



ST. CROIX TRAIL BLAZERS

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 7 | JULY 2017

Camilo at World Games

In our January 2017 newsletter, we highlighted Camilo Mejia going to World Games. I wanted to follow-up to see how this exciting experience went. Camilo’s mom, Patricia Schaber, shared this story with us. Camilo we are so proud of you and glad to have you “back in the saddle!”

Camilo Mejia was on the USA team for Special Olympics World Games in Austria in March 2017. He competed in Alpine Ski in the Giant Slalom and Slalom races. He brought home a Silver medal in the Slalom and a sixth place in the Giant Slalom. It was an experience of a lifetime for him. It was the ultimate reward for 16 years of ski practice.



The World Games were a culmination of a year of training and preparation. He is on the Lumberjacks Alpine Ski team for Special Olympics and trains every Sunday morning at Afton Alps from December to March in December, he trained with the USA team for a week in Killington, Vermont. In March 2017, the USA team gathered in Washington D.C. for two days for an orientation and then on to Austria, first in the mountainous

region of Schladming, and later in Graz for the closing ceremonies. He was responsible for his own schedule and being in the right place at the right time. It was a challenge that he met with determination and much effort.

The games in Austria were filled with daily skiing, touring, activities, and the competition. When he wasn’t competing, he was cheering on his team. There were lots of parties and events during the two weeks. A highlight was the opening ceremony where athletes entered to 10,000 cheering fans. Jason Mraz and Grace VanderWaal sang and dozens of skiers carrying torches weaved down the mountain to light the Olympic flame.

Camilo was proud to represent the USA and made many good friends. Special Olympics national and international competitions can only support a few team members from each state so it is an honor to be selected. Camilo enjoys sharing his experience about Special Olympics. He is in the Athlete Leadership Program at Special Olympics to learn how to give speeches and presentations.

MISSION

Trail Blazers mission is to provide horseback riding, training, and competitive sports opportunities to individuals with special needs in a safe learning environment through adaptive equine experience.

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Special Olympics Competition Approaching



“Let me win.
But if I cannot win,
let me be brave
in the attempt.”

The oath you see above, is the Special Olympics Athlete Oath. Riders have begun working on competition skills. A lot of concentration and memory work goes into the events they will compete in. For example, the judge just told me to reverse my horse, where’s that rider going, now I weave the cones, am I

supposed to walk or trot? For most of us remembering all these things and doing it while riding a horse could come easily. For our riders, it’s takes a lot of practice, determination, and patience to complete all these tasks called motor planning and executive function planning. The day of competition, there is excitement and nervousness but in the end every athlete wins because they have done their best and were brave in their attempt. Wish our athletes good luck as competition approaches!

Special Olympics Equestrian Competition

Friday, August 19, 8:00 a.m.

Northwest Saddle Club

North Branch, Minnesota

Bridge View School

The past three years, St. Croix Trail Blazers has had the opportunity to work with a special needs school in St. Paul called Bridge View. This year they brought five groups of about 15 children to either see a horse, pet the horse, or actually have a short ride.

I helped with the last session of the year and there were children from first grade through high school. I recognized one young man who barely touched the horse last year. This year he not only rode one time but two! The best part was the smile he gave me and the fist bump! Or the very petite, little girl in the wheelchair who signed thank you so I asked her teacher how to sign “you’re welcome” and when I got down to her level and signed “you’re welcome”, she grinned ear to ear and gave me a big hug!



Nothing can beat the smile on their faces and the excitement they have from the

first time ever touching a horse or seeing it up close to actually being on a horse, feeling a different movement, and seeing a different view. I asked one of the teachers if the bus ride home was different than the ride to the barn. He said there was a little more of a calmness but the opposite has also happened where the children didn’t want to leave.

I see so many of these same emotions when a new rider starts with our program and when parents realize the amazing animals that horses are and what happens to their child when they see the confidence that grows, the muscles that strengthen, the motor skills that increase, or the independence that happens. Nothing can replace those little successes.

I’m thrilled St. Croix Trail Blazers is able to give a little bit of happiness to their day!

Karen Harjes
Executive Director

Our New Instructors

You may have seen a couple new faces in training around the barn. Please welcome Shelby Conway and Teresa Ball. We're excited to have them joining us as instructors!



Shelby Conway — Shelby has a background in animal rescue/ranch work and hospitality. She recently helped opened a hotel in the North Loop area of Minneapolis and is currently a Front Desk Supervisor.

Shelby's experience with animals began when she was very young. Her parents owned multiple horse boarding facilities and they managed many barns. She grew up working hard whether it was mucking stalls or throwing hay and was extremely involved because she simply loved interacting with animals and people.

Over the years Shelby has acquired many horsemanship and people skills. She started teaching beginner riders on rescue horses that she had trained to increase their adoptability. Shelby quickly fell in love with teaching and it is something that she has always been drawn to. She focused mainly on new riders and helping them develop a good foundation.

Shelby also spent a summer as a Ranch Hand in Loveland, Colorado. She had the opportunity to ride at a few different barns and was lucky enough to meet some amazing people and horses along the way!

Her approach to horsemanship is all about safety, learning, and having fun. Shelby believes that animals and people can help each other in many ways and that having a connection with an animal is very special.



Teresa Ball — Teresa's love of horses all began with a stubborn miniature pony, lots of determination, and a dream. Having ridden since she was 18 months old, her experience spans the gamut of the equestrian sport, but her passion lies in training and showing Hunters and Jumpers. Having worked most every position in a barn, from mucking stalls to grooming, working student to assistant rider, she hopes to pass on her knowledge and love of horses through teaching with an emphasis on safety and positive thinking.

While her goals still lie in competition, her second passion is working with and teaching children, having nannied and worked at a local summer camp. She is incredibly honored to be a part of the team at St. Croix Trail Blazers!

Pond Life

Last winter as soon as the ice could hold my weight, I went out on the pond to clean out the duck boxes. We have three of them now. I was happy to see that they all had been used the previous season, and I was already thinking about the spring season to come. Into each box I placed about three inches of fresh cedar shavings – enough to make a soft nest for future ducklings, and perhaps to provide temporary shelter for any winter birds that needed protection during winter cold and storms.

When spring arrived (it came early this year), we began looking for the arrival of Wood Ducks and Hooded Mergansers. Not long after the ice was gone, we were happy to see a pair of each. Then after a while everything became quiet. While the ducks seemed to be gone, actually only the males had moved on. Unlike their cousins, the Canada Geese, the males take no part in raising their young – they leave it to the females.

Meanwhile, the female ducks were on the nest incubating their eggs during a colder-

than-normal spring. About a week ago, however, the females were on the lake again, calling their brood of ducklings out of the nest. The Wood Duck has eight little ones that swim closely behind her; and being shy birds, they spend much of their time in the safety of the reeds along the banks.

The Hooded Merganser, on the other hand, is frequently seen out on the middle of the pond, and following behind her are 20 ducklings – the biggest duck family I have ever seen. While she is not aware of it, not all of these ducklings are necessarily hers; other females may have "dumped" eggs into her nest. So some of her 20 ducklings could be stepducklings, and a few may even be Wood Ducks.

It is always a joy to witness new life out on the pond.

Harlan Baxter

With thanks to Susan Grubb, my extra pair of eyes on the pond.

Kowalski's Supports Trail Blazers

When you shop at Kowalski's you can contribute to the Trail Blazers. At the Stillwater store (in the mall across from the high school) you will find acrylic boxes the shape of safety deposit boxes immediately to your right as you use the exit door. By placing your receipt in the

box marked Trail Blazers, your receipt amount will be included in the percentage of total sales the store remits to Trail Blazers. If you forget, no problem, bring receipts back the next time you shop. Suggestion, share this information with your family and friends.

Support Trail Blazers by using AmazonSmile

Did you know you can support the St. Croix Trail Blazers when you order from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)? You use the same account information from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) for AmazonSmile. Your shopping cart, wish list, wedding or baby registry, and other account

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settings are also the same. On your first visit to AmazonSmile (www.smile.amazon.com), you are prompted to select a charitable organization to receive donations.

What are you waiting for?! Visit www.smile.amazon.com and add St. Croix Trail Blazers as your charity!

Hot Weather Reminder

Please remember to bring water bottles and use sun screen. The weather has proven to be quite warm. Water is really important and there is no shade if we're in the outdoor arena. If the humidity and temperature added together equals 140, for the safety of our riders, staff, and horses, all sessions will be cancelled. Cancellations will be posted on our Facebook page. Telephone calls will also be made to inform those scheduled for sessions.



If you bring a new rider who joins the team, we'll give you \$50 off your next month's fee!

Rider must pass evaluation with instructor.

| | | temperature (°F) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----|------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | | 80 | 82 | 84 | 86 | 88 | 90 | 92 | 94 | 96 | 98 | 100 | 102 | 104 | 106 | 108 | 110 |
| Relative Humidity (%) | 40 | 80 | 81 | 83 | 85 | 88 | 91 | 94 | 97 | 101 | 105 | 109 | 114 | 119 | 124 | 130 | 136 |
| | 45 | 80 | 82 | 84 | 87 | 89 | 93 | 96 | 100 | 104 | 109 | 114 | 119 | 124 | 130 | 137 | |
| | 50 | 81 | 83 | 85 | 88 | 91 | 95 | 99 | 103 | 108 | 113 | 118 | 124 | 131 | 137 | | |
| | 55 | 81 | 84 | 86 | 89 | 93 | 97 | 101 | 106 | 112 | 117 | 124 | 130 | 137 | | | |
| | 60 | 82 | 84 | 88 | 91 | 95 | 100 | 105 | 110 | 116 | 123 | 129 | 137 | | | | |
| | 65 | 82 | 85 | 89 | 93 | 98 | 103 | 108 | 114 | 121 | 128 | 136 | | | | | |
| | 70 | 83 | 86 | 90 | 95 | 100 | 105 | 112 | 119 | 126 | 134 | | | | | | |
| | 75 | 84 | 88 | 92 | 97 | 103 | 109 | 116 | 124 | 132 | | | | | | | |
| | 80 | 84 | 89 | 94 | 100 | 106 | 113 | 121 | 129 | | | | | | | | |
| | 85 | 85 | 90 | 96 | 102 | 110 | 117 | 126 | 135 | | | | | | | | |
| | 90 | 86 | 91 | 98 | 105 | 113 | 122 | 131 | | | | | | | | | |
| 95 | 86 | 93 | 100 | 108 | 117 | 127 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 87 | 95 | 103 | 112 | 121 | 132 | | | | | | | | | | | |

■ Caution
 ■ Extreme Caution
 ■ Danger
 ■ Extreme Danger



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