

A VOICE FROM THE WOODS

Alexandra Layos

The semester has flown by here at William Woods, and if you turn around and look back on the months that have passed you will see an array of trials and astounding successes, many of which are related to the Equestrian Special Olympics Invitational which was hosted on Saturday, April 5.

The Invitational began humbly enough as a Mentor-Mentee project between equestrian studies division chair Gary Mullen and student Kate Woodard. The Mentor-Mentee Program began several years ago at WWU as a way to encourage faculty and students to engage in joint research or creative projects ... and this certainly was a creative project.

If the event was pulled off, it would be the first time in nearly a decade that anyone had attempted to hold an equestrian invitational for Special Olympics.

Mullen thought the project would be a great way to incorporate hands-on experience for the students of the Survey of Therapeutic Riding class, and help the greater community of Missouri. However, throughout the planning stages, he constantly reiterated that the goal for this year was not to host a large event, but host an event that went off smoothly and safely. In the end, he accomplished both.

As word got out about the Invitational, more and more teams wanted to sign up. On the long-awaited Saturday, seven teams were represented from all parts of Missouri and even a team from Illinois ... a far cry from the two that were planned!

As a member of the Therapeutic Riding class, I got to see the

event unfold from its beginnings. As soon as we received the "okay" from the state director, the race to get ready for the fifth of April began.

We scrambled to raise money, writing letters to local businesses and explaining our worthy cause. We trained four school-owned western horses to be used in the event, working with them as riders, side walkers and leaders. We learned about the various safety devices used in Special Olympics, such as "peacock" stirrups, and we became familiar with the many,



1. Allie Layos congratulates Amber Gerken, a member of Star Time Riders in Pleasant Hill, Mo., on her blue ribbon. 2. Four students in the therapeutic riding class at William Woods University pose during the Equestrian Special Olympics at WWU. Students (in yellow, left to right) are Kate Woodard, Amanda Smith, Leah Hohmeier and Corey DeVore. With them are Debra and Jimmy Sue Bible (in blue) and Michelle Conley on horseback, all part of Exceptional Equestrians of Missouri Valley in Washington, Mo. 3. Kate Woodard, co-manager of the Equestrian Special Olympics, assists Larry Stephens of Columbia (Mo.) Riders. Woodard collaborated on the project with Gary Mullen, equestrian studies division chair, through the Mentor-Mentee Honors Program. 4. Luke Bossaller, a member of Exceptional Equestrians of Missouri Valley in Washington, Mo., shows off his bronze medal.

many rules which make hosting an Equestrian Special Olympics event more complicated than your average horse show.

As a class, each of us took the test to become a Special Olympics "Class A Volunteer." As the event drew closer,

we attached pins to the backs of the medals, decorated and put together the riders' gift baskets, stapled programs, and gave lessons to local riders who were to compete in the event.

The day before, we got together to set up the arena, sectioning the huge UPHA indoor arena into thirds with the dressage court. We designated a section for the riders to sit which made them easily accessible to the mounting area, and we set up the horse show office and the food room, as well as the first aid stand.

The first section was to be trail, so we set out the trail obstacles, as well.

On the day of, students ran everything. Our class took care of anything involving the actual horses and riders. We tacked the horses, mounted the riders and worked with many of them as leaders and side walkers. Students ran the gate (keeping everyone on track and making sure everyone made the correct

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classes), the horse show office, worked as ringmaster, handed out awards, and worked with the announcer.

Other volunteers from campus who were not part of the Therapeutic Riding class worked the food room for exhibitors and the concession stand, as well as being on hand to help with various other tasks such as removing the trail obstacles before the equitation classes began.

For me, the greatest part was watching the entire campus come together to host this event, many of whom were not equestrian students or involved with horses at all. American Sign Language students helped interpret for deaf riders. Art students contributed their artwork for the gift baskets. An education professor helped with "crowd control."

Woodard, who co-managed the event with Mullen, agreed that the cooperation from the entire campus was amazing.

"This was a great event," Woodard said. "It is an experience that has been handmade for our campus. It was a great opportunity for the students because they got to see each piece coming together during the planning and also got to see and participate in the end product."

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thinking (being cautious about using antibiotics in newborns). But my feeling is that if there is something medically compromising to the newborn foal, there should be administration of antibiotics sooner rather than later, with a view to getting that treatment going sooner," says Johnson.

"Another thing that is popular to recommend now, is emphasize the importance of the cleanliness of the environment into which the foal is born. One of the first things he does is start licking around, trying to find the udder." A foal will nuzzle around the mare, trying to lick her flanks and sides and even the stall wall.

"Before the foal gets his full complement of antibodies from the mare in the colostrum, his intestine is just as

The 19 athletes who competed enjoyed an array of trail classes, equitation classes, and something called a "unified team relay" which paired them with riders from other teams and two WWU students for a keyhole race at the trot.

Safety was of the highest concern during the event, and at the end of the day not one person—rider or spectator—ended up at the first aid stand, not even for a splinter or a bee sting!

The hard work paid off, as reviews were more than positive.

Jeanie W. Byland, mother of participant Sarah Byland of Columbia, Mo., said, "Sarah had a great time. The event was so well planned and we all enjoyed it. I appreciate all the time that went into planning this event. Sarah is still telling everyone about it."

"Our participants, our volunteers, our horses and I had a thoroughly good time," Mary B. Adams, program coordinator of Star Time Riders from Pleasant Hill, Mo., said.

"The event was very well done and you all should give yourselves a mighty 'pat on the back' for the excellent job," said Paula S. Boys, a participant with Illinois Area 10 Equestrian Team from

Decatur, Ill.

Though everyone in the Therapeutic Riding class was exhausted after the event, at our very next class on Monday we were already discussing how we could be just as involved next year. We were worried—we would no longer be in the class that helps run the event.

"Yeah," one of my classmates said, "can we have another class—Therapeutic Riding, Section II?"

We all learned a lot from hosting this grand event. We learned how to prepare a horse for such an event, how to organize and how to pay attention to detail. We learned how to cooperate and work together. We learned the many rules of Special Olympics and what it takes to become both a "Class A Volunteer" and Coach. But most of all we learned that hosting Equestrian Special Olympics is much more complicated than your average horse show...and much, much more rewarding.

Plans are already underway for next year. As the saying goes, we can only go up from here. And when you're starting from a pretty high spot already, there's no telling the heights you might reach.

Until next time, "*May all your days be blue ribbon ones!*"

capable of absorbing bacteria—which can lead to septicemia infection. So it's very important to have a clean stall and do a good job of cleaning up the mare very carefully, washing off any manure and cleaning the skin surfaces around the perineum and the udder so that when the foal is licking and sucking on the mare and everything else in his environment, there will be a reduced number of bacteria." It's a race between the bacteria and the antibodies from colostrum to get to the gut first.

"Another thing that people sometimes do is administer an oral antibody product to the foal even if the mare has plenty of colostrum. If they are giving a commercial source of antibodies when the mare has plenty of antibodies, this may interfere with the foal getting the antibodies from the mare," says Johnson. The permeability of the gut wall (allowing it to absorb the large molecules—antibodies—in colostrum directly into the blood and lymph system) begins to change as soon as the antibodies are absorbed; the gut wall closes up, so to speak, to protect against absorption of bacteria. If the first antibodies absorbed are from your commercial product, then the foal may not be able to absorb much from his dam's colostrum.

The foal's best source of protection is

from his dam's own colostrum, because she has developed specific antibodies against the various pathogens in her environment—the same environment her foal will be born into. Colostrum from a mare that has lived on a certain farm will have the protection her foal needs, on that farm.

"The foal ideally needs to get the colostrum from his own dam. So people buying a commercial product and administering it before the foal nurses may be blocking the antibodies from the mare, keeping those from being absorbed. I prefer to see people making sure that the mare has colostrum, and that the foal is getting the mare's colostrum, rather than giving a commercial product. The commercial product may be something to consider if a mare doesn't have any colostrum, but in our experience the commercial products are not very good at getting antibody levels very high in foals, based on the way they are used in Missouri," explains Johnson.

"We see a fair number of foals come in with infections, that had the commercial product. So I am a bit negative about using these. It's not that they just aren't helpful, but they may even be detrimental, by blocking the mare's antibodies from being absorbed," he says.

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