

GALEP cuts ribbon on riding center

Horsemanship stalls and pen make new additions

By Dana Edlund - Staff Writer

Published:

Wednesday, September 22, 2010 1:35 PM CDT

GALEP, the Galt Horse Assisted Learning and Enrichment Program, is growing again. New facilities will enable the therapeutic riding program to reach more students.

On Aug. 31 before a crowd of about 50 people, GALEP volunteers cut the ribbons, officially dedicating the GALEP center. Housed at McCaffrey Middle School, the center includes an arena and a round pen as well as horsemanship stations. Superintendent Karen Schauer, Ed.D., of the Galt Joint Union Elementary School District, hosted the event.

Special recognition was given to many GALEP volunteers. Chris McParland, Barbara Bell and Jim Hunter were recognized for their hands-on instruction and horsemanship skills. Gina Stilfield has been instrumental in coordinating volunteers and handling much of the organizational skills required to get the program off to a solid start. Dick Benton of Benton Fencing and Dean Singer from Sierra Barns and Corrals were both honored for their donations and work.

Simultaneously, ribbons were cut on three separate projects. First was the 150x250-foot arena that was fenced by Benton Fencing. Second were the five new horsemanship stalls that will enable children to groom and care for the horses in a safer and easier fashion. Third was a round pen that can be used for many activities, including leading a horse. The horsemanship stations and the pen were both built by Sierra Barn and Corrals.

Many members of the elementary school board were present, as were McCaffrey administrators, teachers, GALEP volunteers, school district officials, parents and students.

“Even in an economic recession, look at what we can do together,” said Schauer.

Schauer said in a prepared statement, “At this time, the GALEP program is coordinated with the after school programs at McCaffrey, Valley Oaks and Greer schools. We have over 200 students who are in the after school program and plan to offer fall and spring horsemanship activities at the GALEP Arena at McCaffrey or directly at the elementary school sites.”

This summer we included district special education students participating in extended year programs. Students with special needs from the extended year program at Marengo Ranch Elementary School walked over to the GALEP arena at McCaffrey Middle School and participated in horsemanship activities.”

When asked about the future for GALEP, Schauer said, “Future plans include GALEP achieving accreditation as a North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) Center. This would allow us to become a demonstration and training center for other organizations or communities seeking to offer therapeutic riding. We are also exploring partnerships with Galt 4-H and the high school after school program students to support even more Galt youth participation with GALEP. Therapeutic riding activities can also be beneficial for pre-K children. We are considering ways to offer sessions for Fairsite School Readiness Center participants.”

It takes a combination of human power and horse sense to make GALEP work.

“It takes people power and horse power to offer the program safely and effectively to children with a range of physical, learning, and/or emotional needs. We make strides each month through tremendous support from the Galt community and beyond,” said Schauer. “Volunteers are needed to help with program activities with children and horses, fundraising, accreditation and volunteer recruitment.”

For additional information, please contact program volunteers: Gina Stilfield at gstilfield@galt.k12.ca.us – phone 209-745-2641, or Karen Schauer at kschauer@galt.k12.ca.us – phone 209-744-4545, ext. 310.”

GALEP has several future meetings set up. On Oct. 7, in the elementary school district conference room, 1018 C Street, Suite 210, GALEP community volunteers will meet at 7 p.m. This is an informational meeting for new or current GALEP volunteers. There are many ways to volunteer, and opportunities include helping during riding sessions, fundraising and horsemanship club tutoring.

There will also be meetings at each of the three after school programs. ASES After School GALEP Parent Information Nights will be held at the McCaffrey Middle School ASES After School Program on Sept. 22 at 5:30 p.m. in Room C2, at the Valley Oaks Elementary School ASES After School Program on, Sept. 23 at 5:30 p.m. in the school library, and at the Greer Elementary School ASES After School Program on Sept. 29 at 5:30 p.m. in the school library.

Parents with students in the ASES after school program are invited to attend one of the sessions.

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