

ST. CROIX TRAIL BLAZERS

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 22 | OCTOBER 2021

Special Olympics Equestrian Competition

In August, we were finally back in person at Northwest Saddle Club in North Branch for Special Olympics Minnesota Equestrian Competition. Teams were given the choice to either compete in person or virtually by recording events and submitting them. St. Croix Trail Blazers decided to compete in person. While there were COVID-19 precautions in place, everyone took it in stride and did a fabulous job. Special Olympics Minnesota had their work cut out for them and are definitely commended for putting together an event with major challenges of keeping everyone safe, distanced, and still competing together.



We had a team of 25 riders signed up along with nine horse partners, 13 staff, and four trucks/horse trailers. A lot of preparation and practice goes into participating in this event along with trying to cope with heat

indexes that were really high and having to follow COVID-19 safety precautions.

There were 60 participants from seven teams competing in person; 22

riders ended up competing from St. Croix Trail Blazers. Hard work and perseverance paid off. Riders displayed great sportsmanship and

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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.

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riding skills. The team came home with 18 gold medals, 13 silver medals, 10 bronze medals, six fourth place ribbons, six fifth place ribbons, three sixth place ribbons, one seventh place ribbon, and four participation ribbons.

This "small feat" wouldn't be possible without the support of our committed

staff, volunteers willing to haul our horse partners, and supportive families.

Congratulations on a job well done!



Rider in the Spotlight: Jennifer

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

Jennifer: I think about four years.

SCTB: What horse(s) do you ride?

Jennifer: I have ridden almost all of the horses but usually I ride Epic, Mister, and Rowdy.

SCTB: Do you have a favorite horse?



Jennifer: I love them all! But I really like riding Epic.

SCTB: What is your favorite thing about riding?

Jennifer: Getting to spend time

with the horses.

SCTB: Do you have any hobbies?

Jennifer: Baking, spending time with my two kittens, Mikko and Murphy.

SCTB: Do you play other sports?

Jennifer: I do karate. I have a yellow belt with a blue stripe.



Rider in the Spotlight: Matt

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

Matt: Since 2017.

SCTB: What horse(s) do you ride?

Matt: Willow, Epic, Rowdy, Mister, Diezel, Billy, Zip, Onyx. Those are the ones I remember the most.

SCTB: Do you have a favorite horse?

Matt: Willow.

SCTB: What is your favorite thing about riding?

Matt: It helps with balance and discipline of learning how to ride better, better horsemanship. It is a lot of fun learning new techniques and I enjoy meeting new people especially the staff and volunteers and riders.



SCTB: Do you have any hobbies?

Matt: I like music, especially Christian artists, I like reading to my mom and doing 1,000 piece puzzles, I like bowling, going to movies.

SCTB: Do you play other sports?

Matt: Through St. Paul Adaptive Rec. I do kickball, soccer, softball, bowling, floor hockey, and basketball.

SCTB: Anything else you want to add?

Matt: I really enjoy the staff and the good facility and the way that I am taught, and the volunteers, and the good horses.

Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association Program

In October, three instructors, Kellie, Kjerstin, and Ellyn, along with a volunteer, Amber, will venture to Massachusetts for Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA) training thanks to grants and donations specifically geared to this new program. What is EAGALA? It is the practice of incorporating horses into mental health treatment. It is a way to help you look within yourself and achieve positive changes in your life. The client interacts with the horse and processes that interaction with the equine specialist (who is Kellie or Ellyn) and a licensed mental health professional (who is Amber or Kjerstin) which encourages the client to think about their behavior and choose behaviors that create a wanted response from the horse. This helps the client quickly learn that by changing themselves they can change and improve their environment.

There is a long history of understanding that spending time with animals and pets can have a positive effect on our mood. Because horses are prey animals, they are acutely aware of environmental activity and people's emotional states more so than dogs and other animals typically used in assisted therapies. Research suggests that because horses can identify anxiety, stress, and fear in humans it helps individuals identify these emotions in themselves. Horses being large and

powerful have the potential of allowing people to overcome fear and develop confidence that can be implemented into life situations. They can also help put people at ease because they are neutral and non-judgmental and respond only to people's intent and behavior.

Horse-based therapy can provide numerous benefits as a result in a short time. Benefits can include improved self-esteem, communication skills, self-awareness, relaxation, empowerment, interpersonal relationships, self-control, focus and concentration, and happiness.

An EAGALA session is completed on the ground so there is no riding involved and is completely confidential. The equine specialist selects horses to be used in sessions and works with the mental health professional to develop activities, document horses' behaviors in the session, and maintain the safety of the client, horses, and team. The mental health professional is responsible for treatment planning, client documentation, and ensures ethical practice. The mental health professional builds on the equine specialist's horse observations to bring in the therapeutic and learning importance of the session.

Look for the new program in 2022!

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

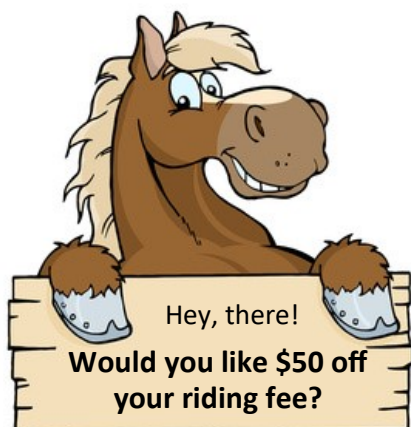
You can reach these people at their email addresses:

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



Email: karen@stcroixtrailblazers.org

Website: www.stcroixtrailblazers.org

Facebook: [St. Croix Trail Blazers](https://www.facebook.com/St.CroixTrailBlazers)

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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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