

Couple rides herd on pony rink revival effort

County funding key to South Park site

By Don Palmerine

TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Dave and Mary Amoroso are pony people.

The Bethel Park couple, owners of Horses Unlimited in South Park, are reopening the pony ride rink at the South Park Fairgrounds.

With the help of Allegheny County, which rebuilt the rink, Amoroso and his wife will begin giving pony rides Saturday.

"It's been a long time coming," Amoroso said.

The couple, who met while riding trail horses in South Park, own nine horses, seven of them ponies.

"They were horses no one else wanted," Amoroso said. "We fed them and got their weight up."

Mary Amoroso said the horses were headed for "pony heaven" when they purchased them.

It's been two years since the couple started a campaign to resurrect the pony rink, which at the time had been out of operation for about three years.

Park officials were reluctant to start the business again because of allegations of horse abuse against Nick and Sophie Lake, former owners of the Valley Brook stables. Those charges were dismissed, but



Dean Beattie/For the Tribune-Review

Dave Amoroso tends to a pony at the South Park site.

the pony ride operators believe the accusations had a lingering effect.

"They (the county) soured on pony rides. They didn't want to take a chance," Mary Amoroso said.

Today, only state police horses

are housed at the Valley Brook stables. Trail rides are prohibited in the park.

"Beginners and experienced riders liked to ride the trail horses at the park," Mary Amoroso said. "That's how my husband and I met.

Now that's all gone. We'd like to get that back also. We're circulating a petition to get it back."

The deal with the county has not been finalized.

Amoroso said he will pay a percentage of sales in return for the use of the rink.

County officials were not available for comment Wednesday. Work on the rink was completed Tuesday.

"The county has done a lot," Amoroso said.

"Besides the rink, they put in lights and electricity. They built it right where the old pony ride rink used to be."

The cost is \$2 per child.

Times will be flexible, depending on weather.

Most weekends the rink will open at noon and close at nightfall. On weekdays, the rink will be open after 5 p.m. until dark.

The rink will operate on a seasonal basis.

"If the weather is nice at Christmas, we'll be out there," Amoroso said.

Amoroso, who also provides private riding lessons and horse rides for parties, estimates that from 100 to 200 youngsters will ride on an average summer day.

"This is going to be a permanent thing," Amoroso said.