

Sebastian Riding Associates

Quarterly Newsletter



www.sebastianriding.org

Fall 2018

All Student Horse Show 2018

Dinosaurs Take Over Sebastian!

by Jenny Dec

Every year, our hardworking students get to show off their talents at the **All Student Horse Show**. This year, on September 15 and 16, there were a record number of 88 riders! The students work throughout the year to develop and refine their talents so that they can demonstrate what they have learned in front of friends and family. Piano players and singers have their recitals, riders have their horse show!

Students had a special treat with the return of the popular instructor **Jamie Juliano** to judge Trail day. Lots of hugs and reminiscing were shared throughout the day. **Lisa Hirsch**, a PATH Advanced Level Riding Instructor and certified Mentor and Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning, joined us to judge Dressage day.

This year, Sebastian Riding Associates was transformed into **Sebastian Park**, a la Jurassic Park, complete with dinosaurs around every turn. The obstacle course started with the riders demonstrating their steering skills by winding their way through the jungle of palm trees. At the last tree, they stopped their horses to collect a leaf. Then (tough to see from the audience), the students walked their horses over giant dinosaur bones. And yes, that was a hungry baby dino who was sticking his head out of a cracked egg (coincidentally the size of a barrel) waiting to be fed that leaf. The last half of the course was a tour through a dinosaur dig site complete with a partially excavated T. rex skeleton.

The inside of the arena was surrounded by really big dino silhouettes, including an Ankylosaurus, Brachiosaurus, and a Velociraptor. This year, the outside of the arena had several dino games and activities that kept the horse show participants and their families busy while they were waiting for their classes. The Triceratoss was a big hit and the mini Paleontologist station was quite popular with the younger set. A big thank you to the awesome, creative, and talented decorations team!

The show wouldn't be complete without Dressage day. It doesn't get the fanfare and dinosaurs that Trail day gets, but it rises to the top with complicated maneuvers and subtle skills. Each dressage rider guides their horse through a set pattern. Each pattern is designed to demonstrate bending the horse on circles, keeping the horse straight on straight lines, making changes right at the letters, lengthening the horse's stride on the loose rein, and showing the horse to the best of their abilities. The riders use their position, centering, seat bones, weight, shoulders, and breathing to assist their horses. It is always an impressive thing to see!

All participants at the show get a ribbon. One individual in Trail, and one in Dressage, each receive a High Point Trophy, too.

The 2018 High Point Trail winner is **Jill Novak**, and the 2018 High Point Dressage winner is **Alyssa Bagosy**. Congratulations to both!

A special nod goes to **Nick LeBlanc**, winner of the **Frank Viall Award**, in recognition of the generous donation of time and talent to SRA through volunteering. A huge shout out to all the caring and committed volunteers that make this show happen!

The **Suzanne Rampley Award**, in recognition of an individual who dedicates their life to bettering the lives of others through their love of horses, went to the very deserving **Lara Feldman**. A big thank you to our talented and dedicated instructors!

Congratulations to **Shawn Thacker** for winning the **Suzie Anders Award** in tribute of the student who demonstrates strength of spirit, triumph over life's challenges, the ability to bring happiness, and the desire to have fun. A big thank you to our all of our supportive students and families!

See you all again next year at the Outer-Space-themed 2019 All Student Horse Show!



A 2018 PATH International Presentation

What Parents Are Saying About Riding Free™

by Dené Mitchell, MPH (founder of the Riding Free™ program)

Who doesn't love a drive up PA's Northeast Extension, through all of the red, orange, and yellow hues of fall foliage along the Poconos this time of year? Christine Hanebury, SRA's Executive Director, and I trekked up and over the mountains to Binghamton, NY, to share what we are learning about the **Riding Free™** program at the Region 2, **Professional and Therapeutic Horsemanship, International (PATH Int.) conference** in September.

For readers who are unfamiliar with the Riding Free™ program offered at SRA, I'd like to provide some background information. Riding Free™ is a 12-session program designed specifically for individuals with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), with the goal to lessen PTSD symptoms and increase quality of life in participants. It focuses on developing trust and relationships, fostering self-confidence, and increasing self-efficacy/autonomy. The program was created after extensive academic research, focus groups, and pilot testing. Not only does SRA offer Riding Free™ all year, any time, for anyone interested, we are also conducting research to determine if the program actually meets the aforementioned goals in children and adolescents.

Arcadia University (AU) is the Institutional Review Board of record for the study, acting as the ethics review board, which is required for any type of research involving people. The data we collect is both quantitative, using prevalidated questionnaires, and qualitative, collecting parental feedback on the program effects, if any, they may observe in their child. As a professional practice professor in the College of Health Sciences' Public Health department at AU, I can't help but feel the need to include a brief description of what exactly is meant by quantitative and qualitative data.

Quantitative Data

When someone asks "show me the numbers" in research, this is what they are speaking of. Quantitative data is when research results are measured in a numerical form (i.e., quantities), and answers questions like "what changed" and "by how much." You might think of how we measure height (i.e., number of inches), test or survey scores (i.e., percentages), ranking (i.e., Likert scale), weight (i.e., pounds), and so on. Many researchers compare their measured "numbers" before and after an experiment or intervention. This allows them to quantify any change, or program effects. The Riding Free™ study uses 3 quantitative questionnaires to collect "numbers" data, before and after the student completes the program.

Qualitative Data

Qualitative data, however, can be a little more complex, although its value is often underestimated. It is collected many ways, such

as through open-ended questions, interviews, anthropological notes, observational data (i.e., qualified researcher documenting various aspects of a program), and so on. This type of data is more of a unique description or perspective, rather than a hard measure, and can include answers like "how" and "why," which is especially useful to support your "numbers" results. Qualitative data may even provide insight on why or why not your results were what you expected. Such insight is invaluable when evaluating a program and is part of our data collection methods for Riding Free™.

Now, back to my story regarding our PATH presentation! In the 2-day conference schedule, Ms. Hanebury and I had the very last time slot on Sunday for our 1-hour-long oral presentation. I was told that "we were saved for last" because PATH organizers felt conference attendees would stay for the full duration of the day to hear our lecture, stating, it was one of the most interesting submissions they had. That made both of us happy to hear; it especially helped ease my nervous jitters right before it was our turn to present.

Primarily, the material we presented was what we are learning from parental comments (qualitative data) about the program after their child completed the program. This rich data is pivotal to understanding, from the parent's perspective, how and what effect, if any at all, the program has had on their child and family as a whole. The questions we ask are open ended, so there is no limit to what feedback might be received, which is a unique strength of using qualitative data. This data also reveals the strong areas of the program, as well as any improvements we might be able to make. Once the parental feedback is transcribed, we take the data and group the quotes/wording into categories we call **themes**.

Themes Derived from Qualitative Data (Parental Comments)

- 1. Intellectual Improvements:** such as a higher ability to focus on tasks, performing better academically.
- 2. Improved Self-Worth:** Child gained self-confidence; child is now making clear choices (leadership skills).
- 3. Improved Mood:** Child shows emotion more in general. Child actually enjoys something for the first time, eager anticipation for horse time, loves SRA.
- 4. Empathy:** Child connects with the horses; shows love towards the horses; child is more open.
- 5. Positive/Safe Community:** staff are great with children with special needs, instructor is passionate and works so well with children; staff

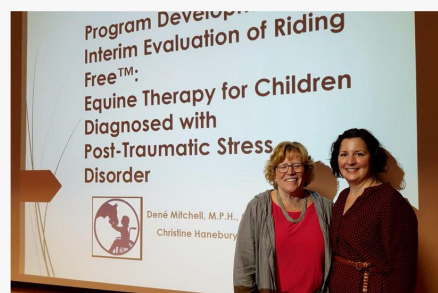
is the most patient as anyone working with their child; staff shows kindness to both students and animals; staff treats kids like they are important.

Actual Quotes from Parents

- Child learned communication, expectations, achievement, trust, relationships, learned boundaries;
- Healed the family, as a whole;
- Child grew emotionally, gained confidence, verbalized trauma;
- Child learned that they are in control of their life, not the trauma, just like she can control a huge horse;
- Child came with a lot of fears, and has now learned to conquer them;
- Passion! Drive! Child now wants to be a vet;
- Child came off medication (off of 8 out of 10);
- Can't imagine not ever having this experience for child and family;
- Brings child to a peaceful state, which is hard to come by;
- Need to offer the program to more children with PTSD.

Now that you have had a brief introduction to a portion of Riding Free™ data, and the amazing results we are seeing, we hope you are as excited as we are to offer the program at SRA. To date, we have had nearly 100 students complete the Riding Free™ program (approximately 30 are also in the study in which data was collected), and we continue to receive clients referred to SRA by local trauma professionals, and others in the field.

After our PATH presentation, we had many conference attendees approach us with questions, as well as praise. Some even commented that they were inspired, and that they were going home taking our story back with them to energize their co-workers. Ms. Hanebury and I, ourselves, felt reinvigorated by all of the positive feedback. On that note, I would like to thank all of SRA's volunteers, and the general SRA community, for your support in making Riding Free™ a success. There is an enormous need for novel, evidence-based, complimentary therapies for treating PTSD, especially in children and adolescents suffering from trauma. Thank you to all who make Riding Free™ possible!



Raise the Roof Update!

So, by now you have seen the new roof over the outdoor arena! It has been a project more than 2 years in the making, and construction was completed in less than 2 weeks! We are so excited to make this a reality. This wouldn't have been possible without the support of many generous donors, beginning with **the Genuardi Family Foundation**, the largest donor to the project. The additional space will benefit all of the students at SRA. We look forward to celebrating all the many donors who have made this possible at the ribbon-cutting ceremony, which is currently being scheduled for Spring 2019. **Our grateful appreciation to the following donors:**

Clydesdale

Genuardi Family Foundation • VNA Foundation of Greater North Penn • Connelly Foundation • Eleanora Baird • Haldeman Family Foundation • Dina Pietrangelo • The Viall Family • The Byrne Family • St. Andrew Lutheran Church

Thoroughbred

Montgomery County Foundation • Gerald & Lorraine Stoltzfus • Karin Borgmann Winter • Mark & Elizabeth Hamlin Family Foundation • Susan Niskey • The Grubelic Family • Timothy Zaro • The Grabenstein Family • Jeffrey Lesitsky • Michael Beard

Quarter Horse

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New Faces at SRA

Although **Becky Ferrier** is not a new face at SRA, she has recently added Assistant Instructor to her resume and is completing her training as an Instructor. We are happy to add Becky as part of the amazing instructional staff team. Here is a little bit about Becky.

"In 2014, I was looking for a place to volunteer and discovered SRA through my church's listing of charitable organizations in the area. Excited to have any excuse to be around horses, I jumped right in, cleaning pastures and giving out hay. Eventually, I began side-walking with lessons and quickly fell in love not only with the time spent with animals, but the students as well! I will never grow tired of seeing the looks on faces when a new skill is learned, challenge is overcome and confidence is grown. It is such an honor to be in this role and a part of the journey in our students lives! In my free time, I'm usually hanging out with my husband, Casey, and our 6-year-old



daughter, Liliana. We recently adopted a hound mix named Todd, and bought a new home where we enjoy hosting friends and family and watching Eagles games!"

Meet Alicia Coughley!

"Ever since I was a child, I have had a love and passion for horses. My weekly riding lessons were the highlight of my week. I knew that horses would always be there with unconditional love no matter what I was going through at the time. This carried on through my teen years and now as an adult. My horse, Java, is my best friend and is the first one I go to when I need support or have exciting news. My passion for horses quickly turned into a career when I began teaching dressage and jumper lessons when I was in college. I loved being able to share my passion for horses with my students and it warmed my heart to see the horses have the same healing and loving effect on them as they did me. When the opportunity was presented to join the team at SRA, I was excited to see how the horses work in the lives of the students here. I really enjoy working with the students, horses, and volunteers and seeing how much of a difference SRA makes in the lives of everyone involved. I have found SRA to be a very special place and I am glad that I get to be a part of it."



A Whole Lot of Help From H.E.L.P.

We were so fortunate to receive lots of help from the philanthropy program at **Arcola Intermediate School in the Methacton School District**. The **H.E.L.P. Club** (*Honest, Efficient, Loyal, Philanthropists*) is offered to 8th grade student leaders who plan ways to give back to their local community through donations of time and money. This program is made possible through the **Phoenixville Community Foundation** and some amazing teachers! In June, the Club accepted our proposal and not only created two pedestal gardens full of herbs but an entire garden that included Adirondack chairs and a bird bath. The 8th graders had a great time creating this garden and it was enjoyed by all of our students this summer!



The Vinnie Chronicles

by Kellen Kissinger

Vinnie's trip to the Memorial Day parade in May was just the kickoff to a busy and exciting summer! He started in June with a trip to Dock Woods Senior Living for a presentation of our "World of Equine Assisted Learning and Therapy." In July, he took a trip to the Indian Creek Foundation to visit their camp, and was even able to bring his buddy Shey along to teach the campers about horses and how to care for them. He was happy to have the company, and Shey was happy to let the campers groom her!

August was Vinnie's busiest month, with four trips to fit in. His first and last trips of the month were to the Norristown and North Wales Libraries, where he shared our literacy program by having readers of all ages share their favorite books with him. Vinnie loves a good story, and it is easy to tell by how interested he is in the readers and the pictures in their books! In early August, Vinnie took his inaugural trip to the Legs for Lindsey race to cheer on the runners. He saw plenty of familiar faces and made lots of new friends, spreading the love and taking a TON of selfies! Finally, Vinnie took a trip to Shannondell Senior Living to give a presentation, and was joined again by special guest Shey. They looked hilarious walking through the facility and got a lot of attention, but they took it all in stride and acted like they were there all the time. We hope that your summer was as exciting and action-packed as Vinnie's! Stay tuned for more adventures!

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Did you know...

The **Montgomery County Foundation** recently funded a new video for SRA prepared by the **Philo Project**. Visit our website and check it out! Many thanks to Ami and Abbie Hays and Vicki and Kylie Fulmer for being a part of the video!

SRA raised **\$604** at the **August 2 Dine and Donate** fundraising event at the Metropolitan! Thank you to everyone who attended!

The **Riding Free™** program is offered as a research project for adolescents ages 6 to 17 with a PTSD diagnosis, but we also offer the program for individuals of any age that share the diagnosis and can benefit from the program. The **Circle of Light Foundation** recently funded the participation of two students in the **Riding Free™** research program, and the **Hogs and Honeys Foundation** have funded four siblings to participate. We are so grateful to these organizations for providing this experience to these participants.

This year marked the **5-year anniversary of SRA being a member of the Chamber of Commerce of Greater Montgomery County**. Chamber President Pam Kelly visited for a photo and a giant chocolate chip cookie in celebration of the milestone.

13th Annual

Legs for Lindsey

The 13th Annual Legs for Lindsey 5K was once again held at the campus of SEI Investments, one of our corporate partners, on August 8, 2018. The course is along the Perkiomen Trail and is very scenic and hosted a cheering squad made up of students and their families like none other. In addition, Vinnie was at the race and helped share SRA with the nearly 200 participants. Eures Dining Services once again provided Tacos in a Bag after the race, which was Lindsey's all time favorite meal! In addition, Kona Ice once again scooped up ice treats, which helped everyone beat the 90 degree heat of the day. We are grateful to our sponsors, most of which have been with us since the race started 13 years ago. Over those 13 years, proceeds from the race have been used to purchase horses, Chex and Sebastian, and his cart; renovate the lounge, and provided nearly \$75,000 of funding for the program. Please consider joining us in some capacity—walker, runner, cheerleader, organizer, or volunteer—next year. With all the fun and knowing you are supporting SRA, you will absolutely be glad you did! 🐾

A reminder that the program will be closed for the holiday, beginning 12/19/18 and resuming on 1/2/19. Wishing everyone a magical holiday season and a New Year full of health and happiness!

