



HOOF BEATS

The Newsletter of Special Equestrians, Inc.

Spring 2011



A Quarter Century of Service: Special Equestrians' Silver Anniversary

Five children, a handful of volunteers, a few borrowed horses and one big driving force. That was all there was in the beginning. In January of 1986, Special Equestrians incorporated as a non-profit and was up and running at the stable at Oak Mountain State Park. By year's end 29 riders had participated in the program and the handful of volunteers with big hearts and a love of horses and children had grown to a team of 82. Five years later rider numbers had almost doubled and volunteers increased by 50%.

Step by step, or more precisely stride by stride, the program grew and matured. In 1991 Special Equestrians became the first program in Alabama to be nationally accredited. Two years later they moved to

their own stable and eight acres of land, leased at no cost, on the campus of Indian Springs School, with their own carefully selected horses. A covered arena, more riders and horses, and more than 250 volunteers each year followed. Now the program serves as many as 98 riders a week.

How does success like this happen? How does a dream become reality? One person who knows is the "big driving force" herself, Founder Rita Mendel. "It happened because people have dedicated themselves to the program – board members, volunteers, and staff who work hard every day and have done so since we began. It happened because of Kathi Claybrook's commitment to quality and our incredible instructors' teaching. It happened thanks to the volunteers who work with our riders and help care for our horses. Through their passion and their work—that is how a dream comes true, how *my* dream came true. I am so lucky and so grateful to them for helping me leave such a legacy. Aside from raising three wonderful children, founding Special Equestrians and watching it grow is the most fulfilling experience of my life."

Someone else who has seen the program grow is Erin Germann, pictured here with her current favorite horse, Joe, and

volunteer Beth Shannon. Erin started at Special Equestrians in 1987 when she was just seven years old. Her first teacher was Pam Abdulla, who was the program's first instructor and who still teaches on Sunday afternoon. Erin has had other teachers and has honed her riding skills on a number of different



horses, including Comanche, Bonnie, PJ, and Oreo. Asked how she feels when she rides, Erin says "Happy. I like trotting and I like to canter, but I don't like to gallop." No fear of that on Joe—who "specializes in slow." He is, though, the only horse we have ever bought, and Erin would agree he was well worth the cost!

Join us for more program memories in the summer issue of Hoofbeats.

**Join Special Equestrians
June 4, 2011
at a Gala 25th Anniversary
Dinner Dance and Auction at
Cornerstone Ranch in Leeds, AL**

**Featuring an in-hand showing of
world class Arabians
and a performance by the
Special Equestrians Drill Team**

**Sponsorship opportunities and ticket prices
at www.specialequest.org**

New Board Members Bring Additional Talents to Table

Six new members were voted onto Special Equestrians' Board of Directors in December 2010. They have a range of experience and talents but share one critical characteristic: a desire to work on behalf of Special Equestrians and the individuals it serves.

Wendell C. Atwater – Wendell is a Vice President with Citizen's Trust Bank and has over 25 years in the equipment leasing and banking industries.

Chris Baker – Chris is a general contractor specializing in residential additions and renovations. His daughter has been riding at Special Equestrians since 2004.

Kelly Johnson – A compensation officer for Regions Financial Corporation, Kelly has over ten years experience in human resources and has been a program volunteer since 2009.

Norman M. Orr – A lawyer with Burr and Forman, Norman has previously served on Special Equestrians' Advisory Board.

H. Ashley Page, III – Vice President for Client Relations of Fi-Plan Partners, Ashley has a 25 year career in commercial banking and has served on a number of non-profit Boards and committees.

Brett S. Sheedy – Brett holds degrees in accounting, business administration, and law and has professional experience in all three fields. He first volunteered at Special Equestrians in 2009.

Industry Leadership: Special Equestrians Hosts Regional Conference

Over 90 staff members, instructors, board members, and volunteers working in the therapeutic riding industry honed their skills, gained knowledge, and developed new ideas last August during the NARHA Region 5 conference, hosted by Special Equestrians and Indian Springs School. Region 5 includes Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi, Georgia, Florida and Puerto Rico, and this is the third time Special Equestrians has served as host. Each time Indian Springs School has graciously opened up classrooms, auditorium space, and dining hall facilities for the event.

Opportunities for professional development were abundant, as seen by just some of the presentation titles: Equine Nutrition and Supplements, Teaching the Low Functioning Rider, Preparing the 990, Insurance

Questions and Answers, Sign Language and Teaching Techniques for the Hearing and Vision Impaired, and Developing and Using a Sensory Trail. Arena activities included reining, natural horsemanship, and equine chiropractic demonstrations, along with presentations on hoof care and health and grooming for shows.

Conference presenters included professionals from centers across the region and members of the Special Equestrians community: Board Chair Greg Powell, long-time volunteer and Board member Annette Troxel, Occupational Therapist Ellen Davis, and Spring Creek Forge owner Mark Johnston, who shoes all of the program horses. Their involvement, along with that of the Special Equestrians instructors and volunteers who gave their



Dr. Kimberly Neff adjusts Oreo, who was chosen for the demonstration because he carries a number of the program's heavier riders.

time to help throughout the weekend was critical to the success of the conference.

Alabama Civil Justice Foundation Supports Special Equestrians' Mission

Special Equestrians was honored to be among 23 Birmingham area non-profits chosen by the Alabama Civil Justice Foundation (ACJF) to receive grants for 2011. ACJF grants are funded by contributions from individual lawyers and law firms across the state as well as from attorneys' participation in the Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts (IOLTA).

The \$3,000 grant was made for general operating expenses "to help you best meet your mission at this time," said ACJF Executive Director Sue H. McInish in the letter that accompanied the grant announcement.

Pelham High School Students Remember Porcia Murrill with \$3,000 gift

Never underestimate teenagers. Never. When fellow student Porcia Murrill passed away unexpectedly last May, the Student Government Association (SGA) of Pelham High School decided to channel its school's grief into productive activity. They decided

to raise money in Porcia's memory to donate to a worthy cause, and there was little question as to where the funds should go. Porcia was an accomplished and passionate rider and had been a committed volunteer at Special Equestrians. Her friends knew she would have wanted the funds to go to them.

As we continue to mourn Porcia's death, the generosity and thoughtfulness of Pelham's students give us hope for the future, knowing that as they move into adulthood they will continue to improve the world by their actions.



Left to right: Kathi Claybrook and Pelham SGA representatives Faith Mote, and Abby McMillan

When school started in August they got right to work selling bracelets bearing Porcia's name and raising money through homecoming activities. The staff at Special Equestrians appreciated their efforts but had no idea just how successful the students would be. When SGA President Abby McMillan contacted us in November to let us know that they would be presenting Special Equestrians with a check for \$3,000, Executive Director Kathi Claybrook was stunned.



Special Equestrians was deeply saddened by the loss of our dedicated volunteer
Fred Van Zalingen,

His commitment to the riders, his love of our wonderful horses, and his generous support of the program will live on in current and future volunteers and supporters.

Annual Celebrity Golf Tournament Brings in Record Numbers

Eighteen teams hit the course at Timberline Golf Club on October 7th for the 2010 Dr. Lauren Bourgeois Memorial Fore the Children Golf Tournament. The annual event pairs foursomes with celebrity golfers, including Alabama and Auburn football alumni and other athletes as well some local media personalities. All are rewarded with a great day of golf in support of a great program, and this year's event netted just over \$15,000.

The tournament welcomed back Celebrity Host Bobby Humphrey (at right), Presenting Sponsors Fi-Plan Partners and Stanley Steemer, After-Party Sponsor Goldberg Attorneys, Prize Sponsors King Acura and Edwin Watts of Homewood, Lunch Sponsor Bambinelli's Café Italiano, and Dessert Sponsor

Everything Iz. Also back were team sponsors Burr and Forman, Family Wellness Chiropractic, Indian Springs School, Regions Bank, Saginaw Pipe, and Jackie Laird, along with several individual golfers who have been with the tournament for years.

New sponsors made a great difference for the 2010 event. We were extremely pleased to welcome teams from Garrett Masonry, Leader Capital, Lemak Sports Group, Medical Properties Trust, and Standard Insurance. It was great, as well, to have Milo's Tea Company come on board and provide tea for the lunch after-party. Thank you all! We hope to see you again for the 2011 tournament.



Above right: Celebrity Host Bobby Humphrey

At right, Presenting Sponsors Greg Powell (left) of Fi-Plan Partners and Greg Smith of Stanley Steemer with Executive Director Kathi Claybrook



Save the date for this year's tournament:

**Thursday, October 6, 2011
at Timberline Golf Club**

Major 2010 Foundation and Corporate Gifts and Sponsorships

We want to say thank you to the foundations, corporations, and businesses that were major donors and/or event sponsors in 2010.

CVS Caremark Charitable Trust	\$15,000
Daniel Foundation of Alabama	\$7,500
UAB Faculty and Staff Benevolent Fund	\$5,000
Susan Mott Webb Charitable Trust	\$5,000
EQUUS Foundation	\$4,000
The Matthew 6:2 Fund	\$4,000
Fi-Plan Partners	\$3,600
Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham	\$3,000
Carousel Tack Shoppe	\$2,500
Goldberg Attorneys, P.C.	\$2,500
Stanley Steemer Carpet Cleaner	\$2,500
Burr and Forman, LLP	\$1,000
The Caring Foundation of Blue Cross/Blue Shield	\$1,000
Emmett O'Neal Managed Fund	\$1,000
Leader Capital Corporation	\$1,000
Lemak Sports Medecine	\$1,000



A Real T.H.R.I.L.L. Ride

Recipe for a great day: bring together horse people and their horses, put them on beautiful trails, add a good cook with a grill, and mix in some fine fall weather. It all came together on November 19th, when Special Equestrians' annual T.H.R.I.L.L. (Therapeutic Horseback Riding is a Labor of Love) Ride-a-thon was hosted by Gates Shaw on his 1500-acre property in Brierfield Farms near Montevallo.

Each year the T.H.R.I.L.L. ride gives riders young and old the chance to recruit sponsors and take to the trails to raise much-needed funds for Special Equestrians. The event has alternated every few years between the Shaw farm in Montevallo and Shel-Clair Farm, owned by Randy Bearden, in Sterrett.

Stay tuned for news about the 2011 T.H.R.I.L.L. ride.



Board of Directors

Gregory Powell

President

Norman M. Orr

Executive Vice President

H. Ashley Page, III

Treasurer

Kelly Johnson

Secretary

Rita Mendel

Founder

Wendell L. Atwater

Chris Baker

Brett S. Sheedy

Greg Smith

Sherrel Stewart

Advisory Board

Dan Goldberg

Jake Guercio

Diane Harrington

Ricky J. McKinney

Patrice Murphy

Annette Troxell

Ray Winston



Special Equestrians, Inc.

1215 Woodward Drive

Indian Springs, Al 35124

Staff

Kathleen M. Claybrook*

Executive Director

Dorrie Fuchs*

Assistant Director

Jaime Laird*

Volunteer Coordinator

Colin Claybrook

Grounds Assistant

Certified Instructors

Pam Abdulla

Melinda Bartlett

Matt Bunt

Sally Cope

Ellen Davis

Charlene Doll

Betsy Guttshall

Lauren Jones

Emily Levine

Jennifer McWherter

*Also certified instructors

Special Equestrians' Wish List

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

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
- Flatbed trailer (6' x 8')
- Lean-to built onto hay shed
- New matching office furniture
- Windows rebuilt on stable
- Shade cloth for arena
- Professional Development funds
- Display tablecloth with logo
- Pick-up truck
- All-terrain vehicle

Ongoing Supply Needs

- Gift cards for Lowe's, Wal-Mart, or Staples
- Equine Spot-on Fly Control
- Repel-X Fly Spray concentrate
- HP Printer Cartridges, #54, 57, 69
- Toner Cartridges for Canon PC 920 Copier
- 1st Class Forever postage stamps
- Horse Treats
- Dewormer
- Select II Vitamins
- Legacy Pellets

Keep informed and support Special Equestrians—visit us at

www.specialequest.org or on Facebook, or call (205) 987-WHOA (9462)