

Meet Claire Morris, Our New Program Administrator



Claire joins the Equestrian Division from within the Park System. She has been a Recreation Program Specialist with the Urban Recreation Division, coordinating the Recreation Assistance Program. This program provides quality recreation programs and services to state-designated urban areas in Monmouth County.

Prior to coming to Sunnyside, Claire briefly served as the Executive Director of the Friends of the Parks. She has also served with other non-profit organizations. She is still active with the Western Monmouth Habitat for Humanity and the Lutheran Girls Camp Association. She is familiar with the mechanics of 501(c)(3) organizations.

Her experience as a recreation programmer, an administrator, and her work with non-profits will make her an asset to both SPUR and the Sunnyside staff. When she first arrived, Claire said: "I am looking forward to working with the dedicated and talented group of people that make up the staff and SPUR Board here at Sunnyside. I am also looking forward to getting to know the four-legged staff!"

Welcome Claire!

Students, Parents and Volunteers Sing the Praises of ARIES

Editor Notes: This is a continuation of the November 2007 article titled ARIES: Advanced Riders and Independent Equestrian of SPUR.

Jessica Viverito started riding with SPUR at age eight in the private lessons. She is now 13 and rode in her fourth ARIES class this fall. When asked what she likes about the new program she responded, "It's more advanced and there's more stuff to do, like off lead work and trotting." She shared that the class has challenged her more and lets her do things that she would not be able to do in the half hour private classes. (bottom panel on page 3)

Siblings Scott and Melissa VanClief ride together in the ARIES class. They share a love of horses and an appreciation for the ability to be around them and to ride them. "I like to be around the horses and pet them. It's good that you can ride and feel like you are free," said Melissa. Scott added, "It's good that you get to ride and be responsible for your horse. I like to take care of my horse, like tacking and grooming, and make sure he is okay."

The volunteers are such an important part of all of the programs at Sunnyside. Though their role is slightly different, their participation in the ARIES program is vital to its success. Each student is assigned a volunteer to assist him or her during the lesson. The volunteers become very much like an assistant to the instructor. As the lesson progresses, they help the students while working in the stall and then reinforce directions while students are mounted. Since the riders' goals are to be as independent as possible, the volunteers often enjoy a



Melissa VanClief and her mount Indy.

break from leading. They have the opportunity to join the instructor in the middle of the ring and watch as their students progress.

"I can absolutely see a progression with these students. It's truly amazing what you see," said Jackie Neill, a seasoned volunteer in the ARIES class and the private lessons. She has observed that the students' lines of communication seem to open once they get on the horses. She finds it wonderful to see how the students perk up just from the movement of the horses. Neill sang the praises of the program: "The atmosphere is warm and professional. The place has such good karma."

The ARIES classes have gotten rave reviews from the parents as well. "She is a different person," Jessica's dad shared. "She has gone from knowing

(Continued on page 2)



Board of Directors

Officers

President

Kate Gotterup

President-Elect

Linda Irving Smith

Recording Secretary

Nancy Young

Treasurer

Tom Durney

Assistant Treasurer

Virginia Di Chiara

Member-at-Large

Linda Irving-Smith

Robert Beccarelli

Doug Irwin

Joanne Irwin

Jo Ann Lindemann

Donna Singer

Fran Stefanelli

A Message from the President

The end of 2007 marked a major milestone for SPUR; the completion of the *Phase II* development project at Sunnyside. The SPUR staff finally has offices that are not in a trailer, tack room or a modified stall! The main entrance of the building now leads to a large viewing area where parents and siblings of students can watch in comfort and without distraction to the ongoing lesson. Sunnyside now has a large classroom and a therapy room as well. Please stop by and visit Sunnyside and see for yourselves what the SPUR donors and the Monmouth County Park System have built together.

With the major building projects now behind us, the SPUR Board of Directors will focus our fundraising efforts on increasing scholarship funding and supporting the SPUR staff in the growth of the programs at Sunnyside. We are planning a fundraiser for later this year with more details available in the next newsletter.

On April 27, 2008 SPUR will host a free Open House from 1-4pm at Sunnyside. We invite all our past donors, our SPUR volunteers and families as well as anyone interested in what goes on at Sunnyside to come join us for an afternoon of pony rides, therapeutic riding demonstrations, children's entertainment and lite fare.

Looking forward to seeing you on the 27th!

Sincerely,

Kate Gotterup

President, *SPUR Board of Directors*

ARIES of SPUR

(Continued from page #1)



Scott VanClief and his mount Blue.

nothing to being a pretty good horse-woman. She has learned not only to ride, but to respect and care for the horses she works with."

"Riding is very soothing for the kids. They look forward to it every week. The staff is wonderful and the horses are great; the kids just love them. The program is well thought out, thorough and structured," said Diane Winters, mother of Scott and Melissa. "I like that they have something nice to do each week. If they had a bad day, they have this to look forward to." Diane feels that Scott and Melissa are conquering something that they never thought they would be able to do. She says she has seen a difference in their confidence and ability to ride. "They will never be overconfident in their riding because they know there is always something new to learn," she added.

Since its start in January 2007, the ARIES program has been a huge success. The pro-

gram started out with two classes running each session: one for ages eight through twelve and a second for ages thirteen through eighteen. Instructors always have their eyes out for potential candidates to add to the database of ARIES riders and as those numbers grow, classes will be added to accommodate the demand. Last fall, a third class for the most advanced riders was added to the facility's schedule. Next, a class titled "Short Stirrup" was created for students ages four through seven. More classes are anticipated in future sessions.

On March 4th at the New Jersey Recreation and Parks Association's Annual Awards Dinner, ARIES was presented with the 2008 Excellence in Therapeutic and Wellness Program Award. We are extremely honored by the association's recognition of this program.

An Educational Journey... *By Cindy Ross*

As the stable manager at Sunnyside, one of my responsibilities is finding suitable horses and ponies for our specialized programs and further developing their knowledge, tolerance and skills once they are a part of the program. Two years ago I discovered Parelli Natural Horse-Man-Ship and have used this program as the basis for my work with our horses. The basis of natural horsemanship lies in understanding how horses relate to one another and developing a clear communication, respect and partnership. Parelli incorporates playing games that horses play with one another.

On July 23rd I had a unique opportunity to travel with Indiana, one of our therapy ponies, to Reynoldsville, PA for three amazing days with Parelli 3 Star Natural Horse-Man-Ship instructor Gina Torrell at her 50 acre facility. On our trip, Indiana and I saw some beautiful Pennsylvania scenery and got an amazing education. We passed our Level 1 Assessment, meaning our skills at this level have been demonstrated successfully in the presence of a Parelli instructor. Much of our time in with Gina was spent developing our Level 2 skills. Gina is a warm and talented horsewoman who shares her knowledge



Cindy and her mount Indy.

in a clear and supportive manner. I was honored to be her student during three days of private instruction.

I am excited to continue applying the techniques I am learning and developing with all of the horses at Sunnyside. They are tremendously effective in improving a horse's confidence and responsiveness to cues given by a handler or rider. Communication becomes clearer and interactions between horses and people are safer. I will also continue to share this information with the students, volunteers and staff. Volunteers who have attended my horse handling clinics report having a much better under-

standing of horse behavior and how to respond and relate to the horses. This improved communication between horse and human results in a more positive experience for everyone, more effective lessons for our students and greater volunteer retention.

I am so grateful to have discovered natural horsemanship. In my 30+ years with horses I have never had such an understanding of their behavior and psychology and unique horse-analities! Most importantly, I have never felt such a deep connection and bond of partnership with horses as I do now. I am learning to more effectively communicate with them through body language and energy, in the way they naturally communicate with one another as herd animals.

Through my practice of natural horsemanship methods I have also discovered many surprising personal benefits that carry over into other areas of life. I have become more patient, compassionate, understanding and more aware of the effect people have on one another. It is amazing how much you can learn about yourself along the way. My favorite Pat Parelli quote is: "The greatest challenge in horsemanship is in mastering ourselves." It is so true!



Jessica Viverito and her mount Halik.

My SPUR Experience

By Jessica Viverito

My name is Jessica, I'm 13 and have been riding at Sunnyside for five years. I started riding Merryleggs and Halik, but now Te is the only horse that I would want to ride. I love him so much! He's so calm and is eager to work after a while of trotting. My favorite thing is posting, but Tara, Liz, and Cindy have been helping me with my sitting trot and now I like that too. I love being able to ride off-lead all the time because then

it's just me and Te out on the trail, and he definitely likes not having someone always standing right next to him. I would ride all day, everyday if I could. And when I'm not riding, I'm doodling, and sometimes I come to the barn with my friend Megan to see Te and everyone else. I love riding, and can't wait until I have my own horse and can ride everyday. But right now I'd rather be riding Te at Sunnyside.

Congratulations to Our 2007 SPUR Volunteers of the Year!

By Pat Bernstein



Junior Volunteer Alex Neff

Alex has been a part of our SPUR program since June of 2005. She has helped us in many different capacities and because of her horse handling abilities and her rapport with our instructors and students she was an obvious choice to help Liz and Cindy launch their Advanced ARIES Intersession program this winter. Even a broken bone in her foot didn't stop her for long! She only missed two lessons and made sure that she was there to help for the last lesson of the session. As Liz observed, "Alex has always stepped up; has been a wonderful help to the staff in running the daily programs,

and relates well to the participants as well as the other volunteers." In addition to the hours she volunteers with SPUR, Alex has also volunteered with the Monmouth County Park System's Youth Horseback Riding Summer Camp program. We are grateful for all her help and would like to note that we enjoy having her at Sunnyside as much as she seems to enjoy being here.

Co-volunteers Jackie and Art Neill



Jackie began volunteering with us in June of 2003 and fit in with our Sunnyside team so well that we quickly realized she was a great match for our more challenging students. Liz has noted that Jackie's warmth, patience, and firmness enable her students to relax and focus.

Jackie is equally adept at helping new volunteers "learn the ropes" and is comfortable helping in any kind of lesson, from our regular SPUR lessons to our ARIES program. She always comes to the barn smiling and, equally important, always leaves with the same sunny attitude.

Pat first discovered Jackie's husband Art when she called Jackie to ask her to substitute. Pat realized right away that Art would be a great person to recruit as a volunteer. With a little coaxing, he signed up for a March 2005 workshop and fit in just as quickly-and just as well-as Jackie had. Art is a great help with all of our SPUR students, especially in our ARIES program. Liz has commented that Art has a way of encouraging a reluctant student to do his or her work happily and that "his sense of humor has helped a great number of students to succeed." When we thank Art at the end of a lesson, he invariably thanks *us*!



NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LINCROFT, NJ
PERMIT NO. 42

Just a note... We publish our semi-annual newsletter to keep you informed about all the SPUR news, as well as upcoming events and fund raisers. Our next issue is Fall 2008.