



Project ASTRIDE

NEWS...Spring 2008

Contact us at www.astride.org or

e mail us at: info@astride.org

PO Box 874

St. Joseph, MN

56374



Welcome!

Riders - Families - Current and New Volunteers to our 2008 session!

Website

We are pleased to announce we have a new WEB master (past volunteer Anita Hollenhorst) to help update our current news etc. The site should be updated by March. Send her your comments and corrections via the website WWW.astride.org

We are looking for your heartwarming stories. Have you made a special connection? Do you have a favorite horse and why? Has PA made a measurable change in the life or qualities of your life or your child's life? Have they transferred to other aspects of life? Send us your story and perhaps you'll see your story posted on PA's website. Look for updated photos. You may be a star.

On-Line or Snail mail?

We will publish this newsletter on line and notify you by e mail of its arrival.....

PLEASE notify us if you prefer to receive the newsletter in snail mail form at...

Project ASTRIDE

PO Box 874, St. Joseph, MN 56374

VOLUNTEER TRAINING...

Please let anyone you know who might be interested in becoming a Project ASTRIDE volunteer that the next volunteer training is Saturday April 5th, 2008 at the Avon Hills Barn, 9AM – 1PM.

NEW volunteers MUST attend a session and past volunteers are encourage to come to share your experiences and help out with the event!

Additional trainings will be Saturday, June 7th 9AM – 1PM **AND** Saturday, August 9th 9AM – 1PM

SESSION DATES

SPRING SESSION 2008

Tuesday Classes: 5:30 & 6:45 classes....April 15, 22, 29, May 6,13,20,27, and June 3.

Thursday Classes: 5:30 & 6:45 classes.....April 17, 24, May 1, 8,15,22,29, and June 5.

SUMMER SESSION (Last class date is a make-up date only IF we cancel a class due to weather)

Monday Classes: 9:30, 10:30 & 11:30 June 16, 23, 30 July 7, 14, 21, 28 August 4, 11.

Tuesday Classes: 5:30 & 6:45 June 17, 24, July 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 and August 5, 12.

Wednesday Classes: June 18, 25, July 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 August 6, 13.

Thursday Classes: 5:30 & 6:45 June 19, 26, July 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 August 7, 14.

FALL SESSION

Tuesday: 6:00 & 7:15 August 26, September 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 October 7, 14.

Thursday: 5:30 & 6:45 August 28, September 4, 11, 18, 25 October 2, 9, 16.

Fundraisers in the works....

Jessica Wilson is arranging a fund raiser for Project ASTRIDE.....We had our first Quilt/Craft volunteer meeting on Friday Feb. 29. We had great brainstorming by a very talented group of women. We will be selling our items at two different shows: September 26, 27 & 28 at Crossroads Mall & November 15 & 16 at the Civic Center/. We will have a 8 ft table and I believe a 8 x 10 space. We have 2 dates at Grubers Quilt shop, May 9th and June 30th from 5PM-7PM. Anyone interested in helping is welcome you to come. Soliciting of volunteers to work the shows will start in August. We have a flyer for you to share with friends and family. E mail or call Jessica to receive a flyer. Right now we have embroidery, baby quilts, crochet doilies, quilt tops that need to be finished. I would like all projects completed and to me for inventory and pricing by end of August. Our greatest need at this time would be if anyone knows someone that hand or machine quilts and who would be interested in helping out in these areas. Batting and thread will be provided for the quilts. Please contact Jessica Wilson for details. .
Phone 320-654-8191 or e-mail ismom@charter.net
Thanks again and we look forward to a great fundraiser!

Region 6 Conference

Will be held March 14th 15th 16th 2008 in Fargo ND and will be attended by all of PA's instructors. If you are interested in attending go to the www.narha.org and sign up using the Region 6 conference link.

Message from the President...

Submitted by Gwen Marshall

I would like to welcome everyone back to another wonderful PA season!! We have again seen many changes over the winter- some sad and some good. The good news is we will be staying on at Avon Hills for the next five years! Remember to thank Rick and Marlys Backes for their hospitality if you see them around the barn this season. We had a wonderful time at the party they hosted for volunteers and riders last fall. They were kind enough to hitch up their Haflinger's and take volunteers and riders on a wagon ride around their beautiful property. A good time was had by all! We also had another successful "photo shoot" for Christmas card pictures with a PA horse again last year. The horses were posing pretty for their big day, and participants and volunteers were pleased with their photos.

Sadly, we lost one of our favorite horses on Thanksgiving 2007. Jondalar was our fuzzy Norwegian Fjord who was everybody's favorite. He will be sadly missed by instructors, participants and volunteers. Thank you Jondalar for your wonderful service to PA!

We are all looking forward to another great year!

Thank you in advance to all volunteers new and old!

Thank you to all of the local businesses and private donors who continue to support PA with their charitable donations, we wouldn't be here without you!

Gwen Marshall- President

Horse Updates...

Taffy....has spent the winter in Richmond again at Valley Creek Farm and being worked by Laurel and enjoying her time away.

Ouachita... has also spent the winter in Richmond at Valley Creek Farm being worked on by Alice Sue and enjoying his winter.

Blackie, Martin and Magic are holding the fort down at Avon Hills and doing fine!~

We are in the process of acquiring at least one more horse for Project ASTRIDE to help with lessons and to fill Jondalar's very big hooves. At least metaphorically speaking...

Clare's Corner...

Submitted by Clare Palmquist Instructor...

We here at Project ASTRIDE hope that all of you are well and staying warm so far this year. There have been many great new things on our horizon and some sad things. We said a fond farewell to our Fjord Jondalar on Thanksgiving Eve this past November.

Since then we have written and applied for two grants for money to purchase 2 new Fjords and their tack. Cross your fingers that we are awarded them! We have also applied for a grant for an Equicizer. This Equicizer is a wooden horse with motion similar to a horse's movement which can be used for evaluation of riders, fear issues, warm up, stretching and many other reasons. Again, cross your fingers we get this grant so we may add it to our stables!

We will be adding a quilt fundraiser this year and have dropped the raffle. We need you, your family, relatives and friends to help. Please donate a new finished quilt to this event to raise funds to support Project ASTRIDE programming. We need everyone's support of our fundraisers to continue offering programming! The quilt donation may be tax deductible.

We are excited to announce that Avon Hills, owned by Rick and Marlys Backes, will be our home for the next 5 years! We have negotiated the rent and entered into a lease agreement with them for the next 5 years. As part of this agreement they will be remodeling the bathroom within the year to better accommodate wheelchair access. We hope the new bathroom will be as gorgeous as their current one.

I'd like to take this moment to share a few financial facts about Project ASTRIDE that you may not know. Our income in 2007 was \$36,165.00. The annual spending at PA last year was \$29,810.00. These figures include all horse, education, vet, rent, administrative and insurance costs related to providing 58 riders an opportunity to each ride 8 times a year by an **ALL VOLUNTEER STAFF**. The balance was our reserve fund which ensured we could pay our basic bills for 3 months. **Rider fees accounted for less than 19% of our overall income.** Based on group lessons the real costs to the program to provide one lesson were \$64.25, riders paid an actual cost of \$15.63 per lesson (\$125.00 for a group session of 8 lessons).

The projected 2008 budget indicates we will be spending \$60,835. With a needed fundraising projection of \$62,100. We will need all of your assistance in fundraising and at fundraising events in order to achieve these goals. If your work, community club, a business or other opportunity you know of might fund Project ASTRIDE please contact me and we would be happy to set up a presentation with your introduction. Remember volunteers that matching funding can sometimes be available equal to the number of hours you volunteer with us.

That brings me to my final point. Due to the increase in rent and the costs related to providing Therapeutic Riding, the cost of lessons will be increasing in 2008. Group lessons will be \$165.00, Semi privates will be \$200.00 and a private lesson will be \$250.00. There is still the \$5.00 annual fee to cover the cost of paperwork.

All of us look forward to the 2008 season and hope to see most of our volunteers and riders returning along with lots of new faces.

Remember, without you we could not offer our program to our riders!

The Equine Touch visits Project ASTRIDE...

Submitted by Alice Sue Becker Instructor

On February 12, PA held an Educational Forum for volunteers featuring Michelle Patterson and Kristi Kelly-Raverty from The Equine Touch. The Equine Touch is described as an energy and soft tissue bodywork discipline which is non invasive and non diagnostic. Kristi and Michelle demonstrated the hands-on technique using some of our program horses and some of our volunteers, as well! Equine Touch is not massage, but is designed to induce relaxation, improve flexibility, reduce pain and increase circulation by working through meridians in the body.

Kristi and Michelle helped volunteers evaluate issues that a horse might have by asking them to watch the horse walk and trot, and also to notice their reaction to pressure and touch on their bodies. After completing what they call a "body balancing", the volunteers were asked to help evaluate the horse's movement and demeanor afterward. All agreed that the horses appeared to benefit from the process, as did the volunteers who willingly climbed onto their massage table for a little Equine Touch of their own! The Equine Touch offers classes to teach technique to horse owners. Our thanks go to Michelle and Kristi for a great presentation. Our next Education Forum for volunteers will be Tues., March 12th from 6:00 -8:00 p.m.

NARHA Re-Accreditation visit scheduled for 2008

Every five years Project ASTRIDE participates in a Premiere Accreditation visit. This visit is done by 2 NARHA representatives who evaluate and score our program for safety, administrative expertise and programs being offered. This visit will most likely occur after July first. If you'd like to help prepare for this process talk to Laurel. There are many small tasks needing to be completed and reviewed.

Why renew our Accreditation? Accreditation as a Premier Center means that we are committed to excellence. We have received the highest recognition in the industry and that we are a safe professional center. All of our instructors are certified and our horses are well screened for their job and well cared for.

If you see a NARHA representative hanging around be sure to greet them, answer their questions and tell them your stories. They'll want to know how you got involved, how you've been trained and what you enjoy most about PA.

2007 In a Snapshot

*The following story is from Shellie Kremers.
One of our Project ASTRIDE Instructors...*

What happened in 2007? We changed facilities, we added classes, instructors and arena space, we lost horses, we added volunteer activities, and added participant activities. Read the newsletter and read more about an exciting past year.

Project ASTRIDE held our official "Non-Official" trail ride at Lake Maria State Park in October. What does that mean...it means that it was just some of us volunteers getting together outside of the program to enjoy a day in the sun, with or without horses. The weather was perfect, the trails were quiet and unbelievably, the bugs weren't even out. Although we just missed the peak leaf color change there was still plenty of beauty. We hope you join us again this year. Lake Maria contains many trails for walking by foot or horse and has picnic tables for enjoying afternoon snacks.

The Project ASTRIDE open house had something for everyone in October. During this time, we held our second photo shoot. This year, horses and people were turned into Christmas cards and memories. What brings back a great memory better than a beautiful color photo with your favorite PA horse. Thanks to photographer Cassie Storms donating her services and the PA team, this was a fundraiser that will give you many years of return every time you look at your snapshots.

The open house gave us a chance to take carriage (cart, wagon) rides donated by Rick and Marlys Backes and their two teams of Hafflingers. The time it took to get the horses ready was well worth it for all of us who took the opportunity to go for a ride and view the gorgeous surroundings and peacefulness. It also gave us all a chance to get to know the Backes', volunteers, participants and all our family members, just a little bit better. Those little horses gave their all that day and loved every minute of it. A potluck lunch and plenty of laughter accompanied this day.

Our first ever horse show, held in August, was hosted by Rocking R Farms in Foley MN. The show, despite a bit of rain and wind, turned out great thanks to the many people who volunteered their time and those who signed up to ride. Two of our participants placed at the show. Jordon Hurrley placed 3rd in his class and Mikayla Thorenson had placed 1st in hers. Mark you calendars for this years show in August again. We hope to see you there,

In October, Hillcrest Stables of Rockville had donated their time to give lessons to volunteers of Project ASTRIDE that had worked 40 hours or more during the 2007 season. They have been involved with the program for many years and have agreed to do the lessons again in 2008. Start early and get your hours in now. We had a great time and look forward to seeing more of you sign up for this opportunity.

Horses...Written By Shellie Kremers....

When you look at this year verses yesteryear, it is apparent that we have come a long way. The Old West depicts times of simplicity in some ways. They never worried about creating a 20-page document only to finish typing the final sentence and get "an unexpected error has occurred"; and very seldom, I bet, did they ever think about identity theft or global warming. Along came the steam engines, automobiles and not only airplanes, but jets; big, powerful jets that fly us from point A to point B in a matter of only a few hours. However, something has stayed the same from then until now. The horse.

They too have taken us from point A to point B, and I believe to points all over the alphabet. The Pony Express was, although short lived, a great development of our mail system. It would not have been nearly as functional to "go west young man, go west" without the use of horse and wagon. Farming was made possible before tractors by horse and plow; and then there was always that Sunday ride available to go off into the meadows and relax with nobody around but you and your mount.

Project ASTRIDE may not have been around in the 1880s but we have been around since the 1980s and while many things have changed, many things have stayed the same. In only the short nine years that I have been here I've seen many lives touched and changed, not only those lives of the participants, but also of volunteers and horses, each one of which helps make up the backbone of the program.

There was Prince, our beloved little palomino pony. He was so loved by everyone (as they all are). He was a great guy for our young and petite riders. Every time someone outgrew him there seemed to be a fuss. Nevertheless, the great thing about outgrowing him was it created another challenge to move to a larger horse. Sometimes the most fearful thing is change and what a better accomplishment than to overcome it. We had Sandy who was a beautiful little white horse. She was so tolerant with us. What other creature would allow 20 people to dip their hands into cold paint and then place them on their body. If you were as patient as Sandy was, you would allow it. I have never seen a horse as colorful as Sandy was the day of that particular appreciation party. Sandy, you were greatly appreciated that day.

Doozie was a favorite of many (although they all are) in the program. He was tall, dark, and handsome and walked with such a smooth walk that if you came in tired that night, there was a good chance he could put you to sleep. Luckily there are volunteers that help prevent that problem, they are always making riders work. Jomie came to our program a little over weight but she wanted so much to please everyone. She wooed everyone over by showing off her white mark that looked like a lightning bolt on her neck. She herself wasn't much of a lightning bolt but always did what was asked of her. As the program became just a bit too much for her it was time to reconsider her job. She is living a comfortable semi-retired life now in MN and from what I hear, it is just to her liking.

Some of you may not have known the horses I just mentioned, and there are others before my time I am sure that I didn't know, but many of you knew Jondalar. He too was a special horse to the program and touched many lives. His goal like all the others at Project ASTRIDE was to go out, be happy, and try to make others happy. He had the appearance and attitude that everyone loved. It wasn't a perfect attitude, and it wasn't a perfect appearance. That's what's so great about life. You don't need to be perfect to be loved. You just need to be yourself. We look forward to adding many more stories to our memories in the future as we have more horses that have only begun a lifetime of giving hope and happiness to everyone who is willing to be surrounded by it.

So, while so much has changed in the past 100 + years, much has not. The horse is there to pick us up and move us to where we need to go.