

ARU Newsletter of Spring 2010 & Early Summer 2010

The best laid plans do not always coincide with events. Finally, after digging the truck and it's plow out of the thigh deep snow alongside three driveways this winter (successful only with the help of a truck equipped with a winch), and now after wiping the sweat from my brow from recent record heat, I've retired to my computer and the respite of air-conditioning, to make note of the events of the last few months. It was my intention to do a newsletter each season (quarterly), but somehow Mother Nature, a car accident, our first fund-raiser, and the early summer's heat took hold. I apologize for the delay.

Our second year in operation started with trying to cope with unprecedented cold and snow that hampered our ability to give lessons even in the covered arena. Cancellations and runny noses were the rule and with good reason. I'm sure I don't have to tell any of you how difficult this past winter was, especially for the parents of our young riders with special needs. I suppose there are a few die hard skiers and winter sports lovers who were overjoyed with the season, but our horses missed running in the fields and hated staying in so frequently. We do turn them out in the snow, and they are beautiful to watch, but this winter there was more than one occasion when after being turned out, their bellies barely cleared the snow's depths, romping across the fields was impossible, and they looked to the gate by the barn for relief and cover.

With the arrival of spring we cheered on every daffodil, and in spring-time, our spirits were revived. We welcomed the chance to clean up and make preparations for our first fund-raising event: "Cuatro de Mayo" with **Peggy Brown and Susan Harris** giving their demonstrations of the Visible Horse and Visible Rider. Rebecca and Art were busy getting invitations out and keeping track of those who responded affirmatively. Board members **Toni, Renee**, and I worked at garnering items for the silent auction. **Anne and our barn staff** spent numerous days spring cleaning horses, tack and facilities. **Jim Davis and John Rainey** gave hours and hours of their time landscaping, building/repairing fence, and enclosing a new room intended for volunteers where they could pour a cold drink and sign in without having to blow barn dust off the cup and volunteer-hours record book. They were also kept busy adding to the down-lighting we so badly needed in the arena and observation area. So many local businesses contributed that I cannot include them all here, but I hope you will see them listed on the website soon and give back by sending your business their way. Of particular note, were **George Thompson, of Georges Kitchens in Concordville and Frank Sill of Ogden Supply in Ogden**. Mr. Thompson donated some gently used kitchen cabinets and a sink that we stored in the observation room until we can utilize them to make that room more family friendly. Frank donated the use of more than 20 banquet tables on which the silent auction items were displayed and our taco buffet was offered to attendees. We quickly came to realize just how much effort goes into a fund-raiser held on site. When the big day came, we had to tip our hats to Mother Nature for her willingness to provide the most beautiful weather we could have asked for with 130 or so attendees waiting for a shuttle bus to transport them from the **Garnet Valley Middle School** to ARU. The day was glorious, sunny and warm. Juanito was the picture of a super tolerant, and well behaved Arabian gelding as he stood for over two hours in the arena, handled by **Karen Sobel (Red)**, while he was being painted for the evening's demonstration. Rebecca and several of our treasured barn helpers had scrubbed his white coat into a glistening palate early that morning. **Red** helped **Morgan and Colleen** braid his mane for the show. The **Rose Tree Pony Club members and leader Lisa Knox** assisted in the anatomical painting while listening to Susan Harris lecture early in the afternoon. Everyone pitched in and set up the decorations, display tables, and auction items and groomed the rest of the crew for our visitor's inspection. **Barb Broome**, Rebecca and old friends **Jessica and Ed Stasul** greeted attendees with numbered bidding bracelets and non-alcoholic Margaritas. **John Scibello** provided just the right Latin music to put everyone in a festive mood as they looked over the auction items making their way down the drive from the barn toward the arena. He skillfully projected the sound to delight our guests while not irritating our neighbors. As guests entered the arena, they were afforded four tier bleacher seating which had been graciously built for us by the

students and faculty of **Williamson Free School of Mechanical Trades** with materials discounted by **Oxford Feed and Lumber**. The **Concord Township secretaries and officials** were particularly kind in expeditiously processing our building and event permits recognizing the charitable nature of our mission. We thank each of you.

Junior Girl Scout Troop 51194 stenciled foam seat cushions to make the dinner and two hour **Anatomy in Motion** demonstration even more comfortable. I must also make mention of the generous donation of time and talent provided by the **Turks Head Juggling Club** who sent their founder, **Randy Lyons** to engage the crowd while waiting for the shuttle bus at the school, and again in between dinner and the demonstrations. Randy was joined by **Bill Peirce**, also a master juggler, who works independently. They were fabulous.....I'd be pleased to give you their phone numbers to call them, if you are having a party! **Moe's** catered a yummy Latin dinner and **Brewster's** donated ice cream for dessert. After that, **Rachel Sierk** used her French Horn and the racetrack "call to the post" to alert everyone to take their seats so safety could be assured as Juanito entered the ring.

Peggy and Susan are obvious expert clinicians and entertaining presenters. Their demonstrations thrilled our audience of seasoned equine enthusiasts alongside many who had never been up close and in the same space as a horse before.

We knew that the event would be costly and felt that if we "broke even" we would have done well in having prompted the marketing of ARU by word of mouth. In this early stage of our growth, we feel it is important that we find a way to have a large number of people actually visit, meet us, have fun, and see our facilities in person. Only time will tell if our thinking is on track. We have the first attempt behind us now and no doubt learned some valuable lessons in fund-raising. Some of the costs of this event will bring us returns for years to come. The bleachers are here for perpetuity and will make it easier for us to teach horsemanship to groups of individuals from various sources in the future. Everyone worked hard to make the "fiesta" a success and numerous accolades have been received about the event which we hope to make an annual affair.

Late spring and early summer have brought on Mother Nature's darker side once again. The record setting heat and humidity of late has made it difficult to attract new students. We are still looking to increase enrollment, but as it was in January, we can certainly understand reluctance on the part of families of those with special needs to initiate a long term outdoor exercise program, like Equine Assisted Activities, when weather conditions are this extreme.

We are sure that as the weather cools, and the economy improves, the numerous telephone inquiries we have received will lead to increased active participation by new students. Our services are valuable, our prices are competitive, and our staff and volunteers are dedicated, compassionate, well trained and highly motivated. We cherish each and every one of you and hope you will continue to ride out this recent damper Mother Nature has put on everyone's stamina.

It is because we love our horses, and love what we do, that we are pushed to keep our chin high knowing that life is made of struggles, as well as parties. Only by having faith in ourselves and our program will we be here to serve those who face an uphill battle in getting through the obstacles a disability can place on daily life. Continue to stand with us, or join our team.

Good luck to **Hillary** as she moves on to her undergraduate studies in Kentucky. We are *thrilled* to have **Karen (Red) Sobel** and her horse **Mitch** back with us. Karen has favored us with most of the photography we use in our advertising, and has trained our horses for many years. She will assume the roles of **Lead Trainer (equine)** and **Volunteer Educator** for ARU. Get ready kids.....she is working on breaking the hinny and asking Jack to remember how to pull a cart. She'll have you breaking down, cleaning, and putting bridles back together in no time. We cannot express how good it feels to have old friends like Red and Donna back working with us.

*The way to make it **FUN** is by working like a team.*

Thank you,
Marcy