

# Newsletter



## R.O.C.K. Talk January 2011 Issue

### R.O.C.K. Riders: Spotlight on Annalise C.

Catherine Bailey, R.O.C.K. Volunteer Newsletter Editor



Annalise shares her love of riding with Bobby Steiner and Rafy.  
Photo provided by Gaynor Photography

Flip to the month of October in the 2011 Down Syndrome Association of Central Texas (DSACT) calendar and you will find that you recognize the horse and the adorable rider! Rafy and R.O.C.K. Rider Annalise C. appear

in the new calendar celebrating the ability and the desire of persons with Down Syndrome to engage in life-enriching activities. Annalise's expression says it all: it doesn't get

much better than riding Rafy!

Annalise C. began therapeutic riding lessons at R.O.C.K. five years ago, and has experienced significant improvements in her strength, confidence, and speech. She has demonstrated her riding abilities during Open House events and enjoyed R.O.C.K. summer camp activities. On a hot day, Annalise enjoys cooling off after her lesson in the shade of the gazebo with a Popsicle. Lessons this semester, with NARHA Registered Instructor, Hannah Yterdal, are focused on increased confidence and skill (especially when mounting and trotting), grooming and horse care, and training for horse show competitions.

When asked for a bit of advice for parents and students new to R.O.C.K., Annalise and her parents David and Sara C. had words of encouragement: "Be patient and enjoy watching how you or your family member will benefit in so many ways by riding at R.O.C.K." Annalise's sister, Clarissa, volunteers at R.O.C.K. as a Horse Handler and Side Walker. The family offered this suggestion for volunteers: "Smile a lot - show the rider you are really excited to be with them. Talk and interact with the rider."

When not attending school at Annie Purl Elementary in Georgetown, Annalise enjoys spending time with her family,

especially watching the classic musicals like "Oklahoma" and "Hello Dolly." Eloise is her favorite book and for good reason. Who can resist the chatty, self-confident, little girl who lives at New York's Plaza Hotel and reminds us that "Getting bored is not allowed"?

Both Rafy and Cinnabon, Annalise's Golden Retriever, would surely tell you how much they enjoy the hugs that they receive from Annalise. If only they could speak, they would tell you: experience a hug from Annalise, share a giggle with her, and you will know joy!

*Editor's Note:* You can order the Down Syndrome Association of Central Texas calendar at [www.dsact.com](http://www.dsact.com). All proceeds benefit the DSACT. Be sure to note Annalise's name on the order form when answering: *How did you hear about the Share the Passion Calendar?*

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### Saddle Up for Horse Shows

Catherine Bailey, R.O.C.K. Volunteer Newsletter Editor



R.O.C.K. Riders are invited to compete in upcoming horse shows. Riders may compete in showmanship at halter, English Pleasure/Equitation, Western Pleasure/Equitation, Barrels, Trail, and even dressage.

By participating in Horse Shows, athletes:

- ♥ Gain self-confidence and self-esteem
- ♥ Experience friendship in and out of the arena
- ♥ Increase incentive to improve in riding skills which may cross over to improved abilities off the horse
- ♥ Are more physically active
- ♥ Improve focus and attention skills
- ♥ Show improvement in socializing skills
- ♥ Learn how to cope with changes in routine and how to win and lose

R.O.C.K. Riders may compete at:

- ♥ Top Hands Horse show, Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, in Feb (Entry deadline has passed)
- ♥ Gold Stirrup Horse Show, Travis County Livestock Show and Rodeo, March 13<sup>th</sup>
- ♥ Special Olympics Regional Equestrian Horse Show on April 10<sup>th</sup> (Special Olympic Medicals must be completed – see instructor to get these medical forms)
- ♥ Special Olympics Chapter Games June 17-19<sup>th</sup> (must have participated in SO Regional event and be 12 years of age or older)
- ♥ Mid Tex Quarter Horse Association Show series in June – August.

Interested in competing?

Consult with a R.O.C.K. instructor to determine horse shows and events that match the rider's abilities and goals.

Weekly lessons can then provide the opportunity to practice for their events, develop showmanship and build confidence.

R.O.C.K. Riders have specific responsibilities when competing, including:

- ♥ All athletes must be 8 years or older at the time of the horse show.
- ♥ Athletes must wear show appropriate attire as defined by AQHA. **(See your instructor to see what that means for you)**
- ♥ Special adaptive equipment may be used where appropriate. **(Your instructor will be using this equipment during practices. These horse shows allow these accommodations without penalty)**
- ♥ Transportation and lodging (if necessary) is the responsibility of each athlete.
- ♥ There is a fee associated with competitions **not to exceed \$100 per day.**
- ♥ All athletes must attend weekly lessons at R.O.C.K. for a minimum of 3 months prior to competitions.

R.O.C.K.'s responsibility is to ensure the safety of the athletes and horses. To make this happen, R.O.C.K. will ensure that:

- ♥ A minimum of 2 NARHA registered instructors will be at each competition
- ♥ An adequate number of volunteers to assist athletes as their needs require
- ♥ An adequate number of sound horses to provide safe rides for each athlete to compete in at least 2 classes
- ♥ Transportation and care of horses

The number of students for each horse show is limited, so make sure that you respond promptly when you get the email about the confirmation of attendance deadline. A student's request for competition does not guarantee the opportunity to compete. Talk to your instructor to learn more and saddle up for the horse shows!

## Chemical Dependence Equine Therapy

Mary Lynn Szymandera, LCAC, IC DAC, CEFIP  
Licensed Mental Health Professional



The R.O.C.K. experiential equine therapy program for people with chemical addictions utilizes the innate gentleness and natural instincts of

the horse to help participants recognize their own blocks to authenticity, intimacy, communication and trust. People who suffer from addictions, depression, codependence and/or PTSD are frequently fragmented. They are disconnected from aspects of themselves that they are unable to cope with such as feelings of anger, grief or fear. This fragmentation results in a loss of personal power and the need to create a false sense of self to compensate for the lack of authenticity. Strong defenses, denial patterns and/or addictions are developed to keep hidden those feelings, which cannot be confronted and dealt with in a healthy manner.

Participating in R.O.C.K.'s Chemical Dependence Equine Therapy Program is valuable for both the participants and the substance abuse counselor because it increases trust, creates a strong group bond and helps the patients identify important treatment issues. The horses are able to communicate clearly, if subtly, any negative reactions they may have to clients who are not congruent with their feelings. Historically, the horse has depended on its powerful instincts for survival. These instincts enable the animal to sense immediately any lack of congruence in an individual and will respond in a manner consistent to its nature. The horse will not willingly connect with an individual who is fragmented because the animal will not feel safe or comfortable with that individual. The animal will communicate its level of discomfort in subtle ways that the therapist is aware of. The horse then becomes a powerful indicator for the therapist who uses the animal's reaction to open up a dialogue with the individual.

With support from the therapist and willingness on their part, clients are usually able to discover unresolved or previously unidentified feelings and as he or she becomes aware of those deeper feelings, an immediate change in the horse's attitude is apparent. The horse begins showing signs of being more comfortable and ultimately of connecting with the client. Without exception, the horses will then turn their heads toward the person working with them and literally become "present" to that individual. It is as if the horse is saying: "Oh, you finally showed up, now I can show up too." The result is that the client has an opportunity to experience the power of his or her own authenticity and at the same time, is validated by the response he or she gets from the animal's unconditional, positive regard.

Working with the horses is a way for recovering addicts to heal at a deep level those wounds that have left them diminished and fragmented. The equine "Staff" at R.O.C.K. welcome the opportunity to be of service in this unique work. They really love their work because all they have to do is be real – something they are masters at.

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### **Instructors Go Back to School in Denver**

*Patty D'Andrea, R.O.C.K. Program Director*

The 2010 NARHA National Conference and Annual Meeting held **November 3-6, 2010, in Denver, Colorado, brought together** the ever-growing group of professionals in equine-assisted activities and therapies (EAAT). Five R.O.C.K. instructors/ therapists attended the NARHA conference and/or preconference, which featured an impressive array of educational sessions presented by industry experts. We attended many outstanding educational sessions designed to teach, inspire, celebrate and challenge professionals in the EAAT industry.



Mentor Training - Ashley Colvin and Taylor Doll completed training to mentor other instructor candidates and create a mentor program. With the addition of Ashley and Taylor, R.O.C.K. now has 5 certified NARHA Mentors, including Lisa Walker, Heidi Dering and myself. R.O.C.K. will host its first NARHA Instructor Training Course in March, thanks to our strong base of dedicated, NARHA-certified instructors.

Evaluator Training - I advanced to an apprentice Evaluator for NARHA on-site workshops and certifications.

Horses for Heroes - Mary Lynn Szymandera and Nancy Krenek learned of new therapies conducted in the round pen for veterans in wheelchairs during the educational sessions provided by NARHA Horses for Heroes. Inspired by this session, we are considering changes to our round pen to improve wheel chair accessibility and safety. Therapy in the round pen has great potential to increase the horse/human connection in several of our programs.

Program Planning and Administration – Conference courses included instruction on assessing the number and size of horses necessary; determining what tack is needed; evaluating the ratio of volunteers and instructors per student; and how to accurately determine the number and types of riders our center can serve. Methods of identifying, recruiting and engaging "partners," such as physicians, therapists, VA Hospitals, etc., were discussed, as well as Human Resource

management, benefits and compensation for nonprofit organizations.

Center Accreditation Training - Conference speakers focused on "best practices" in the industry, which serve to challenge us to an even higher standard. Nancy Krenek and I completed the mandatory accreditation training, as R.O.C.K. prepares for re-certification as a Premier Accredited Center.

Participation in the national NARHA conference was enlightening, rewarding, and challenging. Much of what we heard from speakers and colleagues confirmed that R.O.C.K. is on the right track, and a trailblazer in the documentation of progress, creating goals, caring for horses and doing research. We returned from Denver and the NARHA conference with inspired new ideas and a rededication to "healing thru horses."

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### **ROCKATEER NEWS**

#### **Volunteer of the Month**

*Chandra Simms, R.O.C.K. Volunteer Coordinator*

R.O.C.K. is fortunate to have amazing volunteers who constantly find new ways to go above and beyond their regular volunteer duties. To honor their service, we pay tribute to these individuals by awarding them with the distinction of "Volunteer of the Month."



**Cheryl Helson**, Volunteer of the Month for October, has lived in Georgetown for 28 years and after retiring from teaching middle school math, Cheryl chose to continue working with students by volunteering at R.O.C.K. Cheryl's glowing smile and generous spirit brighten the day of everyone she works with. Whether she is horse handling, long-lining, side walking or assisting with volunteer training, Cheryl is always willing to help. It is amazing, but not surprising, that she has volunteered more than 879 hours at R.O.C.K. since May of 2009.



**Rebecca Black**, Volunteer of the Month for November, began volunteering at R.O.C.K. in October and has quickly become an exceptional side walker and horse handler. Rebecca is a Certified Nursing Assistant and is currently studying nursing at ACC. An enthusiastic volunteer, Rebecca has previously been involved with Special Olympics, AWANAS, Partners in PE, Hearthstone Health Center and St. David's hospital. Despite her busy schedule she still dedicates five to eight hours a week to R.O.C.K.

## Applause and Accolades

### 500+ Hours

Hip hip hooray for **Ravyn Finch** and **Joyce Roebuck**. These amazing volunteers have each donated over 500 hours of their time to R.O.C.K., earning them the coveted "500 Hour Vest." These outstanding individuals will be among the volunteers honored at the 2010-2011 Volunteer Appreciation Party.

### 100+ Hours

Congratulations to **Greg Kaufman**, **Holly Mynk**, **Judy Jones** and **Paige Grigsby**. These volunteers earned their "100 Hour Nametag" in November.

### Reminders

Please make sure to check the Volunteer Bulletin Board in the Tack Room for any updates or notices.

### Justin Boot Drawing!

EACH TIME you volunteer in the arena your name is entered into a drawing for a free pair of Justin Boots. The more you volunteer the greater your chances of winning! Boot drawing winners include Kittie Clark, Julie Biggs, and Robert Weiss.



### Volunteers Rock!

*John Schmalstieg, R.O.C.K. Property/Facilities Supervisor*

A favorite part of my job in facilities management is to supervise volunteers that come out to work on the facilities. We are fortunate to have many volunteers, both individually and groups, who accomplish many things that would not get done otherwise.



Volunteer groups from Dell, Inc., come out regularly to provide a variety of assistance. Their hard work is apparent on the Heroes' Trail: cutting and edging the grass, pulling weeds, and spreading mulch on the trail itself. Dell groups have also worked on the Sensory Trail weeding the flower beds and paths, and creating the wonderful characters that now brighten up the trail. Dell groups have installed the fence where Cutter and Lucki live during the day, cleaned up the wood pile in the back, and have been removing rocks in the mare's pasture. Dell groups also installed the concrete pads that the water tanks in the pastures now sit on. These pads were needed to level the water tanks for use with our new automatic fillers.

If you like what has been done to the front of the arena you can thank Lowe's Building Materials. R.O.C.K. applied for and

received a grant from the Lowe's Foundation that covered the cost of mulch, plants and an irrigation system and provided the manpower to install them. It is quite an improvement and will look great in the Spring.

We on the staff at R.O.C.K. depend on volunteers to keep our facility in top shape. I look forward to future opportunities to work with individual volunteers and groups to make R.O.C.K. look and function even better for our riders, horses, instructors and volunteers.

## HERD NEWS

### Welcome to the ROCK herd!



R.O.C.K.

**Sherrie** is a Belgian draft mare with a beautiful flaxen mane and tail. Sherrie's previous experience includes pulling wagons and trail riding. She comes to R.O.C.K. through the generosity of Kelly Boesen, who also donated Dude to



**Tarra** is a Welsh/Arabian mare that looks like a Barbie horse with her flowing locks. Tarra's previous experience includes pony club, costume classes and trail riding. Jodi Dove, Dan's previous owner, graciously donated Tarra to R.O.C.K.

After a year and a half of devoted service, **Roma** will be returning home to her owner, Rene Bissonett. Roma gave her heart to every rider she encountered. She will be missed.

### Horse Memorial Donations Welcome

*Lisa Walker, R.O.C.K. Equine Manager and NARHA Registered Instructor*



What proud, strong and amazing gifts we have in our herd! Now you have an opportunity to give them the recognition they deserve.

Do you remember the gaze of Pokey's big sweet eyes and that look of "I'll do whatever it takes..." to help YOU! It didn't matter who you were or what you were asking of him. How about sweet little Stewie, also eager to please? Remember Dan, Misty, Shelly, and R.O.C.K.'s own Miss Prissy Texan, NARHA Horse of the Year 2001.

A plan is in the works for creating a memorial area for those horses that have served R.O.C.K. so generously and wholeheartedly. The plan includes an engraved granite plaque on a pedestal and a small bronze statue, "Walking Horse." Our

goal is raise \$2,000. We gladly welcome any gift you can contribute.

For more information, contact Lisa Walker, R.O.C.K. Equine Manager, [lisa@rockride.org](mailto:lisa@rockride.org) or (512) 930-7625.

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## TIDBITS

### Ready for Some (Super Bowl) Football??

The countdown has begun for Super Bowl XLV .... Dallas .... February 6, 2011. ROCK has a limited number of tickets for sale to some of the most exclusive Super Bowl gatherings! Regardless of which teams play that day, this is your once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to attend one or more of several amazing Super Bowl XLV events and parties before the day of the game. Proceeds from the ticket sales for these events will benefit R.O.C.K. The deadline for ticket purchases is January 25<sup>th</sup>.



Watch your email inbox for a separate email with the party details and costs. If you are interested in purchasing tickets, please contact Christy Hall at [christy@rockride.org](mailto:christy@rockride.org) or 512/930-7625.

### All I need to know in life I learned from my horse

You can never have too many treats.  
Passing gas in public is nothing to be ashamed of.  
Everyone loves a good, wet, slobbery kiss.  
Never gallop when you can trot. Never trot when you can walk. And never walk when you can stand still.  
Heaven is eating at least 10 hours a day... and then sleeping the rest.  
Great legs and a nice rear will get you anywhere. Big, brown eyes help too.  
Act dumb when faced with a task you don't want to do.  
Follow the herd. That way, you can't be singled out to take the blame.  
Love those who love you back, especially if they have something good to eat.

### Horse Trivia: How Tall is Your Horse?

Horse height is correctly referred to by a unit of measurement known as a "hand." To determine how tall a horse is, first measure the horse in inches, from the ground in a straight line up to the highest point of the withers. After you have measured your horse you will need to convert the results from inches to "hands." One hand is equal to four inches.

The origin of measuring a horse this way is very old, but easy to understand. In days long ago people did not have the common measuring devices (like tape measures, etc.) that we do today. To measure a horse, they used what was handy:

their hands. At various times in history and in different locales a "hand" was defined as the width of a person's hand using the fingers only; the width of a person's hand using the fingers plus the thumb; and the height of a clenched fist. Somewhere along the way, the measuring unit of a hand was standardized to mean four inches. Though the origins are ancient, a hand is still the unit of measurement for horses that modern horse owners use today.

### Red Brick Valentine



Thanks to your support of the new Red Brick program during the holiday season, we are very close to installing the inaugural square with

164 bricks. With **Valentine's Day** around the corner, remember that all Red Brick proceeds go directly to benefit R.O.C.K. riders. At a cost of \$100 each, Red Bricks are a unique and lasting way to remember, honor or simply send a message to someone special. Say "I Love You" to your Valentine with a Red Brick at R.O.C.K. Please contact Christy Hall at [Christy@rockride.org](mailto:Christy@rockride.org) or 512/930-7625.

### NARHA Therapeutic Riding Instructor Training Course (ITC)

starts Feb 28. Class is limited to 6 students for this 15-week course. Class meets on Mondays from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm, plus additional student teaching hours. The course will provide class time to include role playing, group teaching and debriefing, additional student instructor teaching hours, and 1 hour of horseback riding with the R.O.C.K. conditioning team each week. Candidates will receive pointers from our 4 Instructors working on their Advanced NARHA Instructor certification (Lisa Walker, Hannah Yterdal, Ashley Colvin, and Taylor Doll). Application and more info can be found on our website. Contact Patty D'Andrea, (512) 930-7625.

### Horseshoe Club Celebration

Please join us **Wednesday February 3<sup>rd</sup> from 6:00 to 8:00 pm** for the 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary celebration of the R.O.C.K. Horseshoe Club. Learn more about the benefits of the club for you and for the herd. Many of our horses are still available for adoption. Hope to see you there.

## IMPORTANT DATES

Jan 14 – 15	Board of Directors' Retreat
Jan 15	Volunteer Orientation, Sidewalker, Horse Prep, and Horsehandler Training
Feb 8	Executive Committee and Board of Directors Meetings
Feb 9	Volunteer Orientation and Sidewalker Training
Feb 14	Volunteer Orientation and Sidewalker Training
Feb 18 – 20	Top Hands Horseshow in conjunction with Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo
Feb 19	Volunteer Orientation, Sidewalker, Horse Prep, and Horsehandler Training
Feb 26	LAST DAY of Winter Session
Mar 1	FIRST DAY of Spring Session
Mar 8	Executive Committee
Mar 14 – 20	No Classes (Spring Break)
Mar 13	Gold Stirrup Horseshow in conjunction with Travis County Livestock Show & Rodeo
Mar 15 – 17	NARHA Onsite workshop
Mar 18 – 21	American Hippotherapy Association AHA Level I Training
Apr 8-9	NO CLASSES due to set-up for Barn Dance
Apr 9	Barn Dance
Apr 12	Executive Committee and Board of Directors Meetings
Apr 16	Open House