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# Happy Trails Riding Academy

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A publication of Happy Trails Riding Academy, a nonprofit organization of therapeutic horsemanship for people who have cognitive, physical or emotional disabilities.

Fall 2016

## The Banks Family

One of the many unique things about Happy Trails is the variety of classes offered for those of all ages - even families! Happy Trails has the pleasure of hosting three members of the Banks Family on Thursday evenings for our vaulting class. Josiah (18 years old), Alana (11 years old), and Evanie (8 years old) have enjoyed riding at Happy Trails, and have become tenured riders in the last several years.

Josiah recently graduated from Tulare Union High School and started classes at the College of the Sequoias. His interests for the future are geared toward either a career in acting or the editing field. He began riding at Happy Trails when he was only eight years old, and in the course of the last decade the experience has helped provide balance in his life alongside other extracurricular activities ranging from acting to playing his trumpet; he is clearly passionate about the arts.

Alana is also a seasoned rider, and just as her older brother she began riding at the age of eight years old. She currently attends Kohn Elementary School in Tulare. In addition to riding she is very fond of playing soccer and has a strong love of animals that has inspired her with the goal of becoming a veterinarian.

Rounding out the bunch is Evanie. Currently eight years old, she is not hesitating in following her sibling's footsteps. Attending Kohn Elementary School, she loves playing soccer, gymnastics, and cheerleading. No doubt she will be on stage one day!

Tia Banks, their mother, has nothing but praise for Happy Trails. "Time spent in classes has been a blessing to our family. It has helped instill confidence, improve listening skills and provides the incentive that ultimately encourages all of my kids to make better choices."

We are confident Josiah, Alana and Evanie will continue to excel in class at Happy Trails and in their education at school. As a local non-profit we are grateful to be able to support and serve those in our community such as the Banks family.

## Roundup



Banks Kids-Evanie, Alana & Josiah Banks on "Emma"

### SAVE THE DATE

Happy Trails "Round Up" ~ Friday, October 7 at 6pm

To Reserve Your Tickets or Table Please Call (559) 688-8685

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# 2016 Night at the Races was a huge success!



## 21st Annual Spring Event

The Visalia Convention Center was filled with the sound of folks cheering on their favorite steeds as Happy Trails hosted many friends and supporters on May 20th at our annual Night at the Races. The evening began with mingling and catching up with friends over a glass of Kentucky Lemonade while being entertained by Doug Hurt. A delicious



Board Member Linda Nogues with Lee Brehm



V Town Derby Dames

dinner served by Sue Sa was followed by a presentation of Happy Trails' newest outdoor riding facilities, captured by drone footage. The fun then hit a fever pitch as wagers were placed, races were run, and prizes were won. Our most popular race prizes were the Coach purses and a pair of his and her handguns. The evening ended with an exciting live race by the V Town Derby Dames. All at Happy Trails wish to express our sincere thanks to our many sponsors and attendees. This event generated over \$100,000 to support our programs of Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies. We hope to see you at next years' races!

## Veterinarian of the Year

Happy Trails is proud to announce our very own Board President, Neal Spiro, DVM, has been awarded PATH International Region 11 Veterinarian of the Year. As an international voice in the equine

assisted activities and therapy industry, PATH International has the pleasure and honor to recognize individuals and equines that symbolize the celebration of ability, optimism, diversity and a shared love of equines.

Dr. Spiro is a large animal practitioner focusing on bovines and equines in the Central Valley for over 25 years. His involvement with Happy Trails began in 2013 as a member of the board. Over his years of service he has been a consultant to the horse herd and instrumental in the ten acre expansion project.

Neal will be honored at the PATH Awards Banquet in November in Williamsburg, VA. As a regional winner he is a finalist for the 2016 PATH Intl. Veterinarian of the Year award. Congratulations!



"Bookie" Dr. Neal Spiro at  
2016 Night at the Races

# Ron Willenborg

On May 21, our dear friend and HT board member Ron Willenborg passed away. I first met Ron at a board meeting in 1994. His son, Andrew was a rider for many years. Ron was integral to the success of many fundraisers, including Western Jamboree, Ropin' the Stars and Night at the Races. He was always the entertainment and audio guy who enjoyed lining up bands and performers for the events. He was also successful at obtaining sponsorships and selling plenty of tickets. His efforts contributed to more than \$1,000,000 being raised over the past 20 years.

On the Friday night before his passing, Ron shared a story from 2003 when Tanya Tucker arrived very late for her performance at Ropin' the Stars. He had us smiling with his recollection of how he and the warmup band Southern Cross played an extra two hours that they nearly ran out of songs!

Ron joined the HT Board of Directors again in 2012 because "Happy Trails was always in my heart." He was a good friend who liked his music and scotch and loved his wife Charlotte and his family. He will be sorely missed.

Andre P. Gaston



Ron Willenborg

## How to Become a Volunteer

Happy Trails relies on volunteers in order to provide riding classes, keep the facility looking beautiful, and other special projects. We are currently looking for more help in the following areas:

- 1) During riding classes - working alongside therapists and instructors in direct contact with our riders and horses. To volunteer in this capacity, you must be at least 14 years old and attend the Volunteer Orientation. Call the office at 688-8685 for date and time of next Orientation class.
- 2) Maintain the Sensory Trail – pulling weeds, trimming plants, and preserving the landscape in the Sensory Trail. All ages welcome. If you or your service clubs are interested in helping, please call the office at 688-8685 to make an appointment.



Mission Oak High Tennis Team

## Meet Thumper

Our new addition to the Happy Trails' herd is a grey 9 year old Mustang named Thumper. He is small but courageous. His natural mustang instincts give him an air of confidence and have moved him quickly into the program. As he gains experience and time in classes, we are sure he will be a favorite of many. Thumper was donated by Deborah Higgins.

### Needs List

Shavings

Gas powered leaf blower

Gift Certificates to Feed Depot or Country Feed



Rider Erin Sample & "Thumper"



*An investment from your heart...  
Riding builds strong wills*

NON-PROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Visalia, CA  
Permit# 520

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You can now follow Happy Trails on Twitter & Instagram @ HTRidingAcademy



# 2016 Happy Trails 3rd Annual Horse Show



Left: Rider Kristina Changsing, "Frankie",  
Lozen Hendrix



Lexi Medcalf, "Honor",  
rider Cassidy Phillips & Sue Cercone



Group photo



Valuting Demo by Josiah Banks, Alana Banks,  
Christopher Webb & Evanie Banks