

February 2005

HORSEMEN'S *YANKEE* PEDLAR

CITY TO SADDLE Brings Riding to All Walks of Life

Many children dream about attending a summer camp and most of them have the opportunity to do so at one point in their childhood. Others are not so fortunate. Regular camps are not inexpensive, and those that include a riding program are often out of the question for families on a tight budget.

City to Saddle, a nonprofit organization formally organized in November 2004 as a 501(c)(3), is working to make that dream a reality for children.

The idea began on a plane ride to look at a horse. Two good friends, a riding instructor and her student, discussed their desire to bring disadvantaged children into riding programs. In 2003 they tested this idea out with eight children from Bibleways Christian Center in Dorchester, Mass. City to Saddle founders Barbara Zenker and Kim Summers worked with Dana Hall School Riding Center, where Kim was an instructor and Director of the Summer Camp, to bring these children into the program. Kim recalls, "It was a dream come true—the children were saying it was like Christmas every day."

Last year City to Saddle brought together a group of children from Framingham, Mass., to attend a vaulting program at Dunvegan Farm in Wrentham, Mass., which again was a huge success.

Barbara explained, "We are dedicated to making sure disadvantaged children have access to a riding program. Our goal is not to focus on just Boston but to locate children across Massachusetts and beyond within an hour's drive of a participating barn." Kim adds, "We hope this year to jump from two host facilities (Dana Hall and Dunvegan Farm) to at least five. I am busy meeting with barn owners now hoping to get them involved and also looking forward to including City to Saddle riders at ~~our~~ facility as the director of the lesson program at Apple Knoll Farm

in Millis, Mass."

That is the key to their success. City to Saddle is the middleman between barn owners who run riding programs and community groups looking for suitable activities for their children. The barn owners are busy, but do want to give back; they are happy to have this opportunity to help. All of the children involved thus far have been between the ages of 7-13 and

have had no prior riding experience. All of them have walked away with knowledge of horses and riding in one form or another by the end of the program. More importantly, these children have experienced the benefits of confidence, patience, teamwork, physical activity, balance, strength, and flexibility which will help them in every part of their daily lives.

As City to Saddle moves into the new year they will begin extensive awareness campaigns to inform the equine community as well as the local community of the program. Fundraising is a necessity with an organization such as theirs, and they welcome donations of all kinds. In addition to monetary donations, they need support in the form of grant writing, development and fundraising activities, clothing (children's riding gear), transportation, and printing, and they welcome collaboration with interested equestrian lesson barns and community-based youth organizations. Kim says, "We know the riding community has the means and desires to provide these children with access to horses. They know firsthand what riding has done for their own children and they want to be a part of this special effort."

For more information about City to Saddle, or to make your tax-deductible charitable donation, contact City to Saddle, c/o Barbara Zenker, P.O. Box 456, Weston, MA 02493, call 781-891-5920 or email citytosaddle@aol.com.

Information provided by Barbara Zenker and Kim Summers of City to Saddle. 

