



ST. CROIX TRAIL BLAZERS

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 15 | APRIL 2019

Choosing the Right Horses for Our Program

As you know, horses at St. Croix Trail Blazers are a huge part of our program. Without them we couldn't do what we do! What is lesser known though is the lengthy process that determines what horses can call St. Croix Trail Blazers home. After many curious minds have inquired, we thought it would be interesting to write an article to shed some light on how all of our horses have found a home with us.

When I'm looking for horses for the program, I have a narrow age group that I search within, generally 8-13. Any younger and they usually haven't seen enough to have a natural tolerance for "scary things". Any older and the amount of time they'll be able to be ridden pain-free goes down drastically.

I generally prefer geldings (fixed male horses) because their disposition tends to be the most even keel. After finding a horse that's the right age and gender, I evaluate their personality, general disposition, and willingness to work. Horses must be calm, friendly, and not have traits that would lead them to react negatively. Confusion is ok; kicking, bucking, and biting is not! As you can imagine, this narrows the pool of horses to choose from. Sometimes the search for a horse like this takes months.

When a new horse passes the first set of criteria and arrives here, they go through

several weeks to months of training with me. It's really up to them how long it takes to adapt to their new home. When I feel they're calm, adapted to their new surroundings, and have consistently shown a good attitude towards what we ask, I will usually have other instructors ride them followed by lead line lessons with the students. Some horses don't adapt well once here, and have to be returned to their previous situation.

Once these horses have again shown the well-rounded consistency I look for, they are able to fully be used within our program. You may have noticed Cooper being slowly introduced into our program. For various reasons, his path has taken quite some time to get him here but we are happy to have him!

Once incorporated into the program, I continually monitor their behavior and attitude and give them breaks or "tune ups" when they show it's needed. Our horses continue to go through desensitizing and bonding events where they're exposed to many strange and scary obstacles, lots of manners training, etc. The bond between the instructors and horses is important to establish as the horses look to us for reassurance when they're confused, scared, etc.

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MISSION

Trail Blazers mission is to provide horseback riding, training, and competitive sports opportunities to individuals with special needs in a safe learning environment through the adaptive equine experience.

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Our horses also let us know when it's time for them to retire. Sometimes their heart just isn't in it anymore or they need a change of pace. Sometimes pain from age and injuries is great enough that riding isn't an option anymore and sometimes they leave us for the Rainbow Bridge

unexpectedly. No matter what the reason, we work to ensure our horses are happy and well cared for while they are with us. Without them our riders wouldn't have a program!

Kellie Grayden

Rider in the Spotlight: Parker

SCTB: How long have you been riding with St. Croix Trail Blazers?

Parker: Three years.

SCTB: What horse(s) do you ride?

Parker: Rowdy is my favorite...also Onyx.

SCTB: Do you have a favorite horse?

Parker: Rowdy.



Parker: I like riding over the bridge. Sara is really nice, and helps me a lot. It's fun when we ride outside. I like giving the horses and cats treats when Sara lets me.

SCTB: Do you have any hobbies?

Parker: I like dinosaurs and singing along with the radio.

SCTB: Anything you want to add?

Parker: Thank you for letting me ride Rowdy. I really like it!

SCTB: What is your favorite thing about riding?

Rider in the Spotlight: Stacy

SCTB: How long have you been riding with St. Croix Trail Blazers?

Stacy: Almost three years.

SCTB: What horse(s) do you ride?

Stacy: Zip.

SCTB: Do you have a favorite horse?

Stacy: Zip and Vanna.

SCTB: What is your favorite thing about riding?

Stacy: Having to ride at a beautiful place and a super staff and volunteers. Getting to know the other riders and the horses they ride. Just being with the gang and belonging.

SCTB: Do you have any hobbies?

Stacy: My other hobbies are fishing.

I caught a 51 inch muskie that is now stuffed and mounted on the wall of our lake home.



SCTB: Do you play other sports?

Stacy: Other sports I play are with Special Olympics softball and floor hockey where I play goalie. We got the gold in the state tournament in our division.

SCTB: Anything you want to add?

Stacy: I work full time at 3M. Before that I was at Securian for 17 years. I work in the document section. I am very lucky to have lots of friends from Special Olympics. We are very active in keeping our social life going!

The Power of Horses

The February 17th edition of *Parade Magazine* featured an informative and "eye catching" article titled, "The Healing Power of Horses". Many friends asked me, "Did you see the wonderful article on horse therapy?", so I know it captured attention. If you missed it, there is a copy in the lounge at the barn.

We Trail Blazers are well aware of the benefits of riding to persons with autism, Down syndrome, and many other neurological situations, as well as physically limited. The article focuses

on the benefits to victims of abuse and veterans.

One quote from Rupert Isaacson, author of "The Horse Boy", captured my attention since I often have similar thoughts when watching our riders. "Horses lend you their power, which helps when you are trying to heal. The moment you are on a horse, you are bigger, stronger, more powerful, more beautiful.

Sylvia Grubb

So What is St. Croix Trail Blazers Considered?

There are many definitions of "therapy" when it comes to riding. St. Croix Trail Blazers does not provide actual therapy as a means for treatment, however, we are a therapeutic riding group which means we provide recreational horseback riding lessons adapted to individuals with disabilities. An activity is therapeutic if a participant benefits, shows improvement, or feels better once engaged. An activity can be therapeutic without being considered as therapy.

Riders are taught lessons in a private or group format. The instructor works with

the group in addition to supporting individual success. There is occasional hands-on assistance by the instructor and/or volunteers, but the instructor usually teaches from the center of the arena. In therapeutic riding, the emphasis is on proper riding position and reining for example not functional therapy goals.

Now you know how St. Croix Trail Blazers is defined.

Karen Harjes

Hail Damage and Roof Repairs

A hail storm came through Jasmine Meadows in June 2017. The roofs on all of the barns and houses were dented and damaged. The siding, gutters, and windows on the farmhouse also got hit hard. As a result, the roofs need to be replaced and the farmhouse needs to be fixed up. Fortunately, insurance will pay for most of the repair work.

The repairs to the barn should not affect the St. Croix Trail Blazers riding schedule. The barn roof will be replaced early on week days, when typically no one is using the barn. The workers will remove and replace one section at a time, which should take about a week. Each section

will be finished before riding lessons begin in the evenings. The workers will take extra precautions not to drop nails and screws into the arena and stall areas. If you happen to find any nails or screws, please pick them up so a horse or someone doesn't step on them or one doesn't end up in a tire.

The silver lining here is that we get to pick new colors for the buildings. The horse barn will stay the same, but the farmhouse will be silver-gray to match the horse barn. The new roof on the blue shed will also be gray to match the other barns.

Nature at Jasmine Meadows

While many of our lakes were still frozen on April 1st, the pond at Jasmine Avenue was already clear of ice. Last fall it was among the first to freeze over. While there are probably a number of reasons for this, and no doubt one of these is the depth of the pond, the primary reason has to do with a very special property of water.

What is this special property? We are all used to the idea that when things are heated up, they expand; and when things are cooled down, they contract and become more dense. This is not the way in which water works. Think about it for a moment. If water contracted and became more dense on cooling, ice would form first at the bottom of the pond and with dropping temperatures would gradually freeze up to the surface. If that were the case, there would be no oxygen for aquatic species during the winter months, and most water plants would not be able to grow. In fact, life as we know it would probably not exist.

Fortunately for us, this is not how water works. As water cools, it does become more

dense at first, and it does tend to sink toward the bottom of the pond. However, once the temperature drops to 39.16°F (3.98°C) the process goes into reverse and the water begins to expand. So as winter approaches and the water cools, there is a circulation of water that takes place in the pond or lake. When temperatures drop below freezing, the cooler, more dense water begins to move toward the bottom of the pond, but once the temperature reaches 39.16°F it begins to expand, finding its way back to the surface. Only then can ice begin to form – at the surface of the pond and not at the bottom.

Getting back to our shallow pond, we can understand why it is among the first to freeze and first to thaw. We can understand also why our larger lakes freeze first along the shore before the deeper water ices over. It has to do with that very special property of water along with the depth of the pond or lake.

Harlan Baxter

Make-Up Reminder



If St. Croix Trail Blazers cancels your lesson, you will have a make-up lesson. **You have 30 days to schedule that lesson with Kellie.** Please do so by email so there is a written record:
kellie@stcroixtrailblazers.org.

Thanks!

Our Email Addresses

You can reach these people at their email addresses:

Karen: karen@stcroixtrailblazers.org

Kellie: kellie@stcroixtrailblazers.org

Keri (treasurer):

keri@stcroixtrailblazers.org



Please remember to check your spam or junk folder for any updates from St. Croix Trail Blazers.



If you bring a new rider who joins the team, we'll give you \$50 off your next month's fee!

Rider must pass evaluation with instructor.



Special People Needing Special Horses

Contact Us



Email: karen@stcroixtrailblazers.org

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