



Friends For Tomorrow News

Fall 2010

Special Olympics Massachusetts Equestrian Event 2010

By Allie Dingman

On a crisp weekend in October, the Friends For Tomorrow (FFT) students again met up at Windrush and Ironstone Farms to compete in the 2010 Special Olympics Massachusetts (SOMA) Fall Equestrian Tournament. Fifteen students, five of whom were first-timers, rode at this year's tournament against competitors from all across the state. Eight FFT students competed at the walk, four in the combined walk/trot, and three students rode independently, free of a leader and side

walkers. Each rider competed in the Trail class, steering the horse through, over and around an obstacle course, and an Equitation class where riders were judged on their riding position and communication with the horse. There was also an optional Dressage class, in which Jess Margolis chose to compete, making it the third event for her at this year's tournament. Adding to the challenge of navigating the course, the athletes rode horses that they have never ridden before, in an unfamiliar arena, in front of a large audience, at times made up of more than 100 spectators. Competing in SOMA is a chance for riders to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, show off skills and create new friendships. With smiles from ear to ear, the FFT Olympic Team brought home 31 ribbons and 15 medals!



We are proud that our athletes won all these awards, but what proves these students are Olympians is the exceptional hard work required to prepare for this event and the determined attitudes and focus that our students display while under the scrutiny of the judges. "As a coach, it is wonderful to see the months of practice all come together. This competition is a significant challenge for them in many ways; an unfamiliar setting, unfamiliar horses, and the pressure of being judged. I am so proud that they all rose to meet the challenge," said Lucy Cornish, Program Director and Head Instructor.

SOMA also provides an opportunity for parents to celebrate their children's level of independence and mastery in something that is meaningful to the family. Our riders work hard all year and love to show off their skills in front of their families and friends. In the words of

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Our Mission is to enhance the lives of children and young adults facing extraordinary mental and physical challenges through the therapeutic benefits of horseback riding.

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The Outside of a Horse is Good for the Inside of a Child



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Dear Friends,



Cool weather arrives, but cannot begin to suffuse the warm memories we all experience at Friends For Tomorrow. The past months have been infused with enthusiasm, accomplishments and celebration. Indeed, we are inspired to continually look towards a bright future, permanent and welcoming for the years to come.

This season has had its full share of wonderful moments; parents have shared stories of poignant accomplishments – a child sitting quietly, maintaining eye contact, letting go of pain and frustration. Our horses provide the grounding companionship many young riders need to share their fears, their secrets, their triumphs. The FFT program has continued to grow in depth and commitment to our students, and the relationships we share with our students and their families.

Our students grow constantly, as do our volunteers. Reflected in both, we see the self-reliance that comes with the passing of time, the confidence that comes with mastering a task. This fall, I was awarded the privilege of attending the FEI Alltech World Equestrian Games to continue my education and share the thrill of the ultimate competition. Why has this experience been so important to my growth, as an equestrian and as the ED of FFT? To fully explain, we would need to sit together over a cup of tea, observing our students throughout the afternoon, feeling the great excitement that, in partnership, we make possible for our riders.

The parallels we ride are one and the same—world class athletes are so similar to our own athletes at FFT. We are only able to provide this experience because your generous support allows us to do so, at a very personal and individualized level. Each athlete I observed at

the World Equestrian Games benefitted from the same experiences we are able to offer our riders:

Individual and specialized coaching specific to every athlete. A mount suited to best partner with each rider. Support through the long days of training, trial and of triumph. Exposure to different levels of competition and changing venues. Family and a support team who have dedicated themselves to the success of every athlete, breathlessly watching from the sidelines and joyfully bursting with indescribable pride and relief as an event concludes.

Celebration of the very best in each individual's accomplishments. Of whom do I speak? Our riders – who experience all I witnessed at the World Class level of competition.

Your support, upon which we so depend, has been the key to allowing our riders to experience the same range of challenge and emotion at Friends For Tomorrow. Our own competition at

Massachusetts Special Olympics, and the time spent here on the farm, embody the events the internationally ranked riders shared after every ride broadcast on the Jumbotron screens in Kentucky. Smiles and tears of anticipation, joy and celebration are evident everywhere – the energy is electric and penetrating, from the most lyrical of moments to those of sublime harmony.

Because of your commitment to our riders, every individual involved with FFT has the opportunity to share in the same range of emotion and accomplishment as our world's top riders – a gift beyond measure and with memories to last a lifetime. Thank you for your continued and generous support.

In heartfelt celebration and honor,

Diane

The FFT program has continued to grow in depth and commitment to our students, and the relationships we share with our students and their families.

Special Olympics

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Damon, "Riding a new horse is hard, but it is fun to go fast in the classes. I like the challenge of aiming for first place and getting ribbons." Every year the Special Olympics Tournament offers our students a chance to succeed and feel celebrated - what a wonderful gift for our riders.

This year, SOMA's equestrian competition was dedicated to the memory of Marjorie Kittredge (1924-2010), who founded Windrush Farm Therapeutic Riding Center, as well as created the national organization NARHA (North American Riding for the Handicapped Association), which sets the standards and guidelines for therapeutic riding centers worldwide. Marge was considered an international pioneer in the field of therapeutic riding, and she will be greatly missed.

We want to especially thank Barbara DeNitto of Special Olympics, the Windrush and Ironstone Farms and staff, and all the people who make Special Olympics possible. A big thank you to all of the FFT volunteers who gave up their weekend to support our riders. Your presence and cheering made each of our students feel supported and celebrated!

In the words of the Special Olympics Organization: "Special Olympics would not exist today — and could not have been created — without the time, energy, commitment and enthusiasm of thousands of individuals who choose to take a little time from busy schedules to make the world a better place." Thank you to the volunteers, riders and families for helping to create a wonderful event for us all!

The Friends For Tomorrow Olympic Team:
Jacob, Neil, Christian, Dylan, Damon, Jessica, Hannah, Livvy, Julia, Franny, Lauren, Madison, Kristen, Nikita & Susannah



Why Horses?

By Allie Dingman

In a recent conversation with a friend, I was asked: "Wouldn't it be cheaper to use riding-simulator machines to give the children the physical benefits of riding, without the cost of keeping horses?" My friend was right, it would be cheaper, but no machine can give riders the same experience that a horse can. Horses affect people in so many little and big ways, and it is important to remember these little details. I want to take this opportunity to share with you 10 reasons why we choose to use horses in our work.

1. Horses are big and powerful and can seem quite intimidating. Because of this, interacting with a horse immediately challenges issues of fear and confidence in people. And, as a person becomes more comfortable and knowledgeable with horses, the confidence grows. Imagine being a small child, always being told what to do and having little freedom, being able to control an enormous animal—it can be a huge boost to self-esteem. This is a huge emotional block to overcome and can be quite powerful for many people.

2. Horses give their riders freedom of movement. Throughout history horses have captivated us with their perfect combination of gentleness and power. Their power is seen through their speed and agility. Horses are one of very few species that will lend their power and speed to humans. This gift of movement may seem basic, but for someone in a wheelchair, this is monumental. A horse can take you through the woods, over things, and at speeds that humans cannot do on their own.

3. Horses are also incredibly responsive to human emotion and action and therefore can help riders be self-reflective. Horses will immediately sense and respond to a person's emotions and behaviors, frequently acting as a mirror to that behavior. For example, a frustrated rider can quickly cause his/her horse to become equally frustrated. This connection forces riders to recognize their emotions and notice the effects their behaviors have on others. Working with horses creates opportunities for empathy, compromise, teamwork, and care for others.

4. Horses have a great way of teaching riders about teamwork. If the rider tries to do all of the work, the horse will not cooperate, nor will it allow its rider to do no work. A rider cannot "boss" a 1,000 lb horse around, but instead must "ask" for his cooperation. Every horse knows this and expects to be treated with respect and cooperation. To be successful with a horse, the rider must put in the time, focus, and energy, which in turn is met by the horse's time, focus,

and energy. When a horse and rider can work as a team, anything is possible.

5. Working with horses requires mutual trust. Horses rely on the people around them to care for them and keep them safe. A horse must trust that its rider will not lead the horse wrong. In the reverse, it takes a lot of trust to climb up on the back of a large and powerful animal. And, like human relationships, trust is hard to gain and easy to lose. Often people who struggle with trusting people find it much easier to develop a deep and meaningful relationship with the horse(s) they are working with. This relationship, like any other, must be maintained on a foundation of respect, trust, and patience, giving the riders practice for forming and maintaining healthy relationships with people in the future.

This gift of movement may seem basic, but for someone in a wheelchair, this is monumental.

6. Horses are often the best teachers of cause and effect, because they do not suffer from human fallibility. Horses are always honest and cannot give false responses, thus forcing people to become accountable for their actions. This honesty creates a true cause and effect situation, which can be very helpful to people learning how to be responsible and honest. By working with horses, children learn to be accountable for their actions and feelings and the way these affect others.

7. Horses can also help people build communication skills. As in a human relationship, successful riding and horse training require positive, healthy communication, both verbal and non-verbal. Watching a group of horses interact, you will see that they use body position, ears, eyes, sounds, and intention to communicate with one another. Working with a creature that does not speak the human language can be a very frustrating task. As people spend more time around horses they learn that communication with the horse is two-sided, just as with people, and requires them to pay attention to what their equine partner is saying.

8. One of the best things about horses is their lack of judgment. No horse will care how you dress, how you walk, or how you talk. Horses don't see what is on the outside, but instead how a person is on the inside.

9. Horses create a hierarchy of power in every group and will look to the dominant being for direction. Horses will not

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OktoberFFesT at Frank's

By Janice Gilman

The cool weather and vibrant color of the leaves welcomes the time of year for our annual benefit for the students of Friends For Tomorrow, OktoberFFesT. On October 19th, the family of Frank's Steak House in Cambridge, Carol Ravanis Rourke and the Ravanis Family, once again graciously hosted more than 60 friends, families and supporters at Boston's oldest steak house, which provided a delicious buffet and appetizers. The food was accompanied by tastings of fine white and red wines provided by Berman Wine and Spirits of Lexington, donated by George and Roberta Berry. Micro-brewed beers including Winter Ale and Pumpkin Ale were also served and donated by Mercury and Cambridge Brewing Companies respectively. We are thrilled to share with all of you that the benefit raised \$3,500 for the program!



Spring Pony Partners Program



Beginning on Fridays, from March 12 – May 20, our spring empowerment group for girls (Pony Partners) between the ages of 8 – 11 years old will be held. This 10-week program is appropriate for able-bodied girls who have a love of animals and who are struggling socially, personally and/or academically as they approach the middle school years. They will learn about the teamwork, behaviors of and caring for a horse and receive introductory horseback riding lessons.

For more information about this program, visit our website at <http://www.friendsfortomorrow.org/program.html>. To join this upcoming session, contact our Program Director Lucy Cornish at chrisliefarm@comcast.net.

www.friendsfortomorrow.org

A Parent's Perspective

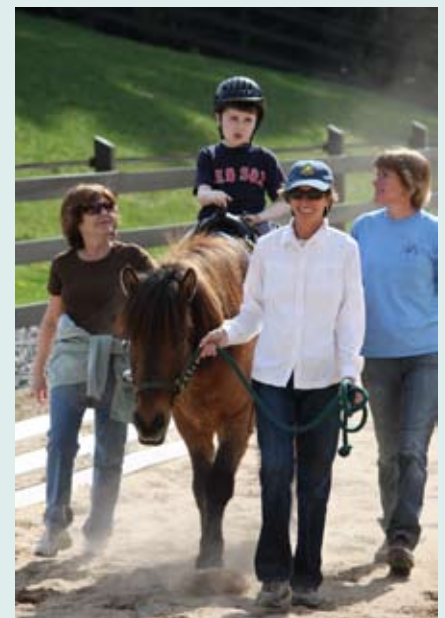


Our parent guest speaker this year was Maura Buckley.

Neil is our beautiful, nine year old son who has mitochondrial disease and autism spectrum disorder. Neil has been so fortunate to be riding at Friends for Tomorrow for over two years. Neil is a non-verbal child who has been experiencing chronic pain from Crohns' disease and other GI problems, as well as fatigue and muscle pain. Given Neil has many challenging behaviors as well as being unpredictable, is loud and sometimes overwhelmed by sensory issues – we were honestly not sure if riding would be a long-term therapy for him. Neil's adjustment to riding was slow but steady and he continues to surprise us with his compliance and independence. His motivation to ride seems to prevail over his difficult behaviors! (at least most days...)

Neil loves his instructor, Lucy, his volunteers at Friends for Tomorrow and his wonderful horse, Dayton. When he arrives at the stable to ride, he leaves his frustration and pain behind. He doesn't feel demands, and he isn't confused; he just enjoys the riding and his connection to Dayton. While he is riding, he is learning to communicate with his horse and his instructors in such a natural and fun way. The staff at Friends for Tomorrow support Neil's communication by providing him with a communication device (with voice output) that allows him to have some choice and control during his ride. Neil is strengthening his core and controlling his impulses. He is learning and developing skills through consistency and expert support.

As Neil's parents, we cherish the fact that he can take part in something that may have seemed, given Neil's limitations, beyond his capabilities. We are so grateful for the devotion and patience of the staff, for the amazing horses and for the remarkable mission of Friends for Tomorrow.



Volunteer Spotlight – Hannah Ellerkamp

“I have been volunteering with FFT for three years and my involvement has grown tremendously due to my increased interest in the program and the children. It is a privilege to work with these students as they overcome their challenges and to witness their successes and smiles. The joys of working with the students continue to inspire and motivate me to work towards a future where I can work in similar situations.

Throughout my semester internship at FFT, it was a pleasure to work with students on each day during the week. Now that I am also juggling work, I have had to cut back to one day a week and it has been heartbreaking not to see the kids every day.

Throughout the past three years I have witnessed many successes, small and large: from experiencing a student’s first fearful ride to watching that same student swell with pride when receiving a Special Olympics Equestrian medal. I

love knowing that I have had a small part in making these milestones happen.

My experiences here have influenced me to begin the process of becoming NARHA certified myself, in the hopes that some day I will be able to work at a place such as FFT.”

Hannah has been an integral part of the FFT family for the past couple of years, this past spring completing her Senior Internship (from Groton-Dunstable Regional High School) at FFT. She committed to lessons every day during the Spring, getting to know all of the students and horses well. Hannah’s creativity and enthusiasm have brought a special sparkle to the program, in particular the annual horse show for which she tie-dyed over 40 T-shirts for the riders and volunteers to wear. She has a great ability to make connections with the



students in a playful and productive manner.

She goes above and beyond the expectations for volunteers, giving up her time on the weekends to help prepare theme weeks, sitting all day cheering on students at SOMA, and putting in extra hours in preparation for the fundraisers.

Hannah is currently pursuing her State Riding Instructor’s License and plans on working on a NARHA certification in the spring. Hannah will someday make a fabulous instructor and we are proud to be a part of her start.

Our Volunteers

Friends For Tomorrow couldn’t exist without the dedication of our volunteers. Thank you to all who give their time to support our riders, horses, and program.

Kris Auger
and the Auger family
Carol Bailey
Henry Barrera
Marie Louise Barrett
Sarah Bennett
Joanne Borstell
May Chou
Eliza Clarke
Eve Corning
Chrissy Cornish
Anne DeFilippo
Alex Denton
Sonam Diwali
Ashleigh Dunworth
Hannah Ellerkamp
Nina Farrell
Taylor Faulkner
Sara Feld
Fritz Ferbert

Emmy Ferbert
Kelli Gerrior
Sam Gifford
Jamie Goldberg
Jordan Hansen
Nicole Haug
Elizabeth Hayes
Gabe Jackson
Sasja Jackson
Bradlee Jackson
Paige Kane
Terri Karpel
Christine Learned
Liz Learned
Bambi Lerner
Molly Lobel
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Mia Pennels
Conor Rault
Carol Ravanis Rourke
Peter Richardson
Amanda Sargent
Erica Skye Schaaf
Carolyn Sullivan
Helen Syski
Paulo Torres
Caroline Wass
Jeannie Watson
Dianne Wesselhoeft
Anne Wilson
Jessica Wilson
Abigail Young

Our Wish List

- Color printer/scanner and a year’s supply of ink
- Bitless bridles for our horses Romeo, Dayton and Thor
- Second blankets for Romeo and Jigsaw to keep them warm and dry during the winter months
- Projection screen to help our staff and board meetings be their most productive and accessible, also to be used for fundraising and awareness presentations
- Unique and exciting items for our Kentucky Derby auction (vacation homes, sporting events, electronics, nights out on the town)

Eat at Main Street Café and Give to FFT

When you eat at the Main Street Café in Concord Center, let them know you'd like your meal reward applied to Friends For Tomorrow (requests must be made at the time of ordering). They will track the rewards requested and send a cash donation to FFT.

Halloween Week October 25 – 29

Giggles and spooky fun are how we celebrate this week of goblins and disguises. It's a fun week for everyone to put his or her imagination and creativity to work and dress up for this fall celebration – even the dogs have costumes! Students will brave a wide variety of Halloween themed activities and challenges. See photos from this year's festivities on the back cover.

Sibling Day Sunday, November 14th

We devote this special day to recognizing the siblings who patiently spend time waiting at the barn while their brothers and/or sisters enjoy their lesson. Finally, it's their turn to ride! They will participate in a theme week as their siblings do. We'll also enjoy games, art projects, face painting and light refreshments during the afternoon.

SAVE THE DATE!

May 7, 2011



Third Annual Benefit and Auction
Join us for the Kentucky Derby at
the Concord Country Club!

www.friendsfortomorrow.org

Volunteer Recognition – Anne DeFilippo

Our volunteers provide the primary energy upon which our program exists, and because of this great impact towards our success, we have chosen to recognize a volunteer for his or her outstanding contributions of time and support. The person chosen for this honor displays a weekly commitment to the program, brings a positive attitude, shows compassion for the needs of our students and horses, takes initiative in learning about how to best support our students, and fosters the growth and success of their fellow volunteers.

This year, we recognize Anne DeFilippo as the first recipient of the "Friends For Today and Tomorrow Volunteer Award." Anne has been volunteering at Friends For Tomorrow for the past four years. She has given over 700 hours of her time and consistently assists in all aspects of our fundraising and program initiatives.

Congratulations, Anne, and thank you for all that you do for all of us at Friends For Tomorrow!



Horses

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respond to weak or ambiguous commands—they look for clear leadership. The higher a horse is in the herd pecking order, the more responsibility for the other horses it has and the more stress it carries—horses look for someone stronger and more dominant who can take care of them. To become a good partner to your horse, you must learn to communicate clearly and with purpose, have conviction of thought, be consistent, have little tolerance for disrespect, and set clear boundaries.

10. There is just something special about a horse. For reasons that we may never know, the horse holds a special captivation and power that none of us ever outgrow. Horses have been seen as having natural healing powers throughout history and were often described as "magical." Today we use them in many different ways, but they still make a large impact on the lives they cross.

Horses have many unique and wonderful attributes that make them great teachers to all humans. Working with horses encourages one to look inside oneself and focus on the basic elements of trust, teamwork, communication, and caring. These lessons are the basis of every relationship and interaction. This is what makes horses so special and invaluable to the work we do here at FFT.

Working with horses encourages one to look inside oneself and focus on the basic elements of trust, teamwork, communication and caring.

Friends for Tomorrow, Inc.



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Bringing Children & Horses Together

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Moments from our annual Halloween Celebration 2010



Photographs by Janice Gilman

To receive future newsletters and announcements electronically, please send your email address to jgilman.fft@gmail.com.