

ST. CROIX TRAIL BLAZERS

NEWSLETTER

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Virtual Special Olympics Equestrian Competition

We have all experienced the challenges COVID-19 has given in one way or another this year. Many of our riders who participate in Special Olympics events have not been able to because Special Olympics Minnesota made the difficult decision to close many of the sports to keep participants and volunteers safe. Special Olympics Minnesota has been creative in ways to keep athletes engaged such as virtual dance parties, bingo, and some sports.

Fortunately, equestrian competition was one of the sports done virtually. We had just returned to riding after being closed for a couple months due to COVID-19 when the notice came of the virtual opportunity. Of course, we said yes! Competition was slightly different in that the event had to be held at our own facility, and we would video record the rider and their horse partner. The video was then submitted to Special Olympics for judging.

It was not long before we had 26 riders signed up. Normally we have 10-12 weeks of practice time. This time we had a little over a month to get everyone's riding skills

refreshed. Mother Nature decided to add another challenge with heat, so our practice time was delayed a bit more and some events needed to be scratched. Athletes, instructors, and volunteers did a tremendous job meeting this "virtual" goal.

There were five teams with 37 riders competing. Twenty-six of those riders



were from St. Croix Trail Blazers! Riders earned 13-first place awards, 10-second place awards, and 3-third place awards. Much to our surprise, Special Olympics Minnesota teamed up with Fox Sports North to have Top 10 Virtual Summer

Sports Classic Highlights during the virtual awards ceremony. Lake K. and his horse partner, Vanna, were highlighted at number six and Austin H. and his horse partner, Epic, were highlighted at number one.

Congratulations to all the riders. You did a fabulous job showing your skills! Thank you to instructors and volunteers for the hard work and support. Most of all thank you to our families for hanging in there with us!

MISSION

St. Croix Trail Blazers' missions are to provide horseback riding, training, and competitive sports opportunities to individuals with special needs in a safe, learning environment through the adaptive equine experience and provide therapeutic riding and activities for active duty or veteran military personnel to enhance their physical, emotional, and social well-being.

In This Issue

Virtual Special Olympics Equestrian Competition page 1
Riders in the Spotlight page 2
New Instructors page 2
Holiday Party
Cancellation page 4

Cold Weather Cancellation
Reminderpage 4
Make-Up Reminderpage 4
Our Email Addressespage 5
\$50 Off Riding Feepage 5
Reminderpage 5

Rider in the Spotlight: Ashley

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

Ashley: I've been riding at St. Croix Trail Blazers for four years.

SCTB: What horse(s) do you ride?

Ashley: I've ridden every single horse!

SCTB: Do you have a favorite horse?

Ashley: My favorite horse is Willow!



SCTB: What is your favorite thing about riding?

Ashley: My favorite thing about riding is honestly probably meeting riders!

SCTB: Do you have any hobbies?

Ashley: I love to ride horses, take walks, go to state parks, hang out with friends, and many more!

SCTB: Do you play other sports?

Ashley: I do play other sports! I play hockey!

Rider in the Spotlight: Ruby

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

Ruby: Three years riding.

SCTB: What horse(s) do you ride?

Ruby: Rowdy, Onyx, Cooper.

SCTB: Do you have a favorite horse?

Ruby: Rowdy.

SCTB: What is your favorite thing about riding?

Ruby: I love being outdoors and going on trail rides. I also love being involved with the Special Olympics.



Trotting is my new favorite thing.

SCTB: Do you have any hobbies?

Ruby: Riding horses, going on walks, reading, writing letters to my friends and family, and spending time with my family.

SCTB: Do you play other sports?

Ruby: Sports, I love to bowl.

SCTB: Anything else you want to add?

Ruby: I love playing board games and I am the UNO champion in my family!

New Instructors

Piper Mork is an instructor. She has been riding horses since she was six years old and got her own horse. Piper took lessons for Western and English disciplines for five years. She then began helping her father

foster, nurture, and train rescue horses for various rescue organizations. Piper began instructing students in riding around the age of 14. She also started competing

Continued on page 3

Continued from New Instructors on page 2

during her early teens in barrel racing and then began jumping lessons. She no longer competes but continues to teach. Outside of horses, Piper is currently a



student at the University of Northwestern St. Paul and works at the library there also. She enjoys reading, cooking, and watching movies with her cat.

Ellyn Thompson is an instructor. Ellyn began taking riding lessons in 4th grade after her mom signed her up thinking that horses would be a phase. Since then, she has worked as a counselor at horse camps and worked with several



horse-centered non-profits while continuing taking lessons and leasing horses. She attended Concordia University for her undergraduate education where she worked as a tutor and was the president of the CSP History Club while

she earned a degree in secondary education and social studies teaching license. She recently earned a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction and now holds an additional teaching license in reading. Ellyn works as a reading interventionist for middle and high school students in St. Paul.

Ellyn loves Thoroughbreds and has been riding off the track Thoroughbreds since middle school when she first fell in love with the breed. She continues to ride and take lessons as an adult, always learning and wanting to better herself. When she is not at the barn, Ellyn is an avid reader and reliable patron of her local library. Ellyn is also a religious supporter of Chelsea Football Club and follower of the English Premier League. She is a member of the Dons Trust making her a part owner of AFC Wimbledon, a professional football club based in London, England.

Talia Wagner is an instructor. She knew she wanted to work with horses ever since she was little. Talia graduated from Stephens College with a degree in equestrian science and a passion for teaching lessons. She has 12 years of



riding experience primarily in Hunter/Jumper but has also trained in Dressage, Western Pleasure, and Driving. Talia is currently pursuing Eventing. When she isn't working with horses, she is kayaking, fishing, and hanging out with her dog.

Holiday Party Cancellation

Sadly St. Croix Trail Blazers has decided to cancel the Holiday Party for this year. We love being able to have our families gather for this night to have an enjoyable evening together. However, everyone's

health is important and not knowing what the fall/winter months will bring, we want everyone to stay as healthy as possible. We plan to bring our Holiday Party back in December 2021.

Cold Weather Cancellation Reminder

As much as we hope the cold weather holds off for as long as possible, we wanted to put a reminder out ahead of time. When the temperature reaches 0° or below, for the safety of our riders, staff, and horses, our normal policy is that sessions will be cancelled. Cancellations will be posted on our Facebook page and telephone calls will also be made to inform those scheduled for sessions. We will make every effort to contact you. Discretion will be used to cancel sessions if the temperature is above 0° but the wind chill is below 0°.

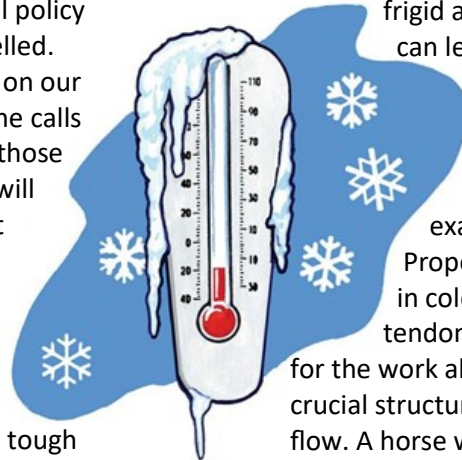
Not only is the cold weather tough on humans, it can also be tough on our horse partners. To minimize dust in the indoor arena, the footing gets dampened. The unfortunate part of that in the winter is the footing can freeze and can feel like concrete under a horse's hooves. Footing that gets clumped or solid can twist joints

and bruise feet. It's best for the footing to have "give" to it.

Cold air can also worsen respiratory issues. Some studies have shown that frigid air – in the single digits – can lead to minor inflammation of the lungs. A few of our horses have breathing issues and riding them in cold weather can exacerbate the situation.

Proper warm-up takes longer in cold weather to prepare tendons, ligaments, and cartilage for the work ahead. Warming up heats crucial structures by increasing the blood flow. A horse with arthritis will take longer to warm up also because they will feel stiffer in the cold air. Those of us with arthritis know that feeling!

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask.



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



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



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St. Croix Trail Blazers is tax-exempt under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Service.

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