

**Friends of Governor Dodge-Equestrians**

4175 State Highway 23N

Dodgeville, WI 53533

4/24/20

Dear Wisconsin Horse Council Trails Committee,

On behalf of the Friends of Governor Dodge State Park and many grateful trail users, thank you for awarding us grant funding to carry out much needed trail repairs on a popular multi-user trail loop at Governor Dodge State Park. This loop, along with other equestrian trails at Governor Dodge, sustained significant damage in 2018 and 2019 due to unusually wet weather and many torrential downpours. The wet conditions not only forced several (previously rare) closings of the park's equestrian trails, but also impeded efforts to carry out needed repairs.

This year, with your assistance, the Friends will fund repairs of a number of the most severely affected areas on one loop of the park's equestrian trails. These repairs are important both for user safety and to prevent further trail damage. The repairs will help keep the beautiful trails at Governor Dodge State Park sustainable by preventing further erosion and ever-expanding mud holes.

The loop chosen for this year's repairs leads west on the Driftless trail from the park's day ride trailhead, circling back to the trailhead via sections of the Goldmine, Meadow Valley and Woodland Trails. This is a popular loop with many day riders at the park, who will also have an opportunity to enjoy the improvements at the trailhead that were funded in part by last year's WHC trails grants (thank you again).

These are all multi-use trails, and the repairs will also be appreciated by the hikers, dog-walkers and family groups who traverse the trails on foot, in addition to trail riders. We are happy to be carrying out this project, which shows in a very practical way the value of equestrians as trail partners and good stewards. Thank you for your generous support of this effort.

Sincerely,

Jean Warrior

President, Friends of Governor Dodge State Park



Scavenger Hunt

Horse Ride

Guided Hike

New Date!

Sunday, September 13, 2020

Silent Auction & Lunch Included

Rain or Shine 9:30 a.m.—1:30 pm

Proof of Negative Coggins Required for Horses

Governor Dodge State Park

4175 State Hwy 23 N

Dodgeville, WI 53533

All Proceeds Fund NEW Equestrian Campground

Register by August 14 for FREE T-shirt!

Horse riders follow a marked trail, riding at their leisure in small groups. **FUN!**

No horse? No problem! Join a park naturalist on a **FUN and informative hike.**

\$30 per participant, includes lunch, silent auction and entertainment! **FUN!**

Stop by for Lunch \$15 **FUN!**

Details at www.GovDodgeEquestrians.com

A Place for Healing: Chippewa Falls woman turns to horses for therapy

By Nate Jackson, The Country Today / thecountrytoday.com

CHIPPEWA FALLS — Holly Schindler gives much of the credit for her strength to her horses.

Schindler, who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis 20 years ago, started working with horses 17 years ago, primarily her service mini-horse, Mocha, and an Arabian mare, Emeera. She saw benefits not only muscularly, an advantage of riding the horses, but also mentally.

"I ride Emeera, I play with my mini-horses, but having an ongoing medical condition is not like a warm-fuzzy," Schindler said. "There are good days and bad days. Sometimes you can wind up in a really dark place, but my horses and a lot of really good friends have helped me get to where I'm at now.

"I can have my worst day, but if I get near my horses, it gives me a more positive outlook."

Multiple sclerosis is an unpredictable, often disabling disease of the central nervous system that disrupts the flow of information within the brain, and between the brain and body, according to the National MS Society. More common symptoms of MS are fatigue, numbness or tingling, weakness, walking difficulties and spasticity.

Schindler was diagnosed with MS at the age of 31 in 2000 after noticing early symptoms when she was working at Marshfield Clinic–Eau Claire Center.

Since the diagnosis, Schindler said there have been ups and downs to go along with the many doctors visits and hospital stays. But with help from family, friends and horses, she is now at a point that would have looked unlikely 20 years ago.

"I'm on the least amount of medication I've ever been on," Schindler said. "This has been my best year since my diagnosis. (My doctor) said the reason I'm doing so amazing is I didn't stop. He said, 'You just kept going. You don't feel sorry for yourself, you just find another way.'

"And now I'm having more good days than bad days."

After years of working with horses on her Chippewa Falls-area farm that includes a competition-size outdoor riding arena, a tractor shed that has been converted into an indoor arena, a dairy barn that has been modified to include horse stalls, a quarantine area and room for horse boarding, Schindler has decided to officially open her farm to anyone looking for any possible health benefits that can come from working with horses by opening Holly's Place to offer horse-assisted therapy.



Submitted photo

Holly Schindler of Chippewa Falls was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis 20 years ago but has fought the disease, in part, with help from her Arabian horse, Emeera.

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“The kids and the adults love the idea that finally, after all these years, this is going to be positive for more people,” said Schindler, who volunteers with 4-H and as a MS support specialist. “Everybody kept saying, ‘Just go to Holly’s place.’ So now we’ve named it Holly’s Place, and we’re going to be able to do so much more for people.”

Holly’s Place has several certified peer support specialists on staff who will work with people of all ages on emotional, spiritual, physical and “coping with life” problems, Schindler said.

“Anybody can come here, and I will be my best to try to help,” Schindler said. “It started with me, because I need help. Then one of the kids helped out with a boarding horse, so I thought, let’s turn this into a mentoring thing, let’s share information, share education. I am wholeheartedly full of education here.”

Schindler said she decided to offer horse therapy because it worked for her, both emotionally and physically. The idea to offer horse therapy, she said, came from working with 4-H’ers and others who came to spend time with the horses.

“I was having so many kids coming here just to play with horses and help me out because I was in a wheelchair,” Schindler said. “While they were helping me out, they would open up and start a conversation and bring an awareness to me that we need to help.”

Holly’s Place will have therapists and trainers who will work with everyone from senior citizens to at-risk teenagers to trauma sufferers or those with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or post traumatic stress disorder. Instructors have also used horses for speech therapy, workforce development and helping people recovering from addictions, Schindler said.

“The horse-human connection is essential,” Schindler said. “Horses innately respond to the way people feel. If you are having a bad day and go out in my pasture, my horses would know it. Horses respond to body language, and if you’ve had a bad day, you’re all out there with horses.

“Not only that, but everybody, whether they have a horse or not, says when they come here, ‘This is a beautiful place. I feel like I can finally breathe when I come here.’”

Schindler said a key partnership in getting Holly’s Place started is with the Colorado-based organization Happiness Through Horses, a group that states its mission as being “to heal the hearts of struggling youth through bonding with horses.”

Schindler said she has seen amazing results from working with youth who are having a hard time socially or emotionally.

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