

Halleck Creek Ranch Headlines *November 2008*

Volunteers: the Heart of Halleck Creek

What is the value of a friend? Who can put a price on a day well spent? Nearly every day of every week, volunteers are giving the priceless gift of their time and friendship to the riders and horses at Halleck Creek Ranch. Through their smiles, encouragement, and patience, they help each rider to push themselves to reap the maximum benefit of each therapy session. Through their friendly conversation they fill each riding session with valuable social connections that are often lacking in our fast paced world.

Volunteers also make life more enjoyable for our therapy horses. Volunteers clean paddocks and water troughs, groom and exercise retired or injured horses, and complete ranch improvement projects. They are instrumental in helping new horses get acclimated to the ranch and program in a safe and systematic way. Our sparkling ranch and healthy horses are a testament to the extraordinary work of our dedicated volunteers.

Volunteers come individually, as a family, or in groups from school or businesses. Some volunteers come several days a week, while other volunteers may only come once a year for a special project. They are teens, young adults, adults, and retirees. While our volunteers come for many different reasons, they all make Halleck Creek a very special place to be.

Therapeutic Riding In the Mainstream

Conventional health practitioners are increasingly prescribing therapies such as therapeutic horseback riding to complement their patients' traditional medical treatment plan. As the name suggests, complementary alternative medical (CAM) therapies are not meant to replace traditional medical practices, but to complement, or enhance them.

While there continues to be controversy over whether or not all of these therapies can produce scientifically measurable results, there is a growing body of evidence that these therapies have a marked effect on the relaxation levels of patients. Sometimes derided as a "placebo effect", the effects of decreased levels of stress and increased levels of relaxation are now recognized as essential to good health in and of themselves.

Demand for therapeutic riding has increased through its acceptance as a viable CAM modality. More than ever, parents of children with a wide array of disabilities are being referred to therapeutic riding programs as an effective part of a traditional therapy program. As one of the largest and oldest therapeutic riding programs in the Bay Area, Halleck Creek receives an increasing number of referrals, and is working hard to meet this demand.

Just Who Pays For This Anyway?

Because Halleck Creek Ranch is unique in its mission to provide its services at no cost to its participants, I am often asked, "Who pays for this?". Obviously, there are enormous expenses involved in running the ranch and programs, and the board and staff spend a lot of time fundraising in order to meet expenses. But Halleck Creek is committed to breaking down barriers for people with disabilities, and these include financial barriers.

All of Halleck Creek donors and supporters play a vital role in the success of the mission. In addition to special fundraising events, we ask weekly participants to make a voluntary donation that is comfortable for them. Currently twenty-three families donate an average of \$55 each month, raising approximately \$15,000 to support the ranch and programs.

These "Halleck Creek Friends" support Halleck Creek on a weekly, monthly, or annual basis: Victor & Ingrid Iacovetto, Suzette & Frank Poon, Brian & Annette Neill, George & Barbara Denison, Earle Johnson, Judy Pacheco, Beatriz & Nicholas Lituano, Michael Mihalko & Angeline Hekking, Chuck Bullock, Kai Fung & Tiffany Laux, Joseph & Clara McCarthy, Theresa Recht, Raymond & Debra Duca, Rafael Arceo, David & Susan Lee, Pam & Dennis Hansen, David & Tina Lambert, Denise Mondot, Merrill & Joanne Bobele, Ted Johnson, Jr., and Thomas McCarty.

The eventual goal is to encourage seventy families to donate an average of \$50 each month, to cover our program expansion expenses. Please talk to Julie Cassel if you would like to join this special group of friends.

Thank You Halleck Creek Ranch Supporters!