

# ST. CROIX TRAIL BLAZERS NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 25 | OCTOBER 2022

## Special Olympics Summer Sports Classic

On August 19th, 23 riders competed in-person at the Special Olympics Summer Sports Classic

Equestrian competition.

Riders competed in equitation where they are asked to walk, trot, or canter their horses, working trail which is a

series of working their horse through obstacles, and barrels where they take their horse through a cloverleaf pattern in the best time.

This year the competing group wasn't as large as in past years partially due to the option to compete by video again. There were five teams totaling 44 in-person athletes. Twenty-three of those athletes were St. Croix Trail Blazers' riders.

Athletes showed fantastic sportsmanship and showed their hard work throughout

the year paid off in skills such as hand placement, steering, keeping appropriate spacing from other horses, etc.



Riders came

home with 17 gold medals, 17 silver medals, 10 bronze medals, eight fourth-place ribbons, seven fifth-place ribbons, seven sixth-place ribbons, one seventh-place ribbon, and two participation ribbons. We are so proud of you!



A big THANK YOU to:

St. Croix Trail Blazers' staff and volunteers. Dave Grayden, Daniel Harjes, Chuck

*Continued on page 2*

### 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

- Special Olympics Summer Sports Classic ..... page 1
- New Footing ..... page 3
- Welcome New Instructors .. page 4
- Make-Up Reminder ..... page 4
- Benefits of Horse Play..... page 5

- Tigger Retires from Mousing Duties .....page 5
- Our Email Addresses .....page 6
- \$50 Off Your Riding Fee.....page 6
- Reminder.....page 6

Continued from Special Olympics Summer Sports Classic on page 1

Malmskog, and Bonnie Reyers for your time to haul our horse partners. Jeannie Heckel and Bonnie Reyers for the use of your trailers, and Kris Kelly and Kelly Monicatti at Special Olympics Minnesota for another successful competition.



Without these people, competition wouldn't be possible.

*Karen Harjes*



## New Footing

Many of you may have noticed the bright new sand in the outdoor arena. I'm sure you're also wondering why we aren't using it yet!

Our outdoor arena has been under construction since 2020. Initially, the arena let us know that the support posts weren't treated wood by falling over like dominos after one too many strong storms. Wood, labor, and supplies (on a nonprofit budget) were all hard to come by in 2020 and 2021, but with the help of an Eagle Scout Troop and lots of patience, we successfully managed to deconstruct and reconstruct the arena now. Our last step is replacing the base boards with treated wood which we are working on currently. Once these boards are installed, we can spread the sand. Unfortunately, this will likely be too late in the year to enjoy much outdoor riding time.

The sand in the outdoor arena has been dotted with small rocks for a few years now but has become increasingly rocky

in the last year. We tried many solutions (sifting, raking, dragging, picking) before consulting some local sand businesses. Due to the course uneven size and shape of the original sand, it was going to continue to blow away and sink into the base. The base of the arena is made of several rock layers. What looks to be rocks floating up was in fact sand sinking down. This isn't something we could correct without adding new footing.

I researched with quite a few footing companies and found an excellent solution in the form of frac sand: sand that comes from the St. Croix River basin. This sand doesn't clump, pack, sink, blow away, or drift. It drains well, and outside of its shocking color, it really is a "unicorn sand". This will be great for our horses' joints and muscles as well as staff and volunteers who are on their feet all day. We are looking forward to a beautiful, soft arena for our program next year!

Kellie Grayden



## Welcome New Instructors

You might have noticed a couple new faces in training around the barn. We welcome Mckenzie Jamison and Mara Klecker. Allie McMahon will be leaving in November to move to a new home and resume traveling for her employer. We'll miss Allie's caring nature and smiling face, and we wish her the best. Corri Schmidtke will be moving to teaching on Saturday instead of Friday.



**Mckenzie** has made horses a large part of her life for over 13 years. She started riding horses when she was eight years old and has used every moment since then

looking for opportunities to work with horses. Outside of the barn, Mckenzie enjoys outdoor adventures with her dog, Gonzo. After high school, she attended Ellsworth Community College to pursue degrees in Equine Management and Equine Science. The equine program at Ellsworth opened her eyes to a variety of ways to become involved in the equine industry. Mckenzie used her previous summers to work as a groom and veterinary assistant. Now, she is very excited to begin practicing the skills

gained during her schooling and to be a part of the St. Croix Trail Blazers community again this time as an instructor instead of a volunteer.



**Mara** grew up trail riding around her family's acreage in the Black Hills of South Dakota before moving to Sioux Falls, where she learned to jump and

dabbled in dressage. Before heading off to college to study journalism, Mara spent her high school years volunteering with a hippotherapy program and worked as a camp counselor for children with muscular dystrophy. Mara has also seen how therapeutic horses can be for her own family. Her mother has MS and her father is a Vietnam veteran and both credit horses for staying active and finding peace. Mara now works as an education reporter for the Minneapolis Star Tribune. She enjoys hiking, reading, and hanging out with her two dogs, Maisie and Kita. She also loves to travel and wants to ride horses in as many countries as she can. So far, she's ridden in Australia, Ecuador, Nepal, and Iceland.

---

## 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](mailto:kellie@stcroixtrailblazers.org).

Thanks!

## Benefits of Horse Play

Newsletter readers may have noticed a recent article in the Minneapolis Star Tribune touting the benefits of therapeutic horse therapy for senior citizens. As a senior living in a facility similar to the one featured in the story, it is clear how a horse friend could appease loneliness and depression. "If you have trouble walking and you get out of your wheelchair onto a 1,200 pound animal, and it goes where you want it to go, that is empowering," stated Barbara Bolin. She is the organizer of the program in Mason Neck, Virginia. "Some residents of continuing care facilities have "skin hunger" which



the stroking of animals can relieve," Barbara continues, "It's the absence of touch. If someone is separated from their family, they are not getting hugs." The isolation during the COVID pandemic came to my mind.

Pictures accompanying the article show program participants in a building similar to the venue of Trailblazers. Many ages, mentally and physically challenged, can benefit from hanging out with horses, The Tribune article presented another arm of horse therapy.

Sylvia Grubb

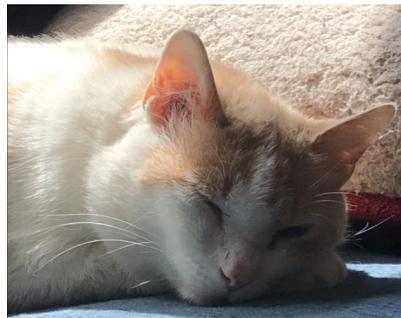


## Tigger Retires from Mousing Duties

Many of you have noticed Tigger hasn't been around the barn. St. Croix Trail Blazers decided it was time for him to retire from his mouse patrol duties.

When Tigger came to us, he was a house cat so his transition to the barn was quite hard. He soon learned his job of keeping the barn free of critters who weren't supposed to be there and still be a loving cat to many.

We quickly learned he's a very curious boy and landed in some bad situations with serious injuries. Many of his injuries have required frequent visits to the emergency veterinarian clinic. The last two were serious enough to make us wonder if



going back to being a house cat was better for him. The answer was yes. The last injury left him with a broken paw and an open wound. How this happened, we don't know.

So Tigger has come to live with me and is adjusting really well. He loves sitting on the window ledges or laying by the sliding door watching outside and laying in the sun. He's also made friends with the dogs, one in particular, Flynn. Tigger will grow old with lots of love and being spoiled.

Karen Harjes



## Our Email Addresses

You can reach these people at their email addresses:

Karen: [karen@stcroixtrailblazers.org](mailto:karen@stcroixtrailblazers.org)

Kellie: [kellie@stcroixtrailblazers.org](mailto: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](mailto:karen@stcroixtrailblazers.org)

Website: [www.stcroixtrailblazers.org](http://www.stcroixtrailblazers.org)

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

6659 Jasmine Court North, Stillwater, MN 55082

Copywriters: Sylvia Grubb and Karen Harjes  
Layout: Kristie Campeau-Perlock  
Send submissions to: [hsgrubb@gmail.com](mailto:hsgrubb@gmail.com)

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

## Board of Directors

- Karen Harjes, President/Executive Director
- Vacant, Vice President
- Karen Malmkog, Treasurer
- Johanna Martinson, Secretary
- Kellie Grayden, Program Director/Board Advisor
- Colette Morris, Legal Counsel/Board Advisor
- Spence Morley, Board Advisor

## Instructors

- Kellie Grayden, Program Director
- Kjerstin Berg, Instructor
- Elyn Thompson, Instructor
- Allison McMahan, Instructor
- Corrin Schmidtke, Instructor
- McKenzie Jamison, Instructor
- Mara Klecker, Instructor