

Therapeutic Horsemanship Focus Of Conference

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) - Up to 300 people will saddle up with a few of the equine partners for the 1999 Therapeutic Horsemanship Conference, Feb. 26-28 at Penn State's University Park campus. The event is sponsored by the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) Region 2, in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Council on Therapeutic Horsemanship, Penn State and Cornell University.

Riding and handling horses has been shown to have therapeutic benefits for children and adults with physical, mental, emotional or learning disabilities. There are about 70 accredited — and many more nonaffiliated — therapeutic riding programs in NARHA Region 2, which encompasses Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware and the District of Columbia.

"This is a great opportunity to learn more about therapeutic riding and how to start and run a program," says conference organizer Marianne Fivek, Penn State assistant professor of agricultural and extension education and a NARHA registered instructor.

"It takes knowledge to choose a horse of the right temperament, fit the horse to the rider and fit or adapt the equipment to both," Fivek says. "In addition, program leaders must have business, fundraising and other administrative skills."

The conference opens on Friday, Feb. 26 with registration from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. at The Nittany Lion Inn. Friday workshops include "Business Planning for the Therapeutic Horsemanship Program" and "Special Equestrians: Driving for the Equestrian with Disabilities." Tours of Penn State campus facilities will be offered, including the University Creamery and the horse barns housing the university's quarter horse herd.

Following a welcoming reception, Frank Bell, well known horse trainer and clinician, will present the keynote address at 8 p.m. in The Nittany Lion Inn ballroom.

The conference continues Saturday, Feb. 27 with concurrent sessions on "Sensory Integration and Horseback Riding," "Understanding and Planning for Riders with Learning Disabilities," "Destressing the Therapy Horse" and "Feldenkrais Method/ Alexander Technique." State presentations, a silent auction, a reception and a banquet round out Saturday's schedule.

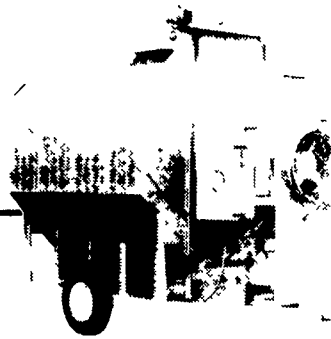
Activates on Sunday, Feb. 28 include a morning keynote on "New Ideas for Fundraising" by NARHA Region 2 Chair Virginia Mazza, research presentations and a panel discussion on "Client Assessment and Matching Horse/Rider/Equipment." The conference concludes with "A Whisperer Like No Other," a special presentation by Frank Bell.

Conference sessions will be held at several locations around the University Park campus, including the Ag Arena, Agricultural Sciences and Industries Building, Kern Building and The Nittany Lion Inn. Commercial vendors specializing in equine nutrition, tack, apparel, adaptive equipment, and health and wellness will display their goods and services in the Ag Arena.

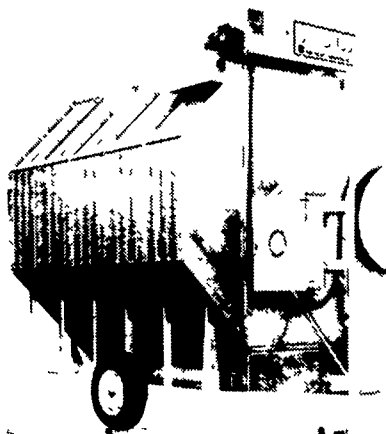
For registration information, contact Marianne Fivek by phone at (814) 865-7521 or by e-mail at mafivek@psu.edu.

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