

Sebastian Riding Associates

Quarterly Newsletter



www.sebastianriding.org

Spring 2019

2018: Oh, What a Year!!!

by Chris Hanebury, SRA Executive Director

The start of a new year is a great time to review and reflect on the year behind us, while planning and strategizing for the one ahead. What a year it has been at SRA!!! We have reviewed the 2018 program statistics and have put together this infographic that highlights some of the 2018 program accomplishments. In addition, 2018 was the year of two major milestones for this organization!

First up, 2018 marked the 10-year anniversary of our ability to subsidize the cost between what a lesson actually costs us to provide and what we charge. Our program fees have remained the same without increase since 2008: 10 YEARS!!!! I don't know of any other organization that can make this claim. It has been and remains the commitment of this organization to provide equine-assisted learning and therapy programs at a cost that is affordable, making it a viable option to all who can benefit from them. The difference between the cost of lessons for SRA and the cost to the student must be subsidized through fundraising, donations, and foundation grants. This is only possible with the help of the community in participating in fundraising events, sponsoring a horse or an event, or making a donation - every single student benefits from your support!!

The second major milestone is the covering of our outdoor arena! We dedicated ourselves to the Raise the Roof campaign knowing that the completed project would not only allow us to address the waiting list but also provide the additional physical space to safely and privately operate our growing equine therapy programs. It took us nearly 2 years to raise the funds and within 2 weeks, the structure was completed. We will be celebrating not only the completion of the project but all of the donors who made it possible at a community ribbon cutting ceremony on March 30, 2019.



Volunteer Appreciation Day 2018!

by Cyndi MacFarland, Volunteer Coordinator

Volunteers & Staff, Make the World Go-Round...and nowhere is that more evident than right here on the SRA Farm. No matter day, evening, or season, we come together on common goals of healthy farm, horses, and happy families. From the inception of SRA in 1975 to present, Sebastian Riding Associates' programs have grown with the support of community, grants, and exceptional teamwork.

The Annual Volunteer & Staff Appreciation Day is traditionally held at the very end of October; however, the venue is always held in fun surprise. This year the committee chose The Carousel at Pottstown. Yes, a real, honest to goodness, vintage carousel wheel. Built in 1905 by the Philadelphia Toboggan Company, it was renovated in the early '80s by hundreds of talented volunteers and generous supporters. The Carousel is awe-inspiring and inviting to take a spin or two or three. Ok, SRA had unlimited rides for 2 hours! We eagerly jumped into queue, keeping an eye on the special steed, giraffe, or zebra we would ride. It felt a little bit like a trail ride with all of your barn mates! All were captivated by meticulous details at every turn of this carousel and appreciative of the hours spent with love and attention.

Speaking of love and attention...we decided to play an SRA version of the popular "Heads Up!" game. To play, Chris held a postcard up to her forehead with the name of one SRA horse on it. The entire crew of volunteers acted out the horse personality and challenged Staff to guess which horse! Imagine 30+ volunteers acting out Radar? Kasey? And least not, Vinny! It was both hysterical and all true. All won a beautiful new SRA T-shirt celebrating this Appreciation Day together in 2018.

Like the horses we butler, we like to graze, too. Often, we are grabbing a bite on the go as we stay on top of barn and lesson schedules. But today, special delights were before us and the only schedule we had was to chat, enjoy, and of course browse the refreshment table that was brimming with impressive appetizers and baked goods!

Like the carousel before us, SRA has so much history. Each volunteer has a "I remember when SRA..." chapter in the story. Horses help us live in the moment. But today we took the time to view historical photos of SRA and share details of the years. Let's pull out the prize wheel and have a little friendly game of SRA History. First one to correctly answer an SRA History question wins a spin on the prize wheel! Click click click where the arrow lands no one knows. Would it be Thunder notecards, grocery gift card, free SRA bingo cards, free lesson, or numerous SRA Swag options? It's all good. All learned so much about the farm, its mission and commitment over the last 44 years. Cheers to the next 44, at least! 🐾



Meet the Volunteer

Ronnie Cohen

{in her own words}

Volunteering at Sebastian has truly been a joyful addition to my life. In 2013, I was enrolled in a postgraduate degree course in psychology that required weekly volunteer participation. The project had to be meaningful to me and also provide the opportunity to be open to new experiences. I remembered once seeing children on horses with side-walkers assisting them and thought to myself what a loving way to help others. With minimal horse experience (trail rides as a child) and no history of really working outdoors, I took a leap of faith and found myself volunteering at SRA. Even though the course I was taking has long since ended, I continue to find new experiences and heartfelt service each day that I volunteer.

My inspiration for volunteering is witnessing the amazing students giving their best effort during each lesson and the horses responding to the special needs of each rider. All of the horses are wonderful, but my favorite horse is Moe. He has brought so much joy to my heart and has also revealed to me valuable life lessons. I have learned that when being with a horse, I need to be present in the moment and, just as in life, should not be focused on past issues, judgements, or worrying about the future.

At Sebastian, being part of a dedicated team of volunteers has also brought the gift of new friends into my life. I have certainly received much more than I have given during my time at SRA. When not volunteering, I am happily enjoying my retirement from 30 years of working as a college administrator and continue to take classes in spiritual psychology and human development.



SRA: the First EAAT Program to Receive the Certified Autism Center Designation

We are so thrilled to announce that Sebastian Riding Associates has become the first equine assisted activities and therapy (EAAT) program to obtain the Certified Autism Center designation through IBCCES, the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards. As of 2018, 35% of our nearly 300 students have an Autism Spectrum diagnosis. We were very interested in pursuing the Autism Center designation to provide our instructors with understanding and education to help them meet the needs of their students. Our exceptional staff committed to completing the 14 hours of online training required for their individual and Center certification. We were so fortunate to receive financial assistance from the Copple Family Foundation as well as PennCares, both of whom supported our pursuit of this designation and recognized the value of this training for our staff. 🐾



Charity Bingo at Davinci's Restaurant and Pub

by Kendra Bonner

We are always looking for new fun ways to raise awareness in the community and raise the much needed funds to support the program. So for 8 weeks beginning in late November, we had a new and exciting opportunity to play charity Bingo on Monday evenings at Davincis Restaurant and Pub. Bingo was hosted by Kevin Kweder, a Davinci's employee who turned each evening into a fun and friendly competition. We raised \$2,843.00 and had a blast! We were excited to also get to spend time with the students, families, volunteers, staff, and board members who came out to play along with the local community. This event allowed us to share SRA with our community. These events are so important in allowing us to continue to offer our services at the same cost since 2008! We thank everyone who came out to support the people and programs of SRA and had a lot of fun in the process. Keep a look out for upcoming fundraising events. Hope to see you there. 🐾



New Faces at SRA

By now you all have met **Lucky**, our Fjord gelding and social butterfly! He is so pleased to be here and entertain guests at his stall and at his field! He is the definition of "happy-go-lucky" and he loves people! He came from an Ohio therapeutic facility, so he has some experience. Unfortunately, he was sick on arrival and has been recovering from an accompanying laminitic episode (laminitis is a complex cascade of events that causes the soft tissue within the hoof wall to swell, weaken, and die.) since then. Happily, he seems to have almost completed his recovery and now can start training for the program. Look for his name on the lesson board in the future!



Choco is our newest addition! He is a 12-year-old black-and-white Quarter Horse cross gelding. We recently acquired him from the Nace family, where he was a successful western show horse, competing in 4-H up to the state level. He is super friendly, and he already has a fast friendship with his pasture mate Copper! Everyone is looking forward to getting to know him better!



Photos With Santa

by Kellen Kissinger

The most wonderful time of the year was in full swing this holiday season at SRA! We had a great time hosting Santa and Mrs. Claus for the second annual **SRA Photos with Santa event**. This event is always lots of fun for everyone involved. Santa and Mrs. Claus (and of course, our wonderful SRA horses) spent time taking pictures with students, families and friends, members of our community, dogs, and even a visiting horse! We had a beautiful background and many of our visitors were able to make and take home fun ornaments for their tree. Add in hot cocoa and cookies, and it's a day for the books. As always this fun event could not happen without the time and effort given by Santa and Mrs. Claus, our wonderful volunteers, those who brought refreshments, and of course our lovely and photogenic horses! Thank you to all who came for pictures and all who helped this event happen. We look forward to next year! 🌿



Ready for the...

Spring Bulb Sale?

By Jessica Buck

Spring is right around the corner and SRA is excited to announce that the **spring flower bulb sale fundraiser** is back again this year! Please consider supporting SRA through the purchase of flower bulbs for planting this spring. Bulbs make a great Mother's Day gift, provide a fun outdoor activity for the family, and yield beautiful summer blooms! Order forms are available at the SRA office, on the SRA website, and **new this year**, orders may be placed online, shipped directly to your home! See the SRA website for link. (Shipping charges apply to online orders. Orders placed with brochure order form ship free to SRA). Orders are due March 29. All orders will arrive in plenty of time for Mother's Day! Think spring, and order your bulbs today!

Save the Date



**9th Annual
Derby Dine & Dance**

May 4, 2019

The Vinnie Chronicles

by Kellen Kissinger

Our friend Vinnie was at it again during the fall last year! In early October, he headed over to SEI Investments for their annual Dogtoberfest. This is a great yearly event that SEI holds where animal-based organizations can share what they do with SEI employees. Vinnie was a wonderful representative as always and got a lot of attention! Our next stop was the Lutheran Community of Telford for one of our presentations on Equine Assisted Learning and Therapies. He loves to share what we do! Finally, we had to close out the fall season with a bang- two trips in one day! On December 20, Vinnie started the day with an appearance at Skyview Elementary School, where he shared stories about his work with the students. Following that visit, we headed back over to SEI for their SEI Cares Annual Celebration! SEI is a generous donor for us here at SRA and we are very lucky to be involved in their SEI Cares program. Vinnie just had to go and thank them personally! After that busy day, Vinnie was ready to get home and snuggle up with his buddies for a long winter's nap.

