

SEBASTIAN RIDING ASSOCIATES



Winter/Spring2024

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Welcome to the Greatest Show on Earth, the All Student Horse Show

By Jenny Dec

SRA hosted the 'Greatest Horse Show on Earth' last fall! The theme for our all student horse show this year was circus and everyone really got into the spirit. It was a chance for each student at SRA to showcase their hard earned riding skills for friends and family under the big top! (Or arena roof...).

The Students: we had a total of 65 students riding in the show this year. Students participated in either an obstacle trail course or a dressage test. The judge was looking for partnership; was the team working together to stay on course or pattern; were they planning ahead to the next obstacle or maneuver. The judge is also looking for little things too, like are they smiling and having fun (or is that a big thing?) or are their feet positioned correctly in the stirrups (also a big thing?).

The Volunteers: It's a long day for our dedicated volunteers and they love it! They work behind the scenes to decorate the horses and have everyone in place when and where they are needed. The volunteers actually start setting the stage for the show months before the students start practicing.

The Horses: Despite the poor weather, the horses were decked out in feathers, jewels and sequins! They danced and pranced around the rings in true circus fashion (okay, maybe they were just walking and trotting). Vinnie even put on his own circus act with the assistance of his personal artiste Emma! For his big finale he jumped through a flaming hoop of fire!

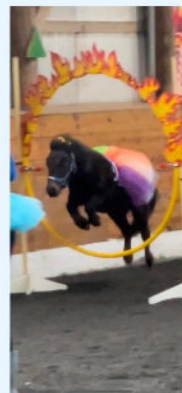
The Judge: Can you imagine having to decide placings for all of our stellar riders? I am glad I don't have too! Thank you to Ali Burdick, our new (at the time) Program Manager!

The Weather: The rain may have limited extra outdoor activities but it did not dampen spirits! The show must go on!!

Our thanks to everyone who helped make this show not only possible but a fun and successful day. Our congratulations to our high point trophy winners:

Trail: Ravy Boch Dwyer Dressage: Samantha Weitz

The Student horse show is also the time that the annual student, staff and volunteer awards are presented. We are so pleased to announce and congratulate this years winners:



Wendy Sherid
Suzie Anders Award
Winner (student)

Susan Popp
Suzanne Rampley
Award (staff)

Nancy Leneweaver
Frank Viall Volunteer Award

Horse Sponsorship Program at SRA

We changed the Horse Sponsorship Program at SRA to offer different levels of financial support allowing more people to participate. In 2023, the average horse expense (hay, grain, vet, farrier etc) was \$7,618 per horse and the horse sponsorship program helps offset some of these costs. The new levels of sponsorship for the horse of your choice are:

- \$2500 Blue Ribbon Sponsorship** - your name exclusively displayed on stall plaque, listing on the website and a SRA calendar
- \$1500 Red Ribbon Sponsorship** - recognition on sponsor board, listing on the website and a SRA calendar
- \$750 Yellow Ribbon Sponsorship** - recognition on sponsor board and listing on the website and a SRA calendar
- \$500 White Ribbon Sponsorship** - recognition on sponsor board and listing on the website and a SRA calendar
- \$250 Pink Ribbon Sponsorship** - recognition on the sponsor board and listing on the website and a SRA calendar

We thank all of the current sponsors and look for the new sponsorship board on the lounge wall coming soon! To learn how you can sponsor, please contact the office.



- Duchess** Lyn Harper Mozley
- Gunner** Shannon Byrne
- Galen** In memory of Madison Grace Reed
- Magic** Jeffrey Lesitsky
- Moe** Ronnie Cohen
- Radar** Frank Viall
- Oreo** Frank Viall
- Sattui** Meredith Tyson
- Sebastian** The Baird Family in memory of co-founder, Eleanora Baird
- Twizzle** The Hanebury Family



- Fozzie** Stu & Sandy Fine
- Vinnie** Emily & Caroline Pineda
- Shey** Jude Mantle
- Trixie** Donna Wenner

In Loving Memory of Madison Grace

By Renee Reed

If you've been to SRA recently, you may have noticed a beautiful bench located in front of the barn. And you may have also noticed that this is a memorial bench – in honor of a very special little girl named Madison. As her mom, I would love to share her story with you.

Madison began hippotherapy at SRA in April of 2021, right before her 3rd birthday. Madison and I both fell in love with the program right away – her team was amazing, and her pony Galen was the perfect match for her. Watching her ride brought such joy to my heart, and it quickly became our favorite weekly “activity.” Riding on the trails during nice weather was her absolute favorite, though she also enjoyed riding loops around the indoor arena. I was always impressed with how “big and tall” she could sit while riding, and my phone is full of photos and videos to prove it! For almost two years, 4:00 on Monday was our favorite hour of the week. I remember always worrying about when she might get “too big” for hippotherapy – once we had found this great program, I couldn't imagine her ever stopping. Unfortunately, her final lesson came much sooner than I ever imagined. On January 22, 2023, Madison very unexpectedly passed away in her sleep.

Madison suffered from Hypoxic Ischemic Encephalopathy (HIE) at birth. She was significantly impacted by her birth injury, which was subsequently followed by a lengthy list of related diagnoses. But despite her physical and cognitive limitations, Madison was truly the happiest child I've ever met. She loved life in a way that I still admire (and envy) to this day. Her smile lit up every room she entered, and she made lifelong friends everywhere she went. She was also an amazing big sister.

Whether you ever met her or not, I hope you have an opportunity to enjoy her memorial bench. Take a moment to sit, relax and enjoy the farm that Madison loved. Keeping her memory alive is very important to me, which is why I also started the Madison Grace Memorial Foundation. The Foundation's mission is to help raise awareness and to provide financial support to organizations that benefit children with special needs. Several donations have already been made by the Foundation, and we're planning to host our first fundraiser event later this year! If you're interested in learning more, feel free to follow our newly created Facebook page – just search for **Madison Grace Memorial Foundation!**



VINNIE'S ROADSHOW

By Handlers Kendra Bonner and Ley Shinn

Vinnie was busy last winter with his then new training team Ley and Kendra. Vinnie started his visit in January on a snowy day, and was able to climb some snowy steps to get inside. Waiting inside the Lansdale Hospital Memory Fitness Club was a group that had been working hard on horse trivia. Vinnie helped them remember all the new words they learned by letting them practice using them. The group groomed Vinnie with all his tools, and learned all about his body and how life is at the farm. He looked very handsome when he was ready to head home.

In February, Vinnie visited and made new friends at Providence Place at the Collegeville, an Enhanced Senior living home. He was greeted by a room full of curious spectators and they quickly became fans. He showcased his skills by playing them a little tune on the piano, as well as how easy it is to fit in his box. He had a special request to see him trot and boy did Vinnie show them how he can move. Vinnie let everyone pet and see him up close, showing off his fancy hairdo.

During March, Vinnie had a little break and started working on some new tricks. Vinnie has been working hard on a few new things. The first thing he learned was how to hold a ring in his mouth. Sometimes he wants to toss it. Vinnie has worked hard to get even better at his jumps. So his team added a hula hoop to run through as well. Vinnie mastered this on lead very quickly so he began learning how to do this off lead. Vinnie has figured it out! He is running through his hula hoop and over his jump all by himself. Wow, it is quite the show.

Vinnie made a special visit to Arcadia University for Public Health Week in April. Vinnie had selfies taken with many college students. They thought he was really pretty special.

Next up with a visit with classes from Skyview Elementary school who came to the farm to participate in our Intro to Horses program. He showed them how he jumps all the way to the 4th level. He showed them his box trick as well. Then he invited his roommate Sebastian to give the jumps a try. Vinnie was proud of his buddy for doing the jumps too.

May brought Vinnie's big off lead debut for Special Vacations, a group of about 35 people. Vinnie was very confident and ready for his show. The first time Vinnie was asked to do his hula hoop and jump he ran quickly away and pressed his easy button. He was letting the audience know that it was indeed easy to out run Kendra and Ley. The crowd loved his silliness. He proceeded to trick Kendra and Ley two more times, running over to his easy button. As the crowd roared with laughter Vinnie ran over and did his trick. However he wanted to make sure everyone knew that he was indeed in charge of this show. He did his trick backwards, going over his jump and then back through his hoop. We are very proud of Vinnie.

Vinnie made his return to the North Wales Library, a favorite for all. If you didn't know better, you would swear he was reading along with the book. Thank you Vinnie for bringing smiles, happiness, reassurance and joy to the people and horses of SRA.



New Team Member



Bugs, also lovingly known as "What's Up Doc?", is a 21 year old Appendix gelding, standing 15 hands high.

Bugs spent the last 19 years in Maryland growing up with "his kid", learning everything and anything they could together. Bugs is a seasoned show hunter, trail horse extraordinaire and professional napper.

Bugs has recently come out of an early retirement to join the team at Sebastian! Be sure to stop by and say "hi" to him!

Participant Volunteer Program

Recently the participant volunteers made horse treats by following a recipe and helping bag the treats. We were able to sell the treats at our local Tractor Supply to help raise money for the program. During this process the participants learned a few different life skills that we aren't always able to teach in the lesson Program. We also have been helping at the farm by cleaning fields stalls, sweeping and learning about equine nutrition while helping to feed the horses. If this is something that you might be interested in, you can get involved by contacting Ali Burdick the Program Manager at ali@sebastian.org

Cheers to 48 years

That is a milestone to celebrate for sure! As many of you may know, SRA started very much by chance in 1972 on the grounds of the KenCrest Residential facility in Mont Clare which is now Rivercrest Country Club. The Recreation Director and his wife, Bannie Stewart, lived on the grounds with her two ponies and the Doctor, Eleanora Gordon Baird who was an equestrian in her youth, used to join Bannie during lunch hours to work with the ponies. As they say, they had the whimsical idea of horses helping people. And so it began with the residents of the facility. In 1975 SRA was incorporated and shortly thereafter moved to our current location.

Supporters gathered at the Five Saints Distillery in Norristown to lift a glass in celebration. The award winners from the student horse show, Nancy Leneweaver, Wendy Sherid (Susan Popp was unable to join us) shared their story with the audience. And Co Founder Bannie Stewart shared highlights of the early days. Co Founder Eleanora Baird passed away several years ago but is celebrating what would have been her 100th birthday this year. Background music was provided by the Wise Guys and a great time was had by all. Many thanks to the sponsors of the event and everyone who came to celebrate! Look for a new venue to celebrate 49 years!

Sebastian Riding Associates
extends grateful appreciation to the
generous sponsors of
Cheers to 48 years

Presenting Sponsors:
Allan Myers, Inc.
The Dr. Eleanora Gordon Baird Family
Tom & Barb Harris

Cocktail Sponsors:
LeRoux School of Dance
Ancient Order of Hiberians
The Viall Family
Wehrung's - Home Improvement Partner

Appetizer Sponsors:
Friends of Eva Rizzo
The Gomulka Family
The Weitz Family
Anonymous



Program Reminders:

Session Length: By now you have noticed that the program no longer operates in five, 10 week sessions. Because we are open seven days a week to accommodate the growing need, it became obvious that we needed an additional program closure week for both the herd and the humans. So we now have four sessions throughout the year however, the winter and summer sessions will now be 14 weeks and includes a two week closure in December and in July.

Make Up Policy: As a reminder, our make up policy allows for one make up per session. So please include your lesson schedule on your calendar and consult when making appointments. As always, if we cancel the lesson due to weather or for any reason, a make up will always be offered.

Student Forms: As outlined in the student handbook, our policy states that students need to have all of the forms updated annually. You will receive an email from Kendra requesting updated forms, please return them in timely fashion.

Weight limit: The weight limit to participate in mounted programs is 200lbs based on our current herd. We understand the sensitivity of this subject but is to keep both horse and human safe, we must monitor this. As a reminder, there is no weight limit to participate in our unmounted programs! Contact Chris or Ali for more information.

FULL CIRCLE

By Bryce Rose

I first came to Sebastian Riding Associates for my senior internship with Arcadia University. I can confidently say that interning at SRA was one of my favorite parts of college! It was a privilege to get to work with such kind and cool people. I even made some new friends, both people and horses. After graduating college with a BA in Psychology, I went on to work in the mental health field. I recently got the opportunity to connect a client of mine to SRA. It's so special getting to continue with SRA both professionally and through volunteer work. I hope more people get the great opportunity to work with Sebastian Riding Associates and experience these beautiful animals like I did!

