



WINTER/SPRING NEWSLETTER 2006

HALLECK CREEK 4H RIDING CLUB



LETTER FROM JULIE

Dear Riders, Parents, Volunteers, and Friends of the ranch,

I hope this letter finds you in health and happiness this new year. Halleck Creek Ranch came through the last storm with very little damage, and I hope all of you weathered the storm as well. There are a few reminders and some good news I want to touch on before we get down to upcoming events.



Congratulations to Oona Zeigler and Nancy Brookshire, two of Halleck Creek's amazing volunteers. They were nominated in separate categories for Volunteer of the Year for 2005 through a program at the Center for Volunteer and Nonprofit Leadership. While they were up against very stiff competition, Oona won as one of five Youth Volunteers of the Year. She was easily the youngest winner by several years. We always knew they were special, but now everyone knows!

Thanks to Melanie Arenson, a youth volunteer who donated all of her Bat Mitzvah money to Halleck Creek so we could buy the High Weed Mower! She added her funds to the funds we had already raised through our California Redemption Recycling Program (thanks to all of you who brought in your cans and bottles). Keep bringing in your recycling, we will use the funds to buy other necessary tack and pieces of equipment.

If you have not completed the 4H re-enrollment forms since 7-31-05, you should do that now. Each participant has to enroll in 4H every year, which may include fingerprinting depending on your age. *If you want to participate in a particular event such as the river trip this year, DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE!* It can take weeks to get a fingerprint appointment, and up to a month to get your prints cleared. You **MUST** be fully enrolled in 4H to participate in 4H sponsored activities. If you are not sure of your status, please contact Julie.

Oona with
her Youth
Volunteer
of the Year
Awards

Halleck Creek is participating in the ESCRIP program to help raise much needed funds for our program. You can register your debit, ATM, and credit cards with ESCRIP and when you shop at many local and national stores or on their online mall, Halleck Creek will receive a portion of the total. You can also recycle old printer and toner cartridges, recycle old cell phones, or donate your used cars to raise money for our program. I will have lots of information out at the ranch if you would like a fairly painless way to raise money for Halleck Creek. *Don't forget to mention our name when shopping at Mill Valley Market as we benefit from their shopping program as well!*

Remember that if the weather looks questionable, you can always call the ranch after 7:30 am the day of your event. If activities are cancelled, I will leave a message on the voicemail.

Just a recap of some of the great stuff we have been up to, starting with the **Novato Horseman's Picnic**. Once again we were treated to a bountiful spread by our friends over the hill. Folks ate so much they had trouble getting on their horses afterwards! Thanks so much to all of the Novato Horsemen and Junior Horsemen

HALLECK CREEK EVENTS CALENDAR—WINTER/SPRING 2006

LETTER FROM JULIE CONTINUED . .

In July we celebrated **Halleck Creek's 28th Birthday**. Who would have thunk it? Bread and Roses provided another great volunteer group to perform for us, and you all helped bring food to add to the spread. This year on July 8, we will celebrate 29 years! (But I don't think we look a day over 25.)

Our next adventure was the **2005 River Trip**. As always, our "River Rats" came back with stories of endless fun, great challenges met, and joy of old friends seen and new friends made. If you have never made the trip to Indian Mary Campground, you have to try it this year. The trip is scheduled for August 4-7 2006, so reserve your place now. If you did make the trip last year, I would love some photos! We can never say thank you enough to the people who make this trip happen. (I am afraid to put names to paper lest I forget someone, there are so many who work to put this trip together.) They provide food, gear, manpower, expertise, and most wonderful of all, the gift of their friendship. People who take the trip for the first time are always touched by the overwhelming sense of love and care that our Oregon friends put into this trip.

Next we had our **Fall Horse Show and Volunteer Appreciation Party**. While not as glamorous as some of our events, the horse shows are my personal favorite event. I have seen some of the most inspiring growth during these classes. Riders who would never trot for me in the arena are so motivated to show well for our guest judge that they trot the whole arena with a smile on their face. My favorite memory from this last show was Spencer, 4 years old, giggling aloud while chasing his bemused parents around the ring on his trotting pony, ignoring any and all direction from the judge. During the show, we took a moment to thank our great group of volunteers. From the volunteers who make the program run to our Board of Directors working hard behind the scenes, there are so many of you who give so much of your time and energy each week to make Halleck Creek the fantastic place we all love. The next show is scheduled for May 20th 2006. There are no trail rides that day, but we will have lots of fun winning ribbons and trophies in and around the arena.

Our **Halloween** party may have been the best costume party I have seen yet at Halleck Creek! From pony princesses (see the back page photo) to Darth Vader, we had it all! Thank you all for coming in costume to make the day so festive. Music was again provided by Bread and Roses volunteers, as well as some spectacular photos by Peter Merts. There was something magical watching the riders bounce in their saddles to the rockin' tunes as they made their way around the arena.

We finished up the year with our annual **Holiday Party** at the ranch. For the first time in eight years, the weather was TERRIBLE! We rode in the dry arena, and huddled for warmth together in the office between rides. Riders who braved the weather were also treated to a visit from Santa.

Other dates to remember:

March 18th St. Patrick's Day Leprechaun Hunt—bring cookies to share and search for our well dressed leprechaun friends hidden along the trail.

April 15th Easter Egg Hunt on Horseback—bring goodies to share and gather colorful eggs full of treats as you ride through the ranch.

May 6th Human Race— Please help us with the major fundraising event for our ranch and program. No ranch riding this day, but do come walk, jog, or roll and enjoy the freebies and fair that follow. Collect sponsors from your friends, family, or workplace to support Halleck Creek.

June 4th Western Weekend Parade and Cow Flop— come ride in the parade and enjoy a real small town event. Please help buy and sell tickets to our hilarious fundraiser featured in the Feral West cartoon last year!

Someone once said that if you can laugh, think, and cry everyday, then you will live a full life. Thank you for making my life so full of good things,

Helping By Oona Zeigler

It's still dark out as I stand munching a bite of toast, waiting at the end of the drive for a lone pair of headlights to zip down the street. It's Saturday morning, it's cold and I'm still waking up, but where my friend and I are going, it's worth it all the way. As we arrive, the fog rolls over the hills of Nicasio to race through the valley. The horses are nothing but dark specks on the pasture. One horse runs. Before long, almost twenty horses are running past us, looking free, happy, and wild.

As we're brushing the horses, the silence is shattered by the arrival of a bunch of kids, all excited, and I know it's almost time to start the rides. As more volunteers arrive, we mount the riders. I see a little boy wearing a helmet covered with ducks. It's Spencer, three years old, Halleck Creek's youngest rider. I usually ride double with him, Spencer in the saddle and me riding bareback behind, supporting him. When I started backriding with Spencer last year, his trunk would not hold out for the whole ride, but over time, he has been gaining strength and confidence. I tell him little jokes to keep him alert during our rides. I really hope I can ride with him today. I ask Victor, the Ranch Manager, if I can backride with Spencer. Victor says yes, and I run to get my helmet from the car.

Spencer and I ride Kaliki, a beautiful paint mare, into the arena where the riders are listening to announcements about upcoming events at the ranch. Before we head out to the trail, it is very important for one of our riders to warn us of dangers to watch out for on the trail. In a loud voice, he blurts the names of about fifty animals and then repeats them all over again. "Watch out for lions and tigers and cheetahs and anything in the wild cat family!" he shouts. "And bears, gorillas, cobras, and pythons!" Spencer is wide awake now and smiling. So am I, I have a feeling this is going to be a good ride.

Once Spencer is on the horse, it is my job to help him to stay on. To backride you must have extremely good balance, strength, and some knowledge of how to ride a horse. When you are going up a hill, you must lean forward to keep yourself and your rider from sliding off. Going down a hill, you must lean back and slide into the cantle (back) of the saddle to help the horse balance.

When the ride is over, Spencer's Dad is eager to know how he did. With a big smile, I tell him that Spencer sat up by himself for the whole ride—he didn't lean on me once!

Before I began volunteering at Halleck Creek, I imagined I would be helping riders with difficulties, but I never imagined what they might offer me in return. As time has passed, I have realized that they have as much to offer me as I do them. My experience with these riders has changed the way I look at disabled people. They are not just people you try to look past as if they were invisible, but real children and adults who need to be appreciated for who they are. Just like everyone else, they have voices that want to be heard.

People often ask me if I come to Halleck Creek to fulfill a community service requirement. When I tell them that my school doesn't have a community service requirement for eight graders, they say, "You mean, all the time you spend here doesn't count for anything?" My answer to that is always the same: A love for horses drew me to Halleck Creek three years ago, but I stay drawn by my love for the people I am getting to know. The hours I spend here go towards nothing except my ear to ear smile throughout the day and an excited eagerness to come back next week.

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This is edited from a longer article posted by Oona on www.gettingtomaybe.com. Please note that the rider Oona wrote of, Spencer, is now riding alone in the saddle with only a sidewalker for support. Oona so ably put into words all of the real life magic that happens at the ranch each week: the personal and physical growth each participant achieves, the lessons that participants learn at the ranch then apply to their own lives, and the realization that we are all valuable contributors to society.

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If you have a special skill to share, we can use your help. Contact us about getting involved. Volunteers are making things happen at Halleck Creek by donating over 6,000 hours of their time each year.

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Halleck Creek is a Marin County 4H Club

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HALLECK CREEK 4H RIDING CLUB

WINTER/SPRING NEWSLETTER 2006

NON PROFIT
BULK RATE
US POSTAGE
PAID
PT REYES STA. CA
PERMIT NO. 5

Halleck Creek Wish List

"Ask and ye shall receive . . ."

- Your photos of Halleck Creek Events
- New tack, feed, and storage sheds
 - Digital camera
 - Gas BBQ
 - 8' fiberglass stepladder
 - 3 step ladder
- Large and small plastic bins with lids
- Photo albums and scrapbooks (we need several more!)
- 2'X4' boards to complete arena fence
- Small table with 2 chairs for office

Thanks to those of you who donated items off of the last list!



Photo by Peter Merts

Princess Stella on Poppy with Christine the devil as her escort during the Halloween party.