

COOL STUFF

by Joann Pan

The horse haven of Westfield

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A YOUNG CENTAUR STRIDE RIDER PREPARES FOR A RIDE.

Riders say the airy feeling of being lifted a couple of feet off the ground, grasping onto the reins of a strong horse galloping along a smooth pasture, is incomparable. For children born with cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, and other mental or physical disabilities, the experience may be even more remarkable.

Testimonials by parents and children who have become regular visitors at Centaur Stride, the non-for-profit therapeutic and recreational horseback riding facility, suggest the healing benefits of riding. Better alignment of the back, calming effects, alleviation of pain, and strength training top the long list of improvements people have seen in themselves and family members who have experienced several treatment sessions at the facility.

Though health advancements and surges in confidence have not been quantified scientifically at the center, people have continually confirmed the positive effects of what goes on at Centaur Stride Therapeutic Riding Stables since the sixty-three acres of wooded area opened in 1993.

Before visiting Centaur Stride, many riders have never had the opportunity to interact recreationally or socially

due to the physically debilitating nature of their health conditions. For many of the center's first-time riders, it is significant that they are building bonds with people outside their immediate family.

"For many of our riders, therapy is a life-long need, and scarcely provided. Personally, I gain strength from our riders. They do not complain about their situation, but live with challenges every day. They have adapted and are proof that even

the most unexpected progress is possible when a physical and learning stimulus is provided," says Centaur Stride co-founder and president Claudia Monroe.

Monroe—who is also a physical therapist specializing in pediatrics and neurological disorders—started the program with her husband Harry Monroe after their own children started horseback riding. After reading an article about the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) in *Physical Therapy* magazine, they realized it was the perfect solution to the lack of therapeutic services in our area.

Getting to ride a horse around peaceful trails surrounded by pristine scenery allows children and adults who usually require assistance to do something independently. Participants easily grasp befriending these kind animals, coaxing them to stop and go with a stroke of the animal's neck. With these skills, participants develop self-esteem and confidence quickly, and their balance and posture improve over time. "Some make significant improvements in their physical abilities, but all riders, whether their challenges are physical, cognitive, or emotional, or a combination of all of the above, make great strides," says Monroe.

Last year, Centaur Stride saw twenty-nine new riders and forty-two ongoing riders. Volunteers and staff gave over 1,143 lessons. Stride also sees friends and family of those with physical challenges and offers afterschool programs and field trips.

There are presently fourteen horses at the Westfield facility that help approximately 150 riders a year overcome physical complications and improve overall health with weekly exercise. Each animal has a distinct personality, which helps in matching them up with people with certain needs. A seven-year-old racking horse named Dude, newly donated this year, is especially attentive to visitors and other horses, making him great for lessons. Rosie, the chocolate brown mule,

Photo courtesy of Centaur Stride.

is smaller in stature, making her more suitable for clients with limited movement in the hips and back.

First-time riders are always matched up with their horse according to their ability and size. "As we get new riders, we need to again pair horses and riders for the best match, using the tack that best fits the rider and the horse and can accommodate everyone who is scheduled to ride," Monroe says. "It takes quite a bit of planning before an actual day of riding. Not only do the horse and tack need to be matched, but the number of leaders and volunteers must be confirmed so that safety is paramount."

One easy way you can help Centaur Stride—and experience some of the best food and drink the Chautauqua region has to offer—is to attend the Chautauqua Bon Vivant, a weekend spectacular billed as "a luxury experience of culinary, wine, and spirits." During the three-day event beginning Friday, September 24, you'll be able to taste wines from around the country and your own back yard. The location is ideal: Spanning over 1,065 square miles, including six lakes and fifty miles of the Lake Erie shoreline, Chautauqua County is one of America's oldest commercial wine regions.

One highlight is a wine pairing lunch at Olive's hosted by Jennifer Simonetti-Bryan, a master of wine who has appeared alongside such Food Network stars as Rachael Ray and Bobby Flay.

The weekend's main event, according to Monroe, will be a "grand tasting" in Chautauqua's 20,000-square-foot Expo Center. National and regional experts and suppliers will be available to answer questions. The entry fee includes a gift bag, and a silent auction will take place during the evening. Things wind down with a champagne brunch at La Fleur on September 26.

Accommodations can be made at the centrally located Chautauqua Suites for the three-day event. (Mention code "Vivant" for a special discounted rate.) For more info on the fundraiser and the organization it benefits, visit www.centaurstride.org.

JOANN PAN WAS A SPRING 2010 INTERN AT SPREE AND A RECENT UB GRADUATE.

COMING UP: June

Except where noted, all events take place in Buffalo (area code 716). Got an event of your own to publicize? Send details to: elicata@buffalospree.com. Don't see your event here? You can add it to our online calendar at www.buffalospree.com.

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JOANN FALLETTA INTERNATIONAL GUITAR CONCERTO COMPETITION SEMIFINALS
Named in honor of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra's music director, the competition was launched in 2004 by WNED and the BPO; the semifinals are followed by the finals, on June 4. 7:30 p.m. through June 3 at the Mary Seaton Hall at Kleinhans Music Hall. (71 Symphony Circle; 885-5000 or www.fallettacompetition.org.)

56TH ANNUAL AAUW SCHOLARSHIP BOOK SALE
Featuring an estimated 100,000 items donated over the past year, including hard and soft cover books, DVDs, CDs, games, and puzzles, all selling for bargain prices. 9 a.m.–8 p.m. through June 5 and 9 a.m.–noon June 6 at the Office Depot Plaza. (2309 Eggert Rd., Tonawanda; www.aauw.buffalo.edu.)

BUFFALO WELLFEST
Health screenings and more for City of Buffalo, County of Erie, and Buffalo School District employees. 10:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m. at the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center. (Convention Center Plaza, 153 Franklin St.; www.buffalowellfest.com.)

DAVE MATTHEWS BAND



Jammy favorites on their annual summer tour. 7 p.m. at Darien Lake Performing Arts Center. (9993 Alleghany Rd., Darien Center; 585-599-5040 or www.livenation.com.)

LITERARY READING
Featuring Jennifer Campbell, Jorge Guitart, and Ansie Baird. 7:30 p.m. at the Center for Inquiry Literary Café. (1310 Sweet Home Rd., Amherst; 636-4869 or www.centerforinquiry.net.)



Celebrate the music of Michael Jackson with this tribute show. Through June 8 at the Avalon Theatre at the Fallsview Casino. (6380 Fallsview Blvd., Niagara Falls, ON; 888-FALLSVU or www.fallsviewcasinoresort.com.)

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4TH ANNUAL SABRES ALUMNI FISHING TOURNAMENT
Fish with Sabres alumni for a great cause—proceeds will benefit the Buffalo Sabres Alumni Scholarship Fund and Niagara County Youth Fishing. 7 a.m.–2 p.m. at Olcott Harbor. (www.sabresalumni.com.)

21ST ANNUAL GELATIN SPLASH
Slide into 1,000 gallons of gelatin to raise funds to support blood cancer research and education. Sponsored by the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. 4 p.m. registration, 6 p.m. start at Banchetti by Rizzo's. (550 N. French Rd., Amherst; 834-2578.)

100 AMERICAN CRAFTSMEN



An annual juried show of contemporary craft, featuring leather, glass, metal, clay, wood, basketry, fiber, paper, and mixed media. Through June 6 at the Kenan Center. (433 Locust St., Lockport; 433-2617 or www.kenancenter.org.)

BUFFALO PRIDE KICK-OFF PARTY
Pride weekend begins with singer/songwriters Melissa Ferrick and Joanna Barbera plus comedy from the Dykes of Hazard in the Ninth Ward at Babeville. Doors open at 7 p.m. at Asbury Hall. (341 Delaware Ave.; info: www.babevillebuffalo.com; tickets: 888-223-6000 or www.tickets.com.)

CATS



Andrew Lloyd Webber's beloved feline musical. Through June 6 at Shea's Performing Arts Center. (646 Main St.; 852-5000 or www.sheas.org.)

EXHIBITIONS BY PAULA SCIUK & STEPHEN HOUSEKNECHT
Featuring Sciuk's "The State of Miscibility" and Houseknecht's "It Can't Happen Here." 5–9 p.m. through June 24 at Buffalo Big Print. (78 Allen St.; 884-1777.)

FIRST FRIDAY ALLENTOWN
Enjoy galleries and more along Allen St. and environs. Allentown. (881-1024 or www.allentown.org.)

FRIDAY RECITAL SERIES
A free thirty-minute concert featuring Michael Stefanek, organ. 12:30 p.m. at St. Paul's Cathedral. (128 Pearl St.; www.stpaulscathedral.org.)

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TASTE OF COUNTRY
Billy Currington, Rodney Atkins, and more perform in this country music extravaganza. 6:45 p.m. at Coca-Cola Field. (One James D. Griffin Plaza; www.tickets.com.)

RICHARD LEWIS
The neurotic comedian and *Curb Your Enthusiasm* scene-stealer performs his unique comedy. 8 p.m. at the Bear's Den Showroom. (Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel, 310 4th St., Niagara Falls; 299-1100 or www.senecaniagaracasino.com.)

LOVERS

Brian Friel's drama is a play in two parts set in Catholic Ireland in the 1960s in this Irish Classical Theatre Company production. Through June 27 at Irish Classical Theatre Company's Andrews Theatre. (625 Main St.; 853-4282 or www.irishclassicaltheatre.com.)

THE BASH

The American Red Cross Greater Buffalo Chapter's annual party and fundraiser. Expect lots of camouflage. 8 p.m. at Red Cross Headquarters. (786 Delaware Ave.; 878-2383 or www.buffaloredcross.org.)



Many of the great options in our calendar are offered at no cost. Keep an eye out for Honest Abe. He'll point you to **FREE** events.