# Handi Kids News

Recreation for Children with Disabilities

Vol 1, Issue 1 FEBRUARY 1, 2007


# J. DeRenzo Generosity Benefits Handi Kids Therapeutic Riding Center

Founded in 1963 by the Knights of Pythias, Handi Kids provides therapeutic recreation on a year-round basis to thousands of children and young adults with physical and cognitive disabilities. Handi Kids programs include Summer and Saturday Camps, School Vacation Camp and an extensive Therapeutic Horseback Riding Program located on a 20+ acre facility in Bridgewater Massachusetts. Operating as a private, non-profit organization, Handi Kids relies heavily upon fundraising and donations of talent, labor and materials for maintaining the riding facilities. In January 2007, J. DeRenzo Company provided Handi Kids with a very generous gift in the form of a major upgrade to the Therapeutic Riding Center.

Before

After

The history of Handi Kids Horseback riding begins in the early 1970's with the construction of a barn, fences, and an outdoor riding arena. In 2001, through the hard work and dedication of board members and friends, funds were raised to construct an indoor riding arena with offices and new grooming and mounting areas. This significant milestone allowed the therapeutic riding program to evolve to a new level, allowing the offering of services year round. As the number of riders grew, more horses were needed and the back section of the camp became dedicated to the horses and riding center. With year-round activity, the property, particularly the paddocks, became a major challenge. After many years of use, limited drainage for rainwater and trees shedding their leaves had resulted in the paddocks surface becoming a 12" – 16" bed of soft organic material that held water (also known as deep mud!) Improving the condition of the horses living environment was a major priority as the animals provide a critical service to the special riders.

Before

After

The J. DeRenzo crew arrived at the Therapeutic Riding Center on January 10, 2007 with an excavator, loader, bull dozer and a roller to wage battle against the mud. First order of business was to remove the dead trees and stumps. Some gave way easily, and others fought, standing their ground. The riding center staff watched in awe as machines pulled the stumps from the ground, scooped up the dense organic material and trucked it away from the paddocks. They had been struggling to work around that mud for so long and they felt like victors over a long-term adversary! Dozens of truckloads were removed and the paddocks were scrapped down until dry material appeared.

One of the secrets to success for this project was to create a grade in the land that would direct water away from the paddocks. After removing the organic material, Derenzo crew members Angelo, Kenny and Mark worked the subsoil to establish the proper slope. Next came truckloads of new, compactable material which would act as a strong subsurface. Tons and tons of crushed stone arrived to begin the process of rebuilding the base structure, which was spread, leveled and compacted. The riding center staff and the horses could literally feel the earth move under their feet when Angelo was operating the roller!

Before

After

Watching this professional crew reconstruct a well engineered paddock surface was an extreme pleasure. Day 5 was looked on with excitement as a top surface of clean screened sand was applied. The surface looked beautiful; it was high, dry, soft and smart. The horses that perform such important work each day were truly going to have 5 star accommodations! But, the work did not end there. The DeRenzo team picked up shovels and rakes and carefully attended to spreading the material around the sheds and fence posts, removing all the old rotting wooden mangers from the paddocks. After raking the new sand surface to ensure consistency and levelness, wood chips were spread around the work site so as to leave a truly finished appearance.

After seven full days of work, the Handi Kids Therapeutic Riding Center can boast of having pristine turnouts for the horses. The quality of work performed by the DeRenzo team gave a better footing than could have been imagined. It truly is amazing to look out from the barn or indoor arena and see clean, dry, soft surface that just a short time ago was deep, black mud.

In This Issue:


| Feature | Page |
|---|---|
| Major Improvements at Handi Kids | 6 |
| Parents Marvel at Riding Facility | 15 |
| Riding Instructors So Appreciative | 27 |


## Handi Kids Staff & Riders Thrilled with Recent Improvements

The gratitude the staff of Handi Kids Therapeutic Riding Center feels towards J. DeRenzo Company is difficult to put in words. To say thank you for such a generous gift seems insufficient. Every day of the week special children and adults come for the wonderful experience that being close to horses and riding and driving horses provides. Each time a rider arrives, a staff member must go to a paddock and retrieve a horse. Each time a rider rides, the horse's hooves must be handled and cleaned. Every day a horse's shed/stall must be cleaned. Every day a horse's turnout area must be cleaned. And every day a staff member was walking through 6 – 8 inches of mud to accomplish these tasks. The horses would leave their paddock area with wet, dirty legs and hooves and students would have to handle those legs and hooves. Staff members were unable to push wheelbarrows through the mud to get the daily cleaning done. It was a truly difficult situation.

Thanks to J. DeRenzo, those conditions are history. Their gift has given Handi Kids a facility of which we are so proud. Staff and volunteers can easily maneuver around the stable and turnout areas and cleaning is a much easier task! The horses come inside to carry their students with clean, dry legs and hooves. They are happier now because they can lie down, rest and even take a good hardy roll in their clean, soft sand. Every square inch of their turnout area is now available to them for walk, trot and play. J. Derenzo's generosity has improved the quality of the horses' lives which directly affects the service provided to the Handi Kids riders. And at the end of the day that is the most important thing.

The smiles seen as a child feels the freedom of movement astride a horse; the giggles of an adolescent boy navigating a horse and carriage at a bouncy trot; the warmth on the face of a parent as they observe their child interacting with a pony. These are sights seen everyday at Handi Kids Therapeutic Riding Center. These are moments that J. Derenzo's generosity will support long into the future.

The staff, children and the families of Handi Kids extend their deepest thanks and heartfelt gratitude for the thoughtfulness and generosity.