



The Chincoteague Pony Drill Team includes members Pennie Peterson, 20, Sarah Shimko, 13; Lyndsy Holton, 14; Erika Bender, 16; Katye Allen, 11; Beth

Holton, 12; Kerra Allen, 16; and Adrienne Zimmerman, 11.

Chincoteague Ponies Unite For Drill Team

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MANHEIM (Lancaster Co.) —

Chincoteague ponies and Kendy Allen are synonymous. Long an admirer of the ponies made famous by a series of books written by Marguerite Henry, Kendy purchased Misty II, granddaughter of Misty of Chincoteague, in 1987.

The Allens, which includes husband Keith and daughters Kerra, 16, and Katye, 11, now own 14 descendants of the Misty of Chincoteague ponies. Under the Allen family's tutelage, the famous ponies have performed in numerous states and special events. To help with the growing herd of Chincoteagues, the Allens lease a few to horseless kids involved in 4-H.

Starting today, a Chincoteague Pony Drill Team will debut at the Elizabethtown Fair.

The idea for developing a drill team was birthed when Misty II

and the Allen family was visiting the Kentucky Horse Park last summer.

Kendy said, "We watched some of the youth drill teams perform and they were so neat. I thought, why can't we do that? We're always getting invited to have the Chincoteagues appear at different places, and performing in a drill team adds a new perspective to showing people what Chincoteagues can do."

Kendy believes that the temperament of Chincoteague ponies is well suited to the structured riding event performed to music. Kendy and the riders, who range in age from 11-19, selected the soundtrack from the movie theme "Hoosier's."

Although Kendy admits to being partial to Chincoteague ponies, she said that the breed adapts quickly to being around other ponies, which makes them ideal for drill team participation since ponies

maintain close contact with each other. The ponies are also intelligent and eager to please, she said.

Drill teams teach riders timing and control of the animals. Ponies that are accustomed to drill team maneuvers are more quiet and settled in other situations, according to Kendy.

Eight riders perform in synchronized pairs from a 17-page pattern that Kendy outlined and members practiced on foot until they memorized the pattern and were ready to mount the ponies.

Drill team requires experienced riders. Each team member has had at least five years of riding experience. Some, such as Kendy's daughter Katye have ridden since three years of age.

Another daughter, Kerra, said that communicating while performing in drill team is a must.

"Each kid must focus. We must all put forth the same amount of effort. No team member is more important than another."

Forgetting parts or becoming disoriented during the drill can result in jammed knees in addition to interrupting the smooth flowing show.

"If one person makes a mistake, we cover for each other by pretending we know what we are doing and go on from there," Kerra said.

While the drill team practices, a group of children sit on the fence yelling and clapping. According to Kendy the antics of this group is helping the ponies become accustomed to noise that they will hear when performing at large events. This trains the ponies to concentrate on their job and to ignore the noise of the crowd.

The riders insist that they can tell when the ponies' favorite parts of the drill are about to begin.

According to Pennie Peterson, 20, who is captain of the drill team, "The ponies like the fast parts."

Pennie, who is a citizen of both Denmark and Canada, has been riding for 14 years, and has worked in North Carolina stables. As captain, she calls out the changing

gaits during the practice sessions. Pennie said that in an actual show, verbal commands will not be given. Instead, she will signal teammates by nodding her head when ready to cross patterns.

"It's important to pay constant attention to your partner," Pennie said.

The Allens breed, raise, train, and occasionally sell one of their quality Chincoteague ponies. Their farm is the only place known in the United States where "Misty Family" ponies can be purchased ready to ride and show.

All their ponies are registered with the Chincoteague Pony Association in Chincoteague, Va.

Each year, a round-up and an auction of the wild ponies on the island of Chincoteague is held. The ponies sell from \$1,000-\$6,000 each.

Ten years ago, the Allens purchased Misty II, who was then 13 years old and had remained unbro-

ken on the Chincoteague island. Misty II is the only pony in the entire Misty line since the original Misty to show the markings of "map of the United States." The Allens gentled her to saddle, ride, stand on a stool, and shake hands.

Misty loves carrot oat cakes, but her favorite food is fruit-flavored Life Savers.

Misty II traveled to Chincoteague in July to participate in the Pony Penning where she and other Misty family relatives performed.

"We think Chincoteague ponies are one of the best kept secrets in the horse world," Kendy said. She hopes the drill team performance will show the beauty and the intelligence of the ponies.

In addition to the Allen children, team members include Adrienne Zimmerman, Lititz; Pennie Petersen, Lititz; Sarah Shimko, Manheim, Lyndsy and Beth Hol-

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Kendy Allen, right, instructs the Chincoteague ponies to stand on a stool for introduction to the crowd.



These kids attend practice to yell, shout, and clap to help the ponies become accustomed to noises they will hear from the crowd during actual performances.