

# Halleck Creek Ranch Headlines *Winter 2008*

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## **Meet The New Faces At Halleck Creek**

If you have spent any time at the ranch lately you will have noticed some friendly new faces. These smiling faces belong to Molly Scannell, our new Program Manager, and to Christine Deghi, our temporary Ranch Manager.

At Halleck Creek, we are interested in improving and expanding our program. In particular, we want to continue to serve more riders, and expand our volunteer recruitment and training efforts. But with only two paid staff members, a Ranch Manager and an Executive Director, there were not enough hands to get the job done. The goal of the new Program Manager position was to make the new growth in our program sustainable.

Although many of you may not recognize her, Molly is no stranger to Halleck Creek, having volunteered with the program for years when she was a teenager. After graduating from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Molly's desire was to work in a therapeutic riding program. It is a great match.

Congratulations to our long time Ranch Manager, Teresa Miranda. She and Victor are expecting a baby in June. Because Teresa needs to stay off of her feet for the rest of the pregnancy, we have hired a temporary Ranch Manager, Christine Deghi. Christine comes to us with extensive experience with horses and also experience working with people with disabilities.

Christine has also previously volunteered at Halleck Creek with her husband, Matthew McBride. We are extremely fortunate to have such a delightful and qualified person to step in to the position. Welcome Molly and Christine!

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## **A Rider's Story**

Many of the riders at Halleck Creek have obvious physical disabilities that impair their ability to walk and other gross motor functions. But we also see riders who have less obvious disabilities, like learning disabilities. Learning disabilities can be very targeted, where students may struggle with one subject more than another. But they can also affect other areas of a young person's life. Many students that have learning disabilities also have trouble with fine motor skills like writing or drawing. Using their hands to grip the reins or while brushing the horse can strengthen their muscles, leading to improved pencil grip and ability to write.

Carly and Sasha de Frondeville are two such children. They are sister and brother, each with their own set of learning disabilities that also manifest themselves in mild physical disabilities. They ride once a week during our intensive weekday sessions. Both children have shown amazing progress, developing the strength and confidence to ride independently off of the lead line. Their mother has noted their improved posture and handwriting, and enthusiastically credits the riding program for their progress.

Just as important is the growth that has occurred in their confidence. Health issues have been a barrier to their development, so it is exciting for the whole family to find a physical activity they can excel in.

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## **Where Do Halleck Creek Horses Come From?**

Where do we get those wonderful horses that give us so much joy and therapy each week? Each of our gentle horses has a story; a history, and a reason that they have come to our ranch. Our newest horse, Raja, is a perfect example. Raja is a sixteen year old Arabian gelding, who came to us from San Domenico School's equestrian program. When the students began complaining about him being a little lazy, they decided to look into a high quality semi-retirement for him.

His owner, Michelle Stern, contacted us about placing him at our ranch. She toured the ranch, and we discussed both our needs and Raja's needs to see if it would be a good match. Our veterinarian evaluated him at San Domenico, and told us Raja was a great candidate for the program. Raja is currently settling in at the ranch getting to know the rest of the herd. Our ranch manager and the volunteers are getting to know him, and are introducing him to the ramps and other areas of the facility. After a 60 day evaluation period, we will make our final decision to keep him.

After Raja feels at home around the ranch, we will begin to introduce him to the program. He will come out with the other horses, get groomed and tacked up, and start to experience the unique sights and sounds of our therapeutic riding program. Volunteers will lead him in the arena and on the trail without a rider at first. Then volunteers will ride him on the trail until we know that he is completely ready. Once he has shown us that he is calm in all situations, Raja will be ready to carry our riders, and to have his name added to the "Halleck Creek Horse Heroes" list on the office wall.