

Bits & Pieces
Issue No. 19

Mark Your Calendars!

- February 10**
Volunteer Training Clinic
- February 11-16**
Break Week, Make-Up Lessons
- February 16**
Dr Mike Burak and his Equine Massage Students at DeVal will work on the therapy horses
- 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



WINTER 2012-2013 NEWS UPDATE

We hope you're all keeping warm this winter. We've had an unexpected break in our lesson schedule with the extreme cold at the end of January, but we're back in full swing.

November and December at Special Equestrians saw many special moments, so we celebrate our special riders, volunteers, staff, and events!

We introduced our new logo and are looking forward to the launch of our new website in early 2013. Our 30th anniversary event, "Kick Up Your Heels for Special Equestrians" on November 3, 2012, was a great success, raising \$18,000 for our programs.

We welcomed our new development team, Mary-jo May and Linda Hunsicker, and as well as two new instructors, Lisa Luongo and Karen Basmagy, who is also a consultant on future programs. Kathy Harris returned to Special Equestrians to work with our Youth Connections Program with teens from the Lakeside School.

The [Quaker School of Horsham](#) brought a group of first and second graders to participate in our REINS (Riders Excelling in New Skills) program under the instruction of Pam Galante with Kathy Harris. These riders will be returning in March 2013.

Featured in this newsletter are volunteer Judith Kirby and rider Tommy S. Read their stories below.

As we move into the new year, we are continuing to coordinate new partnerships and develop new program ideas. If you have any suggestions for groups or programs we could work with, please [email me](#).

See you at the barn!
Denise Quirk, Executive Director

Featured Volunteer

Judith Kirby



In May 2010, Judith Kirby retired from her position at a local veterinary clinic and started looking for volunteer opportunities. She had ridden horses in her teens and knew that she wanted to be around horses again. Thankfully for Special Equestrians, Judith just happens to live nearby the family of one of our riders, who suggested she consider us in her search. So, Judith came to the barn to observe some lessons, saw our wonderful therapy horses in action, heard a rider's giggle, and her decision was made. Judith has been an invaluable member of our SE volunteer crew ever since!

Judith is a wonderful, dedicated volunteer, acting as the volunteer manager for

our Tuesday afternoon lessons. She also pitches in for special events and clinics, and, as we discovered at our recent horse show, has a gift for costume design. As our Barn Manager and Instructor Marika Jones says, "Judith has been an amazing addition to the Special Equestrians team. Her help any day, but especially Tuesdays, has been monumental. She's so detail-oriented, which makes the start of Tuesday lessons run perfectly smooth." Instructor Angelica Biehl adds, "Judith is a unique part of the SE team. She sews an amazing Snuffleupagus costume, coordinates volunteers on Tuesdays, and makes each horse a priority by cleaning, spending a moment for TLC, and preparing them for lessons. She is tireless at helping new volunteers feel welcome and become part of our dedicated volunteer team. Thank you, Judith, for being a key part of our SE program!" Volunteer Coordinator, Diane Sampson, says, "Judith is such a huge help and so much fun to work with. She does everything well and never seems to run out of energy." Judith also volunteers at Pennsbury Manor and was able to make a connection for us to place our much loved, Romeo, with them to enjoy the rest of his days. For that, we will always be grateful.

When asked about her favorite things at SE, Judith replied, "I enjoy all my time at the barn. The people are so nice." She knew she would enjoy being around the horses, but didn't realize how inspiring being with our riders would be. It is a joy seeing "a small child on a big horse, having so much fun." Therapeutic riding "empowers a child with disabilities. Everybody is looking up at them and they are moving." As for our horses, Judith loves them all, "they are awesome, remarkable animals"; but, her heart will always belong to Zeus. "Zeus was the first horse I rode in the Silver Saddles program since I was a teenager...he was such a good boy and took care of me." Judith added that Bear now takes wonderful care of her and, "well, Suzie is just so cute". Our horses make it clear every Tuesday afternoon that the affection is very mutual.

Judith summed up her feelings about SE with a chuckle, saying "SE is such a great place to volunteer, I wonder who is getting the most out of it! It is such a very worthwhile and important organization to be associated with and I am glad to be a part of the team." We are so fortunate to have Judith in our SE family. Thank you, Judith, and congratulations on being SE's Volunteer of Fall 2012!

Featured Rider

Tommy S.



When Tommy S. came to Special Equestrians for his very first lesson in September 2010, his parents, Jen and Bob, listed the goals they hoped for their son to achieve at SE as "increased trunk strength and social interaction." Two years later, Jen summed up just how far their son has come.

"Special Equestrians was recommended to us by Dr. Margaret Souders (CHOP), who felt that equine therapy would be beneficial for Tommy to increase his lower trunk tone. We didn't even know that equine-therapy existed! It turns out that SE's horses are the best therapists of all!"

"When Tommy began his lessons, he wanted absolutely nothing to do with Suzie and (Instructor) Diane. Diane assured me that he would eventually love his lessons and another parent reassured me that 'this too shall pass.' He now looks forward to coming every week and seeing the volunteers, kids, parents, and horses . . . what an incredible group of individuals!"

"Tommy has received so many gifts from these beautiful horses. The physical exercise is just the 'icing on the cake.' There is a connection with the horses that I just cannot explain. Riding has improved Tommy's life overall . . . the

lessons carry over into other areas of his life. So many of the individuals at SE are volunteers-it always amazes me how generous these people are with their time and their talents. We are in the process of becoming volunteers ourselves."

Tommy's instructor, Diane Sampson, is amazed at how quickly he has progressed despite his rocky start. "I had to laugh when reviewing my notes from Tom's initial lessons. The first lesson notes say 'Screamed for most of lesson starting with putting on the helmet,' which was followed by dramatic improvement in his second lesson 'gave excellent commands in between screams.' By the third lesson, Tom had discovered the joy of trotting on Suzie and it was all uphill from there. Now Tom knows all his riding commands without prompting, two-points his trot beautifully, and can steer Bear independently all over the arena. It is especially fun to watch Tom participate in our horse shows where he joyfully waves to his many fans."

Our wonderful Friday volunteers all look forward to participating in Tommy's lessons. As volunteer Judy West says, "Tommy has grown so much as a rider in the more than two years he has been coming to SE. He started out on little Suzie and has graduated to Bear, who brings Tommy endless joy and giggles when he touches Bear's ears or when Bear sneezes and shakes. When we go outside, Tommy is sure to say, 'Door, please,' and he always collects some mint or other plantings to bring back inside as a gift for his mom."

Tommy's next big challenge will be figuring out how to pick flowers in the Sensory Garden this coming spring without Bear eating them before he can give them to his mom. Bear can't wait!

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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