

News

- Archives search
- Business
- Contact us
- Corrections
- District court
- Entertainment
- Discussion forums
- Local news
- Daily lottery
- Obituaries
- Opinion/Editorials
- Special projects
- Sports
- Weather forecasts

Features

- Cape Cod View
- Crossword puzzles
- Feature stories
- Food & recipes
- Health & science
- Movies
- Outdoors
- Personals
- Photo galleries
- PrimeTime magazine
- Television listings
- Weddings

Advertisement



Marketplace

- Used and new cars
- Classifieds
- Dining guide
- Employment

August 21, 2005

Riding past challenges

By CONOR BERRY
STAFF WRITER

BOURNE DALE - Though the din of the busy Scenic Highway is never beyond earshot, a ride down Bourne Dale Road, a tortuous thoroughfare that winds through woodlands north of Cape Cod Canal, is like stepping back in time.



■ Haylee White, 12, of Buzzards Bay admires Max before riding at the Grazing Fields Farm.

On a recent misty morning, the destination was Grazing Fields Farm, nearly 100 acres of pastureland fringed by tall trees just off the winding road.

On this particular drizzly morning, several young horseback riders with serious faces were honing their burgeoning skills at Grazing Fields, a former dairy farm now home to a riding school and more than 60 privately owned horses.

Some of the riders, all girls between the ages of 6 and 13, scrunched up their noses and narrowed their eyes as they concentrated hard on the orders lobbed their way.

"Tighten up on the reins, Haylee!" shouted Mel Fretschl, Grazing Fields' riding instructor.

"Slow up, Kristyn! Let them catch up to you," she barked, scrutinizing the form of each of the five young riders in her charge.

Related To

- Print-f
- E-mail
- Search
- Daily I
- RSS 1

Advertiser

→ Real estate
 → Subscribe to Times

The instructor's words of encouragement may have sounded a hairbreadth less stern than a drill sergeant's commands, but her firmness was for the riders' safety.

If Fretschl wasn't clear, and a child or horse were to panic, someone could get hurt. And there's no room for that, said Barbara Zenker, co-founder of City to Saddle, a nonprofit organization dedicated to getting economically disadvantaged kids on horses.



■ Grazing Fields Farm riding instructor Mel Fretschl gives one final set of instructions before letting the class ride. Haylee White, left, and Kristyn Trant were in the class as part of the City to Saddle program. (Photos by ELISHA PAGE)

The two-year-old program is specifically designed to expose children to horsemanship, from caring for horses to grooming and riding them. Not only is the program fun, according to past and present participants, but it gives kids who otherwise wouldn't have an opportunity to ride a horse a chance to learn skills and gain confidence, said Zenker.

And Fretschl, a licensed riding instructor, is exactly the kind of eagle-eyed, safety-first coach Zenker seeks out for her organization, which places youngsters in established horsemanship programs around metro Boston and southeastern Massachusetts.

"We have to find barns that really have excellent instruction-lesson programs," said Zenker, who co-founded the Weston-based nonprofit with Kimberly Summers.

Both women have Cape ties: Zenker is a Falmouth summer resident and Summers grew up in Chatham and still has family on the Cape.

City to Saddle participants tend to be from inner-city Boston or from disadvantaged backgrounds. At Grazing Fields, Zenker placed two local girls - Haylee White, 12, of Buzzards Bay and Kristyn Trant, 12, of Bourne - in a weeklong riding session at the horse farm.

The girls, both Bourne Middle School students, said they wouldn't get a chance to ride if it weren't for City to Saddle. Though both girls said they had fun, they also said learning how to handle horses was tough work.

"Riding them is probably the most challenging," said Kristyn.

"It's hard," said Haylee, praising her patient, well-behaved horse. "I got

ETHAN

HY
1520
Hyannis
508-5NOW OPEN I
45 Home
Plymouth
508-5

every

With
 price
 can h
 home f
 you
 withou
 for

ETHAN

a good horse. He was nice."

Before they headed out to the paddock for a ride, the girls groomed and saddled their horses and took care of stable chores.

Then it was off to a large outdoor ring to practice riding, including turning and stopping maneuvers. Zenker beamed like a proud mother as the girls made their way on horseback around the ring, steering the animals and changing directions at Fretschl's command.

"The children are the diamonds in the rough and the horses are the gems. And the relationship between the child and horse becomes the sparkle," Zenker said.

After about an hour of intense instruction, with Fretschl constantly in motion and calling orders, the five young riders returned to the barn for some more stable work.

City to Saddle is funded entirely by private donations.

"Host facilities discount their riding programs for us," Zenker said. "The kids pay zero."

In addition to sessions this month and earlier this summer at Grazing Fields, City to Saddle has held programs at riding facilities in Millis, Wellesley and Wrentham.

"We're trying to spread out so we can reach children from different metropolitan areas," said Zenker.

Conor Berry can be reached at cberry@capecodonline.com.

(Published: August 21, 2005)

Back to Cape Cod Times

About us | Advertise

cape cod online | capeweek | primetime | on cape | cape cod times | classifieds

Copyright © 2005 Cape Cod Times. All rights reserved.