

A CHRONOLOGY OF THE 2018 SUMMER SESSION AT EAGLES' WINGS STABLE

Thursday – Classes 2 & 3

This time, I wasn't the first to arrive. Natalee and Tina and one of our long time students were already there. I walked into the arena with Ed who is also on our Board. Ed was volunteering as a horse leader – Ed owns his own company where he is passionate about getting things done right and he brings that passion to Eagles' Wings.



June 14, 2018 – 5:30 Class: As in the Monday class, the horses came into the arena one-by-one led by their horse leaders. There was Ted, Joe, and Sable, different horses than were in the Monday class. The volunteers were also different – Ed, Duane, Steve, Sue, Beverly, Grace, Josie, Jackie, and Sharon. We have over 50 volunteers at Eagles' Wings. The interaction between the students and horses is special and that extends to the volunteers too. The students in this class had been riding for some time – and they were paired with some of the volunteers that they already knew.

The students began their class by grooming their horses and then saddling them. They then mounted their horses. One of the students was transferred from her wheelchair to her horse via a lift – a very smooth operation. Our other star instructor, Rebekah Hastings, began the class. Rebekah started as an Instructor in Training at Eagles' Wings Stable in 2009. Prior to her involvement with Eagle's Wings, Rebekah received an Associate's Degree in Equine Studies from Ohio University Southern. During her studies she focused on therapeutic riding and trained at the University's therapeutic riding center.

As I indicated, the students in this class had been riding for some time. One of the students who was riding Ted, was able to control Ted by herself without much hands-on from the volunteers. The other students had more assistance from the volunteers.

Volunteer roles consist of side walkers and horse leaders. **Side walkers** help ensure the safety of our participants. They walk beside our riders as they are on their horses in the arena – their job is to help maintain the balance of the rider when they cannot do so for themselves, to clarify instructions and directions when needed, and to provide reassurance and encouragement to the rider. **Horse leaders** lead the horses while in the arena. It is the job of the horse leader to maintain the safety of the horse at all times. Horse leaders must be very comfortable with horses and be willing to get up close and personal with them. Horse leaders help the horse follow the instructor's direction. Being a side walker or horse leader requires an 8-week commitment for 1-hour per week.





The relationship between the students and volunteers is special – the volunteers build a bond of trust with their students which is visible in the way that they greet and interact with each other. Last night, the three volunteers that were with Joe had their rider in stitches - laughing and giggling from the stories they were telling. Their love and caring was obvious – I could hear them all the way across the arena.

June 14, 2018 - 6:45 Class: The two students for the class arrived, one with a walker and the other in a wheelchair. Both have been riding for some time. Both required assistance in mounting their horses, Sable and Joe. Assistance was provided by mounting a raised platform that was saddle height and then each rider sat on the saddle and swung their legs over the saddle to mount the horse. There were new volunteers, Myra, Stephenie & Madi (mother & daughter) with Sable; and Molly, Jenna, and Hannah with Joe. This

was Hannah's first time volunteering and she really enjoyed the experience.

Although the two riders in the 6:45 class were not able to walk without assistance, they were getting the benefit of the multidimensional motion and personality of the horse as a therapist – making the movements and connections necessary to improve the rider's well-being. The horse's walk delivers a rhythmic, symmetrical figure-8 motion to the rider's pelvis just as it would move if the rider were walking in a normal manner on the ground.



The warmth, stretch and motion of the horse have an amazing ability to simultaneously relax and stimulate muscles, thereby increasing tone and strength. Next week, I will be talking to these two riders to ask about their experience since coming to Eagles' Wings.



Rebekah, like Gail, had a large volume of notes to process to establish a baseline to chart student progress over the next eight weeks. She, like everyone else I have met at Eagles' Wings, has the special presence – she loves what she does.

I will be following the summer session and providing updates as we go.

June 21, 2018 – 5:30 & 6:45 Classes: I was unable to attend the two classes on Thursday, I will catch-up on June 28th. But I did hear that one of our long time riders from the 5:30 class was for the very first time allowed to have her horse trot. Her normal ear-to-ear grin was even wider – she was beaming!



"And He will raise you up
on eagles' wings,

Bear you on the breath of
dawn,

Make you to shine like
the sun,

And hold you in the palm
of His Hand."

Michael Joncas

SUCCESS STORY: "Our son began riding at the age of 5. Cerebral palsy and an anxiety disorder played a big part in his world, so adapting to new situations and being confident in his abilities had been a struggle. But what began as a horseback riding lesson has turned into so much more. It has impacted his life!

He has always felt a great sense of accomplishment from his relationship with his horse and his ability to ride, but over the past 15 years his insecurity about trotting was a big obstacle—it was too intimidating! But at the same time he wanted to conquer that fear. In the spring session of 2014, he decided it was time to make trotting his goal. This was the year he said, "I can!"

Through the consistency of his instructor and horse, and the encouragement from family and volunteers, he brought his trusted steed in to a trot for the first time! What a great accomplishment! Not only has he achieved the trot but he is now able to imagine, with excitement, the thought of riding a "new" horse.

Through all the changes in life and adventures in new hobbies, therapeutic riding has been the consistency that he has needed. Riding has allowed him to grow in confidence, strength, balance, the ability to calm himself in a stressful situation, and a sense of community he has found nowhere else!"

June 28, 2018 – 5:30 Class:

June 28, 2018 – 6:45 Class: