

HORSING AROUND

Eleven children ages 6 to 12 learned the basics about horses at a pony day camp last week at the Horses Unlimited barn in South Park Township.

They learned to groom, saddle and bridle a horse, tried the English hunt seat riding style and even did horse-related arts and crafts. Demonstrations by a blacksmith and equine dentist were included in the program at the company's barn off Stoltz Road.

Horses Unlimited has 22 animals, including a donkey, and provides pony rides in South Park and offers riding lessons. Dave and Mary Amoroso started the company in 1995.



► Lauren White, 8, of Peters Township, gets a lesson from Mary Amoroso, owner of the Horses Unlimited farm, recently in South Park. Several children from the area took part in a pony day camp at the farm.

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► Brooke Ball, 5, of Baldwin, helps to pound a nail into a new horse shoe with farrier Philip Heidenreich at the farm.



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◀ Michael Columbus, 9, of Brentwood, giggles as he trots on a horse, owned by Mary Amoroso, at the farm.

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Camp teaches riders the basics

By Meredith Polley
FOR THE TRIBUNE-REVIEW



Philip G. Pavely/Tribune-Review

Mary Amoroso (front right) conducts an instructional ride during horse camp Monday at Horses Unlimited in South Park.

South Park

— she and a few others are taking private riding lessons. Many of the riders, all younger than 11, were returning for a second year.

Whether sporting an actual riding or bicycle helmet, none of the campers could wait for his or her turn to trot around the ring.

Discussing favorite steeds, future equestrian careers and a mutual love of horses, the children only had one complaint about caring for their favorite animals.

"You get used to the smell after about two days," said Michael Columbus, 10, of Brentwood. "Picking up poop is the only bad part."

On the other hand, Michael and Cassie Nadzum, 9, of Brentwood, could quickly agree on their favorite part.

"Tank!" both campers screamed. "He is the biggest, the strongest

and the coolest," Michael said of the largest and only full-size horse in the Amorosos' barn.

Dave Amoroso said most of the animals they own are trained for such riders and have fairly amiable dispositions. On Monday, the campers rode Star, a horse that has been with Amoroso for about 20 years.

"That's longer than my marriage," he said.

Horses are a full-time job for the Amorosos who, until this summer, also had been giving pony rides around the ring at the South Park Fairgrounds. After missing the deadline for the bidding this year, when the county sent the paperwork to a wrong address, the Amorosos are fighting to regain their spot.

Through their business called Horses Unlimited, the Amorosos still are plenty busy with private lessons and another horse camp

in August.

Camp sessions take place from 10 a.m. to about 1:15 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Cost is \$225.

Even if the camp is only four days long, the young riders said they can't get enough of the horses.

Maria Carbonara, 7, of Peters, said she likes being so tall when she's on a horse's back.

Cassie said she loves riding because it's carefree. And Katy said she likes that no rules delay riders while riding horses, unlike vehicles and traffic jams.

Although there may not be many rules, Mary Amoroso is teaching her campers good form and technique. As each rider mounted to ride around the ring, she called instructions.

"Shoulders back. Toes up. Pinkies in. And a big smile."

Meredith Polley is a freelance writer.