

A Girl, A Bull and A Dream

BY JESSICA GUARDINO
Camelot Rider & Volunteer

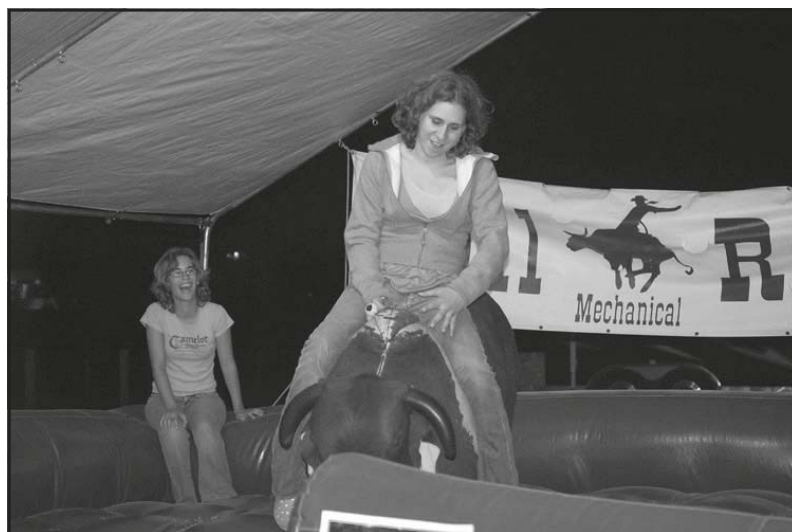
Ever since I started riding at Camelot in 2004, my goal has been to show in Dressage. Now I have another horsemanship goal to add to my list. During one of my lessons, Michelle, a Camelot instructor, asked me if I wanted to go to the conference in Wyoming to speak about disability etiquette. I told her yes right away. I didn't have to think about it because from that moment I knew my life was going to change.

This past June, Camelot staff and I attended a North American Riding for the Handicapped (NARHA) Region 10 Conference in Sheridan, Wyoming. Even though I wasn't a riding instructor or executive director of a therapeutic riding facility, I felt at home amongst the other attendees. In fact, while I listened to the speakers, I was inspired; I realized that I do want to become a NARHA certified riding instructor to help other people with disabilities learn about horsemanship.

I learned a lot that weekend through the wonderful workshops. Michelle, Heather, another Camelot instructor, and I spoke at the conference about disability etiquette and the proper ways of working with and assisting people who have disabilities.

After the second day of listening to speakers, we went to the Buffalo Bill Days Show where cowboys jumped through fire and riders performed gymnastics on

Jessica riding Eli the mechanical bull in Wyoming. Photo by Michelle LaFleur, NARHA region 10 representative.



horseback. When the show was over, we rode a mechanical bull named Eli. I did not think I would be able to because of my disability and my trunk balance. I was definitely wrong! Michelle, Mary, our executive director, and Heather lifted me on the bull. I rode him for about five seconds and then I fell off.

This happened twice and something told me to get back on him. I held on with all my might. At that moment, it occurred to me that my experience on horseback was keeping me on the bull. I have been riding at Camelot for three years and because of it, I had strengthened my core and back muscles. I was able to hold on and balance!

When I was done riding Eli, I called everyone to tell them about my accomplishment. My friends and family members were surprised because before I came to Camelot, I was the typical New Yorker who would never even consider

getting on a mechanical bull!

The whole NARHA conference was life-changing. Michelle, Mary, Heather and I ventured to a new destination and tried new things. For five days and through three airports, I had the time of my life. Thank you for such a great experience. I cannot wait to go to the conference again next year.

Since I have come to Camelot, I have seen how the program and the people have touched students' lives and fostered their goals to compete, to instruct or to follow their dreams.

It wasn't just the conference that made me want to become a riding instructor. It was Camelot's program, volunteers, instructors and one student in particular that made me realize that people with disabilities can teach horsemanship.

One Tuesday afternoon, Camelot alumni George Bohnert came to demonstrate to a colleague how he assists

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"Within our dreams and aspirations we find our opportunities." ~ Sue Atchley Ebaugh.



NIFTY BITS

News From the Ranch

Welcome to our new volunteers:

Kimberly Caravone; Jessica Guardino, a Camelot rider; Hillary Hatch, a Camelot Alum; Phil Simpson; Nancy Smith; Julie Wechsler. Thank for beginning your journey during the most difficult time of the year and seeing it through!

Welcome to our newest students: Scott Bloomer, Alex Higgins, Ricky Lynn, Mel Ventura and Judy Witt.

Welcome to our new equine staff members! Nicholas, an Oldenburg-Thoroughbred cross was generously donated by Susan Knox; and Adonis, an Arabian yearling, was generously donated by John and Sharon Ames. We are so fortunate to have such great teachers in our program!

A very special thank you to Heather Ferguson, who spent the past five years making a positive impact on those at Camelot. It has been a pleasure and a honor watching you transform into a mighty horsewoman. Good luck in your next adventure! M & M

We will be saying farewell to Judi DePhillips, who has volunteered at Camelot for ten years. It is time we share her with others. We will miss you on Tuesdays and look forward to your "fill-in" days!

Welcome aboard to Jeanne Johnson, who has been volunteering since 2005, but recently took on the position of weekend CMO (Chief Mucking Officer). Thank you for everything you do!

Welcome aboard Amy Van Denburgh, our new barn manager. We are excited to have you on deck with all your great experience.

Warm gratitude to Bill Ramseyer, the president of the Pinnacle Peak RMS group, for helping us get the *Slay Your Dragons Tour* off the ground. It is an amazing opportunity to bring disability awareness to our community. Thank you!

We send our gratitude and best wishes to James Shaw, who's donated his time to work with our students. James is the author of *Tai Chi for the Equestrian* and is an international clinician. You will be hearing more about James soon as we will be having a Day of Healing event with him in January! shawtaichi.com

Thank you Horsense Equestrian Youth Riding Camp for donating the new saddles, bridles and equipment to our program! They are gifts that will keep giving for years to come! Horsensforkids.com

Thank you to the Arizona Equine Rescue for donating a year supply of wormer and six tubs of Strongid for our equine staff! Azequinerescue.org

Thank you to Simone Awhina, sound healer, for coming from Sedona to work with our students and volunteers this summer! Your music is amazing! justsimone.com

Camelot is in need of a few knights in shining armor! Please share the word that we are interviewing for volunteer grant researcher and writers, ranch hands and gardeners. Please contact Michelle, (480) 515-1543.

We are also in need of a few good wheelchairs to keep at the barn. If you have one to donate or have a recommendation, please call Robin at (480) 515-1542.

We have beautiful Camelot horse photo books in the gift shop available for \$75. Shipping available. Contact Robin, (480) 515-1542.

CAMELOT REMEMBERS

Diane Dawn Grassi

Edward Bedson

Jacqueline Shadley Moore

GIVEN IN HONOR OF

Ken Kalina

Happy Birthday!

Gail "Starr" Learner

Congratulations on your marriage!

Memorial gifts in any amount are a beautiful way to honor a beloved friend or family member, be they human or otherwise. We also welcome gifts in honor of birthdays or other special events. All such donations are acknowledged with a special card and a mention in our newsletter.

An Afternoon of Food, Fashion & Fun!

Luncheon, Jewelry & Fashion Show!

Sunday, Sept. 30th,
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Donated to Camelot!

To Purchase Tickets
Contact Pat:

Tickets (480) 629-8583 or at

\$35 Pat@j4c.com

RSVP OR

Required Michelle at
(480) 515-1543

A Girl, A Bull and A Dream...

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Camelot riders when they mount and dismount from our horses. George told me that he was working towards getting his NARHA certification in order to be a therapeutic riding instructor. I never thought I could be a riding instructor because I am a wheelchair user. George, who is also a wheelchair user, taught me that no matter what disability you have, you can still succeed regardless of your obstacles.

I am on my way. I have been volunteering at Camelot once a week since returning from the conference. When I am finished with my bachelor's in Communication from Arizona State University, I am going to work towards getting my NARHA instructor certification so that someday I can touch and influence people's lives, just as George, our volunteers and my instructors have influenced my life.

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Publisher: Mary Hadsall
Editors: Michelle Harrison and
Nancy Smith

River of Dreams

BY MARY HADSALL
Executive Director

Mary is front center on the Colorado River. Photo by Linda Tuck.



If you have ever been out to tour the ranch or read my sentiments about our volunteers, there are a few things you will continually hear me say. Our volunteers are the backbone of our organization; we wouldn't be here without their support; and I am continually humbled when our volunteers thank us for this opportunity. What a quandary. They offer us their strength, knowledge and time, then turn around to thank us for the experience.

Last fall I embarked on an amazing journey. I volunteered my time, strength and knowledge and at the end of the journey I was so very grateful for the experience. I traveled where few have gone, while following in my mentor's footsteps. I traveled over 122 miles of the Grand Canyon's beautiful Colorado River by raft, just as Eileen Szychowski, Camelot's founder, did in 1991. I followed a call that spoke to my spirit.

I was invited to volunteer on this great trip and had less than two weeks to get myself ready and get coverage for the barn. The timing for me was certainly not the best; however, I knew I needed to be on this trip. The time was now.

Twenty seven people came together to work as a team and take on the challenges that come with camping for 10 days on the river. No cell phones, no fax machines, no hot and cold running water (the Colorado river being the "cold water" exception) and yes, you guessed it, no bathrooms! When ten of the riverites have disabilities, the challenges increase tenfold, as do the rewards to the human spirit.

The Colorado River is a place to go where you leave time behind and become one with water, wind and earth. It is a healing place for mind, body and spirit. It took me some time to relax and surrender to the experience. Once I did, the magic of Cataract Canyon did wonders to both my mind and spirit. I remember the moment "it" happened.

We were floating on the water in our rafts, moving silently between towering red rock cliffs. Floating under the deepest of blue skies our silent rafts glided over the water. The only sounds I heard were the occasional laughter or soft voices and water dripping from the oars. I am not certain if I felt or heard the drums first. But there they were, the soft beats reverberating off the cliffs, slowly at first then rising faster and stronger.

I closed my eyes and let myself disappear in the beauty of the music. I felt so safe and peaceful. At that moment, I knew the peace I was in search of was mine to embrace. Challenges faced by all on the river are big. Overcoming tremendous obstacles in such inaccessible terrain creates a situation where it is truly all for one and one for all! Everyone working together, side by side, for the common good.

Participants, river guides and support staff, became friends and family.

It was through this that the spirit of family and unity becomes so clear. Absolutely nothing is impossible! When you work as a family, even the most daunting tasks become easier and less formidable. It was through ingenuity and laughter, perseverance and determination, that the most amazing opportunities presented themselves.

To quote Eileen, "At one point or another, everyone on the trip felt helpless and helpful, yet we always made it work... Together we got where we were going.



Mary shooting photos on the river. Photo by Walt Carr.

The going wasn't easy, but it was magnificent!"

The journey was not an easy one. Not a trip for the faint of heart. For those that have braved the elements of the mighty Colorado River and Mother Nature, I raise my hat in sisterhood. For those on the brink of taking the plunge, jump in!

As my thoughts wander off the Colorado river and back towards the barn, I think of our volunteers. I wonder when "it" happened to them, that moment when they relaxed and surrendered to the magic of Camelot and let it seep into their mind and spirit.

When did they first breathe in the fresh smell of creosote after the rain? When did they gaze up at the blue sky and smile, wondering if they first heard or felt the pounding of Paladin's hooves on the concrete floor? The only other sounds they heard were the occasional laughter or soft voices, the song of birds and the shifting of horses being groomed.

Then they heard the beats pounding, slowly at first then rising faster and stronger. At first they saw an empty wheelchair, then they saw where the sound

was coming from. There was someone trotting in the arena, with the wind in their hair and a smile on their face. When did they know the peace they were in search of was theirs to embrace? Challenges faced by all at Camelot are big. People overcoming tremendous obstacles, working together, side by side, for the common good. It is through

ingenuity and laughter, perseverance and determination that the most amazing opportunities present themselves.

We are all floating in our rafts, but it's the moment we look outside ourselves that we learn to live. Thank you for allowing me volunteer on the River of Dreams. Thank you for offering me this experience. I will take it with me always.

For more information on experiencing the river first hand, please contact the City of Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department.



"When it is the darkest, you can see the stars." ~ Author Unknown.

Heroes' Heroes!

Jeanne Alsphaugh



Jeanne walking on the right while teaching Judi Witt. Heather Ferguson heading Bravo. Photo by Mary Hadsall

Jeanne has been volunteering since 2004 and is one of our first Volunteer Instructors to teach Camelot Dragon Slayers.

She is continually striving for excellence and in pursuit of continuing education. She is striving towards an equine science degree at Scottsdale Community College and recently received an Award of Excellence for her hard work.

But it's not all work, all the time, for Jeanne. She is also is a fantastic Hula Dancer and has been known to perform with her dance troop at various Camelot celebrations!

Introducing Our New Barn Manager...

Hi, my name is Amy Van Denburgh and I began as Camelot's barn manager and riding instructor in August. I was born and raised here in Phoenix and just moved back to the Valley. Summer seems an odd time to return, but I had moved to Iowa in December, so clearly I have my seasons confused.

I am new to Camelot and the therapeutic riding industry, but not to horses or hard work. My equine background is based in the Arabian and Half-Arabian breeds. I have been riding since age two, began formal instruction 17 years ago and have spent the last 13 years showing. For the past nine years I have been working as a trainer. I think my parents have finally given up hope that I will grow out of my horse-crazy stage!

I graduated in 2006 from Northern Arizona University with a bachelor's of arts in liberal studies, with an emphasis in business and a focus in equine science.

My horse, Riskie Business +++//, is a



Amy with Adonis, therapy horse in training.

15-year-old Half-Arabian, Half-Quarter Horse hunter pleasure gelding. I am also the proud mother of Blue, a slightly neurotic Jack Russell Terrier, and an extremely hungry Cocker Spaniel mutt named Oso.

I am very excited about joining Camelot! A special thanks to our summer volunteers for seeing it through and for helping to train me. I look forward to continuing to learn from our students, volunteers and horses. I'm sure the lesson season will bring more great experiences as I get the opportunity to meet the rest of the Camelot team!

Our Arena Project is Completed!



Thank You Arena Angels!

★ The Sybil B. Harrington Trust of Amarillo Texas
- Thank you for covering our arena -

Ames Construction ★
Specifically John & Sharon Ames
Thank you for removing, replacing and improving our footing.

★ Thank you to all of the hands that physically made this dream possible.
★ *Each of you will be remembered!*

CAMELOT Therapeutic Horsemanship, Inc.
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supporters...you are
our believers!

~ Mary Hadsall,
Executive Director