

## **Newsletter of January 2010**

We are poised to embark on our second year of operation, welcoming a new decade in which we are committed to ARU continuing to grow and prosper.

The depths of this winter's blast has made it difficult to look ahead to the days of giving the horses a good scrubbing bath in the sunshine instead of breaking ice off the tops of their outdoor water buckets. Yet, we can be grateful for their continued good health and kind nature. Everyone seems to have grown a teddy bear coat for insulation and the lesson schedule has slacked off a bit to give the horses and a good number of 5 and 6 year old students time off to roll in the snow just for fun and/or avoid the single digit wind chills altogether.

This fall, our schedule had grown to thirteen lessons per week. The volunteers and instructors alike stepped up to the challenge and agreed to face the winter's cold to continue their selfless efforts at helping those with special needs enjoy getting exercise with their favorite horse partner. A few brave souls have continued to come for lessons and our compliment of volunteers and instructors should be commended for meeting the challenge.

We now have the time to look back at the things we have accomplished and make plans to carry on with renewed interest when the weather breaks in spring.

Most notable is the fact that we received our 501c3 approval from the IRS in October. This event while viewed as an affirmation of our intent is also a call for action. In late January we will ask our volunteers to sign up for committee assignments to work on program development. We need a group to look into grant-writing opportunities for funding to assist in our growth.

There needs to be an event planning committee to design our own fund-raiser or two as well. This is the time to actively recruit and train more volunteers and review emergency procedures with everyone. I hope a committee will take on the responsibility of going over the NARHA checklist to assure us of our readiness for NARHA accreditation now that we have completed the requisite one year of operation. We need to find a dedicated group of individuals to explore and staff a NARHA Horses for Heroes component at ARU. This will involve not only the riding lesson program itself but finding strong adult volunteers who are physically able to assist adult riders. As committed and caring as our teenage girls are, they cannot fulfill the need for safe sidewalkers to assist grown men in the saddle. There are many adults who are anxious for a way to pay back those who have served our country and need our help in their transition back to civilian life. Our laid back atmosphere and quiet setting is perfect for assisting in that task. Let's work together on putting the things we need in place to get this going!

So many of you have gone out of your way in the cold to see that we could continue to give lessons and work on things that needed repair and revision. We cannot thank you enough. 2009 presented all of us with many questions to be answered, policies to be reviewed, tasks to be completed, and challenges to be met. It has been a year of learning and while difficult at times, we have benefitted from the experience. This is what start-up is all about. The thing that has seen us through and will continue to do so is the knowledge that the goals we are working toward are attainable. These efforts are meaningful, deeply appreciated, and moving us forward one step at a time.