



H O O F B E A T S

The Newsletter of Special Equestrians, Inc.
Spring/Summer 2010



New Look – Same Passion

See anything different in the Hoofbeats masthead? Special Equestrians has a new logo, and the design and selection of this new image has been an ongoing project for over a year.

The decision to develop a new logo started with discussions among members of the Board and staff. Many in the Special Equestrians community have deep attachments to the original logo, which dates back to the program's founding and has been its public image for nearly a quarter of a century. In that time, Special Equestrians has grown to include more riders whose

disabilities do not limit their mobility. The conclusion was that a new image was needed - one that would more accurately represent the program and the community it serves.

The process began with brainstorming about what the image needed to convey. Chief among the ideas discussed were the bond between the riders and horses and the freedom and independence that riding offers. Potential logos were submitted by local designers and, via the internet, by graphic artists around the world. A committee including the staff, Board Chair Greg Powell, and professional

designers Chris Davis and Jay Brandrup reviewed and commented on the submissions, resulting in enhanced designs being submitted. Feedback from riders and their families and volunteers was then solicited, and that input guided subsequent discussions and the final selection.

The new logo is a strong statement of the bond that develops between riders and their horses and represents the emotional attachment riders and volunteers have to the program. It is this image that will carry Special Equestrians into its next quarter century of service to its wonderful riders.

APAC Mid-South and Alabama Bridge Builders Fulfill a Dream

A huge surprise greeted riders and volunteers at the start of Spring Term: a paved road leading all the way to the barn. In April 2009 Special Equestrians' Executive Director Kathleen Claybrook was asked at a board development meeting which one item on the Wish List she most wanted. She didn't hesitate a moment: "A paved road." Ten months later, that dream was a reality.

The paving came about thanks primarily to the efforts of David South, Chief Financial Officer of APAC Mid-South and the father of a Special Equestrians rider. Together with Alabama Bridge Builders, APAC Mid-South donated all of the materials and labor for an environmentally "greener" asphalt road and parking areas. Also instrumental in bringing the project to fruition were Tim Mullendore, Construction Division President of APAC Mid-South, and Kacy Mims, Senior Project Manager of Alabama Bridge Builders.

APAC Mid-South is pioneering a new technology that uses a higher percentage of recycled materials in the asphalt and a process that involves less heating, thereby reducing the amount of hydrocarbons released into the atmosphere. During the two and a half days when nearly a dozen workers laid the asphalt there was none of the smell that normally accompanies paving projects.

Paving the road was a priority for several reasons. Most importantly, dust from the dirt road posed a health risk for riders, volunteers, and horses. There have been instances of riders and volunteers who had to stop coming because of the



Staff members, volunteers, Program Founder Rita Mendel, Indian Springs School Director Gareth Vaughan, and Joe (the horse!) are joined by representatives from APAC Mid-South and Members of the Greater Shelby Chamber of Commerce at the Road Dedication and Ribbon Cutting on March 4, 2010.

dust, and two horses with compromised respiratory systems had to be retired. Dust also had a negative impact on office machinery and equipment, all of which had to be cleaned, repaired, and replaced more frequently. "All barns are dusty" said Spring Creek Forge owner Mark Johnston, who with his wife Mary shoes the program horses, "but this barn was *really* dusty." The pavement also enhances access to the barn for riders in wheelchairs or on crutches.

Special Equestrians' founder Rita Mendel drove to the barn shortly after the paving was finished. "I just want to cry," she said, "it is beautiful, and we have waited so many, many years for this day." It is truly a dream come true for Special Equestrians.

CVS Caremark Charitable Trust starts 2010 off right for Special Equestrians

A \$15,000 grant awarded in January by the CVS Caremark Charitable Trust through their All Kids Can Program gave Special Equestrians a leg up on grant income for 2010. The gift was part of a national day of giving for CVS Caremark Charitable Trust, which announced grants totaling \$6.3 million to non-profit organizations across the country.

All Kids Can focuses its funding on non-profit organizations that serve children with disabilities. "The CVS Caremark Charitable Trust is proud to partner with them to make a difference in the lives of children with disabilities and their families and to promote health and wellness to those who need it most." said Trust Vice President Eileen Howard Dunn in announcing the awards. "We hope these

much needed grants will enable these organizations to start the New Year off with renewed energy." This is exactly the effect it had on Special Equestrians Executive Director Kathleen Claybrook and Assistant Director Dorrie Fuchs, who jointly prepared and submitted the proposal. The grant was immediately announced to the Board and published on the organization's website.

Special Equestrians Grateful for Continued Foundation Support in 2009

Special Equestrians received repeat grants in 2009 from The Daniel Foundation of Alabama, the Youth Philanthropy Council of Youth Serve, and the Susan Mott Webb Charitable Trust. These organizations had all awarded grants to Special Equestrians in past years, but their ongoing support was particularly important given the economic crisis that played out over the course of the year. Many foundations significantly reduced or discontinued their grant programs, and non-profit organizations across the country saw a decline in charitable giving.

The grant from Youth Serve was given specifically for the installation of a much-needed new sprinkler system for the covered arena. All of the other grants were for general operating expenses and helped to pay for horse care, instructors' salaries, and scholarships for riders whose families could not afford to pay the full lesson fee.

Last year also brought Special Equestrians a first-time grant of \$2,500 from the Equus Foundation. The Equus Foundation is a national non-profit dedicated to providing homes and useful lives for horses by funding programs that support horse rescue,

rehabilitation, adoption, therapeutic riding, equine assisted activities, and the equestrian sport. Despite all of this support Special Equestrians' grant income was nearly 50% lower than in 2008. The reduced income was partially balanced by decreased spending, but still the organization uncharacteristically ended the year with a deficit. Planning for 2010 included additional grant proposals to new funding sources and, as always, cautious spending.

2009 Major Grant Income

Daniel Foundation of Alabama	\$6,000
Susan Mott Webb Charitable Trust	\$5,000
Youth Philanthropy Council	\$2,800
Equus Foundation	\$2,500

Small Local Organizations Continue to Make a Difference Financially

Good things come in small packages – an adage many have heard since childhood. It certainly is true at Special Equestrians, where many gifts come from small organizations and businesses. This support is every bit as important as larger grants received from foundations and corporations.

In recent years Special Equestrians has benefited from the generosity of small businesses and organizations including Brookwood Medical Auxiliary, Carousel Tack Shoppe, scout troops, the employees of Jack Henry & Associates, Professional Travel, Christ the King Lutheran Church, and the Knights of Columbus. Other sup-



Kathleen Claybrook accepts a check from Anthony Timpa and Carleton Tanner from the Knights of Columbus.

port has come from local restaurants including Joe's Crabshack, Texas Roadhouse, and California Pizza Kitchen, who have opened their doors for fundraising nights, donating a percentage of their income to Special Equestrians. Whereas the restaurant nights are planned, donations from the other groups and organizations often come out of the blue. Their members decide to raise money to support a local non-profit and a check will simply arrive in the mail. Other times a call will come in from someone saying "We'd like to stop by and give you a donation." Welcome gifts, indeed, from often "small boxes."

Special Olympics for our Special Equestrians

Countdown: five riders and their families, four horses, three staff members, two trailers, and one fabulous group of volunteers headed for Troy the weekend of May 14-15 for the Alabama State Special Olympics games. Kari Balazs, Daniel Chaplin, Chandler Herrero, Colby Spangler, and Tripp Wiggins competed under the direction of Coach Kathi Claybrook and were judged in three areas: Equitation, Working Trails, and Timed Pole Bending.

From the opening ceremonies Friday through the competition on Saturday, a dance Saturday night, and the closing ceremonies on Sunday, it was the perfect combination of an amazing learning experience and lots of fun.

Particular thanks go to the parents and families of the riders and to the volunteers who, as usual, helped make it all possible. They included April Berry, Ellen Davis, Lauren Jones, Anna Kelly, Michelle Kiouisis, Annette Troxell, and James Yancey.



Team "Special E" at Special Olympics

Volunteering: a gift that is repaid many times over

Melissa Turnage

Laurel Stanek and her daughter, Camille, are volunteers at Special Equestrians. What began as a high school community service fulfillment for Camille is now part of both of their lives. Camille was willing and able and thought it would be fun working with horses. Laurel accompanied her daughter to her first session, planning only to observe the class. That was four years ago.



Laurel and Camille with Merlin

Laurel decided to join in and went through training to be a sidewalker. She had no prior horse experience, but gradually her comfort level in dealing with these large creatures increased. As that happened she began to be able to observe

on a different level the real work that was going on in the classes. What she found at Special Equestrians was a community of people and horses working together for a common goal: to help children and adults with disabilities experience the therapeutic effects that a regular dose of horseback riding can provide.

"The riders are the reason we come," said Laurel. "Watching them gain confidence and achieve despite their disabilities is amazing. I love the continuity that comes from working with the same rider for several years in a row. You develop such a connection with them. We learn more about them each week and we in turn become better helpers for their class. With the children, we get to know the parents and they share information that helps us make their child's class more successful. We also can give the parents 45 minutes out of their day where they know that their child is loved and cared for by all of us."

"Showing up is the main commitment volunteers have to be willing to make. Once you do that the rest is easy. There is something truly magic that happens in a Special Equestrians class. Over the years I have seen lives change. I have seen friendships develop. I have seen over and over that special connection between horse and rider. It is truly magic. I would say that most volunteers would agree that being in the presence of this magic is the greatest reward."

A Special "Run for the Roses"

Annette Troxell

On May first, Jim Taylor and Teresa Moran held their annual Derby Day party. What makes this party exceptional every year, besides the fabulous hats, mint juleps and Derby pie, is that it benefits Special Equestrians. Guests give a donation to Special Equestrians in exchange for a horse competing in the Derby and prizes are given for the winners, as well as for the best hat. Thank you, Jim and Teresa, for supporting Special Equestrians in such a creative way!



Special Equestrians is deeply saddened by the loss of three members of our community:

Porcia Murrill, volunteer

Virginia Leigh Maddox,, volunteer

Ralph McEwen, long-time shavings supplier

Their commitment to the riders we serve and love of our wonderful horses will live on in current and future volunteers and supporters.

Special Equestrians, Inc.
1215 Woodward Drive
Indian Springs, AL 35124



Special Equestrians' Wish List

(details at www.specialequest.org/support.html)

Major Wish List

- 2,000,000 Endowment
- Scholarship Funds
- Solar Panels for the stable and arena
- Repair insulation in arena roof
- Electrical work (by certified electrician)
- Lighting installed in arena
- Camera (Nikon Coolpix P90 or similar)
- Lean-to built onto hay shed
- New matching office furniture
- Windows rebuilt on stable
- Shade cloth for arena
- Professional Development funds
- Pick-up truck
- All-terrain vehicle
- New riding mower
- Pressure washer with extension cable

Ongoing Supply Needs

- Gift cards for Lowe's or Wal-Mart
- Equine Spot-on Fly Control
- Repel-X Fly Spray concentrate
- Copy Paper (8.5 x 11 white)
- Copier Toner for Canon PC920 (E40)
- 1st Class Forever postage stamps
- Horse Treats
- Dewormer
- Select II Vitamins
- Legacy Pellets
- Strongid 2x daily, 50 lb

Keep informed at www.specialequest.org and on Facebook!

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