

Making Strides

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*A Word from Betty Gray,
Executive Director*

Show Time!

Special Olympics Florida
Equestrian Games

The Special Olympics County Equestrian Games, hosted at **Stirrups 'n Strides** in January, was an exciting event for our 25 participating riders! We were once again honored to hold it at our facility. Many family members and spectators attended in spite of a very chilly day! This event is the first in a series of three Special Olympics equestrian competitions where riders can build upon their

successes. The Stirrups 'n Strides volunteer team and staff, along with the Special Olympics team, did a great job organizing and facilitating the event.



This year the Special Olympics Area Equestrian Games were held at the **UF/IFAS Horse Teaching Unit** in Gainesville in February. We appreciate the use of this wonderful facility and had a big turnout for the day. Sixty-five athletes participated from our Area and joined in for

a great show competition!

The outcomes paved the way for the Special Olympics State Equestrian Games held at the **Grand Oaks**, Weirsdale. Stirrups 'n Strides had 16 qualifying riders compete. Our riders competed in 32 classes and took an amazing 30 medals bringing home 17 Gold medals!



We so appreciate our partnership with **Florida Special Olympics**. Special thanks to John Robles, county director, for all the work you do and your continued support!

Citrus Cup at Canterbury Showplace

At the Citrus Cup 2018 in Newberry on April 6-7, we brought exceptional riders aiming to qualify for the UPHA Exceptional Challenge Cup Finals held at the American Royal Show in Kansas City each year, and qualify they did! Our riders performed well, 4 in supported and 3 independent. The UPHA show, held in November, provides our riders the venue to showcase their accomplishments on a national level.



Region 5 Exceptional Challenge Cup Show at Grand Oaks

The 2018 Region 5 Challenge Show was held at the beautiful **Grand Oaks Resort** in Weirsdale, Florida on Saturday, April 14th, 2018. Rider participation totaled 78 riders from six different programs which made the competition and the day a wonderful success! Grand Oaks has supported this show for over 20 years by donating the use of their facility. We are extremely thankful for this support along with **The Friendship Masonic Lodge** for providing lunch, **Cowboys for Christ Soncoast Chapter** who sponsored breakfast and **Markel Insurance** who sponsored rider lunches.

We are so very proud of our riders and the effort they put out to participate in these shows. They work hard to better their horsemanship skills and abilities and to overcome personal challenges in order to take part. Our volunteers, rider families, and community supporters make it all possible. We encourage you to come to these events to cheer on our riders. It is a thrill for them to see (and feel) the support of friends, family and our community.

Thank you all for pulling together and being the "Village" that makes it all happen. *Together, We Are Making a Difference!*

Betty Gray, Executive Director

How Can You Help?

Sponsor a Horse

Horse sponsorships help to support the expense for the care of our therapy horses. We thankfully provide recognition for all of our horse sponsors. Sponsorships can be made in a business name, a family name, or even in memory or honor of a loved one. Pledges can be made annually, quarterly, semi-annually or monthly. Joint sponsorships are also a way to share in the good feeling of helping to keep these wonderful therapy horses happy and healthy! Expenses for our horses run about \$2,000.00 per year per horse.



Learn more about our horse sponsorship program: [Sponsor A Horse](http://StirrupsnStrides.com) at StirrupsnStrides.com

Speaking of Horses!

Goings and Comings

We bid a fond "Happy Trails" to both Lazer and Fritz as they retire from the program to very happy homes. Fritz is now enjoying his home with Ken and Anne Blue & family, both volunteers at Stirrups 'n Strides. Lazer has now retired to her new "happy place" with Kevin and Elaine McMinn, also volunteers and supporters of Stirrups 'n Strides.



Joining the Stirrups 'n Strides herd, we welcome Kirby (left), a Quarter Horse gelding pony, and Design (right), an Arabian/Saddlebred gelding donated to Stirrups 'n Strides. Our therapeutic riding horses are evaluated and conditioned for a two month period to be certain they are a good fit for our programs. We also want to be sure they are happily adjusting to their new home and lifestyle. Both of our new additions are fitting in well and quickly becoming popular with our riders and volunteers.

Volunteer Updates

Leadership

Our new mentoring program is a great addition to our volunteer program and is proving effective for "showing the ropes" to new volunteers coming in. This ensures that we are providing comprehensive, individualized training with ongoing support for new volunteers. Additionally, we want to provide a warm and welcoming experience as they integrate into our volunteer "family". Thank you to Anita Gossett for facilitating this program! A special thanks to the volunteers who stepped up to become mentors: Pat Barreira, Anne Blue, Ed Clemmons, Les Fluegge, Pat Lepak, Sandi Kidwell, Amy Toman, Scott Ambrose, Destiney Carreiro, Abby Zavaski, Fran Christman, Ken Blue, Mary Ann Bishop, Mark Simpson.

Mentors and volunteers are also encouraged to bring a friend out to Stirrups 'n Strides who may be interested in volunteering. Shadowing is a great way to get a firsthand view of what volunteers do and how much you make a difference. We are currently in need of volunteers for our Stirrups 'n Stripes Veterans program on Fridays. Know someone who might be interested? For more information, contact Gail McDaniel: 941-809-3908.

Volunteer Celebration

Together, we're making a difference!

Stirrups 'n Strides Volunteers have a vital role in making a difference in the lives of others. We can't thank you enough for all you do! Our annual celebration was a great time and we appreciate all who attended. Special thanks goes out to the **volunteer event planning committee, Sparr United Methodist Church and MoJo Elite Catering.**

Thank you,
Stirrups 'n Strides *Volunteers!*



Together,
we're making a difference!

Professional Association for Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) Certifications

Stepping Up ...

Kudos to volunteers Destiny Carrero and Pat Barreira who are pursuing PATH credentials as Certified Riding Instructors! Certification offers rewarding opportunities for personal and program growth. If you have an interest in becoming an instructor, please speak with Betty Gray, 352-427-3569.

Striding Into the Future Project Update

Making Progress



Although Hurricane Irma damages were quite a set-back for the covered arena project and the farm, we are back on track thanks to all of you who pitched in! The new stalls are built and **Wells Fargo Managers, UF student clubs; CLAS Ambassadors, and Equestrian Team** have been a terrific help with getting them painted! **Phoenix House** volunteers along with **Wayne Gray** have the footers in place and ground leveled for the Community Room! The viewing deck concrete is also poured.

A heartfelt “thank you” goes out to **Sparr Building & Farm Supply** who donated proceeds from their Purina Feed Sales, “A Home for Every Horse” fundraiser that will be used toward building the Community Room. We are so thankful for all of the support Sparr provides to Stirrups ‘n Strides!



We are currently seeking additional funding and assistance for the final phase of construction which includes building the: community room, tack room, feed room and bathrooms. If you have services, materials or time you can donate in this area and would like to contribute to this exciting venture, please contact Betty Gray at 352-427-3569.

Is your group looking for a community service project? Come on out to the farm! Contact Gail McDaniel, Program Manager at 941-809-3908 for arrangements.

From the Board

We are excited to introduce the following new board members:

Ange Banda, Wells Fargo
Chris Eakes, Dean and Dean, LLP, Ocala
Sara Rummel, Dean and Dean, LLP, Ocala
Mary Luster, Royal Shell Real Estate at Golden Ocala

Jim and Laney McGivern have recently retired from our board after providing many years of service. Our deepest gratitude goes out to both of you for all of your contributions and hard work in shaping Stirrups ‘n Strides over the years. We look forward to Laney continuing to volunteer as one of our PATH certified riding instructors who also works with our carriage driving program!

Dear Donors, We Thank You!

We depend on the generosity and goodness of heart of the general community to make **donations** of time, money, goods and services in order to sustain and grow Stirrups ‘n Strides therapeutic riding programs.

By contributing, you bring ‘individuals with challenges’ closer to their personal goals. You enable them with an experience that can truly change their world. You also enable the Stirrups ‘n Strides team to continue to provide the facility and offer an environment where amazing accomplishments happen through equine assisted programs.

It is heartwarming to look back at the donations of time, money and services that have allowed us to sustain and grow. It is also heartwarming to witness the effects those donations have for those that come to Stirrups ‘n Strides seeking physical, mental or emotional healing. Our therapeutic riding classes continue to thrive for those with physical challenges along with our programs for those recovering from substance abuse and emotional or mental health challenges. We truly appreciate your continued support. Thank you.

Upcoming Dates of Interest

- Last day of Spring Riding - May 26
- End of the Year Party – May 26 after classes
- Six Week Summer riding program – June TBD
- Summers End Show- September 7-9
- Volunteer Orientation – September 15
- Fall Riding starts – September 25 or October 2: TBD
- PATH National Conference – Orlando, FL, October 25-27
- UPHA Exceptional Challenge Cup – November 5-10
- Jammin’ at Jumbolair Extravaganza – December 1