



Bits & Pieces
Issue No. 20

OUR NEXT EVENT

[12th Annual Special Equestrians Golf Tournament](#)
[Commonwealth National Golf Club in Horsham](#)

Monday morning, May 13.

For more information, click the link above or contact Mary-jo at mjmay@specialequestrians.org

Mark Your Calendars!

May 13

Charity Golf Tournament

May 19

Student Horse Show

May 12-18

Break Week, No Lessons

May 20

Summer I Session Begins

May 25

Thorncroft Horse Show

June 24-28

Summer Camp Week 1

August 5-9

Summer Camp Week 2

August 12-16

Summer Camp Week 3



SPRING 2013 NEWS UPDATE

The weather is finally acting a bit like spring, and we are all happy to start holding lessons outside again!

Special Equestrians hosted Comcast Cares volunteers of all ages on April 27 as they made amazing additions and improvements to the sensory trail as well as the indoor ring and gardens all around the grounds. It was a great day of gardening, digging, painting, and building, as well as showing the Comcast families around the barn! Pictures and details to come, so stay tuned.

We are delighted to welcome a new program director, Karen Basmagy (see below), this month. Some of you may know Karen from Wednesday nights, and Karen is eager to get to know everyone, so look for her in the barn.

We are pleased to feature Elaine Ballengee as one of our outstanding volunteers; read below for Elaine's SE story.

Special Equestrians has been honored by a number of awards and grants; see below.

The Spring Student Horse Show (May 19) and the Thorncroft Horse Show (May 25) are just around the corner, and our instructors and riders are practicing for the big events. We hope you can join us.

Summer camp enrollment is open, and check out our events calendar for the upcoming golf tournament. See the [website](#) for more details.

If you have any suggestions for groups or programs we could work with, organizations interested in a hosting a presentation by Special Equestrians, or any questions, concerns, or suggestions for our programs. please [email me](#).

See you at the barn!
Denise Quirk, Executive Director

Featured Volunteer

Elaine Ballengee

In the fall of 2010, a recently retired educator by the name of Elaine Ballengee happened to be listening to the radio when a program came on featuring Special Equestrians. She listened to two of our awesome volunteers, Kathi Sadowski and Diane Elliot-also retired educators, discuss their joy in working with our riders and horses and participating in our Silver Saddles program. Elaine had volunteered throughout her working career and, with her lifelong love of horses, knew that SE was right up her alley. When Elaine walked into the SE barn for her orientation clinic, she realized just how much she "missed the smell of the barn!" What wonderful serendipity for SE!



Elaine is an amazing and dedicated volunteer, helping out several days a week as well as at our horse shows and volunteer clinics. Elaine and her family are also proud sponsors of Sonja and Gigi. When asked about Elaine's impact on SE, Barn Manager and Instructor Marika Jones said, "Elaine has been a priceless addition to our wonderful group of volunteers. Between her horse experience and her background as a teacher, she easily wears multiple hats every time she is here. I feel privileged to work with such a nice and talented person." Instructor

Kathy Harris added, "I am grateful to have the opportunity to work with Elaine in our Youth Connections (YC) program. Elaine has expert horsemanship skills and generously assists new volunteers and students in proper horse care and tacking. She is always willing and eager to help whenever and wherever she's needed and her energy and enthusiasm are contagious. Elaine has an intuitive and innate ability to work with and connect to the YC students, and in turn, they gravitate to her. Elaine is an integral reason why YC is such an enjoyable program to be a part of. "

Some of Elaine's favorite things at SE include seeing the riders with their horses and "watching a child grow in their relationship with the horse." She especially enjoys participating in our YC program, where the students are "outside of themselves, connecting with the horses and learning how to care for them." Elaine loves working with her co-volunteers and appreciates the SE staff, who are "so attuned to the horses and people." She adores all of the SE horses, but definitely has a soft spot for Ellie, with whom she thoroughly enjoys working and riding in our able-bodied program. Then Elaine added, "Well, Sonja, she's just so cute and bullheaded."

When summing up her feelings about SE, Elaine said, "SE is such a very positive, patient, zen place and everybody's so much fun." We are so grateful to have Elaine as a member of our SE family. Thank you, Elaine, and congratulations on being SE's Volunteer of Winter 2013!

Our New Program Director

Karen Basmagy



Special Equestrians is pleased to announce that Karen Basmagy stepped into the position of program director on April 1.

Karen has been teaching on Wednesday nights and serving as a program consultant since December. She served as Equestrian Director at Riding with HEART in Pittstown, NJ, and as Equine Specialist at Short Hills Handicapped Riding Center (now known as Mane Stream) in Oldwick, NJ.

In addition to teaching therapeutic riding, Karen has initiated and implemented equine-assisted psychotherapy and learning workshops for bereavement, teens-at-risk, leadership-skills, and anxiety-disorder groups.

Karen is a certified Path Intl. Therapeutic Riding Instructor, a certified Equine Assisted Guidance and Learning Association (EAGALA) Equine Specialist, and a Certified Professional Life Coach. She holds an Equine Studies degree from Cazenovia College. She is a horse owner of many

years, with experience also as a 4-H Leader, as a volunteer at a wildlife rehabilitation center, and as a park ranger/biological technician for the National Park Service.

Recent Awards

Special Equestrians is grateful for recent grant awards made by the following organizations:

Commonwealth Foundation, Athletes Helping Athletes, Bucks County Autism Support Coalition, Seymour Kalstein Foundation, the Alpern-Vitriol Fund of The Philadelphia Foundation, the Bucks County Commissioners, and The Oaklawn Foundation.

Special Equestrians is the proud recipient of the 2013 national Adapted Physical Activity Council's (APAC) Community Program Award. APAC supports both practical and theoretical endeavors in physical activity and recreation for people with disabilities in order to promote appropriate active lifestyles and a healthy quality of life.

Special Equestrians is pleased to announce that two volunteers have been recognized by EQUUS Foundation and Ariat International for their volunteer spirit. We are so proud of all our volunteers!

Amanda Leithead, a volunteer since 2011, was awarded a \$1,000 EQUUS Foundation Champion of Equine Service Scholarship in recognition of her volunteer service in 2012. She is headed to St. Joseph's University in the fall. Lynn Coakley, EQUUS Foundation President, acknowledged the scholarship winners as being among the "wonderful 'horse lovers' who find the time to maintain high academic standards, pursue their equestrian dreams, and volunteer for equine charities dedicated to ensuring the well-being of horses and fostering the horse-human bond."

Debra Lopez, a volunteer since 2009, is one of five volunteers across the U.S. who won \$250 gift certificates for Ariat boots for their volunteer service in the first quarter of 2013 as part of the EQUUS Foundation "CHAMPIONS" program sponsored by Ariat International.

About Us

For 30 years, nonprofit 501(c)3 Special Equestrians in Warrington has been offering programs to improve the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of individuals with disabilities through the equine experience.

For more information, please call Executive Director Denise Quirk, 215.918.1001 x102, or email dquirk@specialequestrians.org.

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