



The

Evolution

of a riding club The Trailblazers

BY ANGELIQUE FAWNS

HORSE TALK CORRESPONDENT

Photos by ANGELIQUE FAWNS

The team from Stonecroft Equestrian in Mount Albert takes a break between classes. This was their first time at a Trailblazers show and they really enjoyed the welcoming attitude and laid back vibe of the day.

My visit to a Trailblazers Riding Club show at the Sutton Fairgrounds in York Region on Sunday, May 26 was like stepping into the pages of an E.B. White novel. There is a very local old-time feeling of riders helping riders, joviality and camaraderie.

This is not your typical one discipline equestrian event. Cowboys and cowgirls can be seen meandering around on their quarter horses in full western gear, while English riders in pristine show jackets put their braided horses through their paces right beside them.

It seems everyone is welcome! Sixty-year-olds are out for a day's riding alongside three-year-olds getting their first leg up in the Little Blazers lead line class. There is an amazing variety of classes. You can try your hand (or horse) at almost anything. There are halter classes, showmanship, English equitation, hunter, jumper, command, driving, Western pleasure, trail, and even games classes like barrel racing and pole bending.

Courtney Hayhurst, 14 years old, brought her Welsh Arab gelding Elite King from Elite Equine in Queensville to compete in the English classes at the Sunday, May 26 Trailblazers' show.





Katie Vahey, the ring steward (pictured on the left) and judge Jade Bourne take careful notes during an English pleasure class. Bourne was fantastic judging the Little Blazers lead line class. Every competitor was complimented and given a ribbon!

Paul Traviss, the assistant show manager of Trailblazers explains, "This whole thing started out over 40 years ago with farmers getting together to take their horses for a ride. And it grew from there."

The family feeling at this show grows from more than just its grassroots beginnings. The Trailblazers Riding Club has many wonderful volunteers, but the Traviss family from York Region is "front and centre". The Traviss' are involved at all levels of the club, and their friendly smiles and laid back attitude set the tone for show days.

Courtney Kay (nee Traviss) is the club's President and she started volunteering 13 years ago. "My boyfriend at the time (now my husband) was a volunteer along with his Mom and Dad. Both of his sisters rode at the time. I started helping out to spend more time with him. The following year my sisters started showing there and I was the Food Booth Assistant."

Kay spent two years in the food booth, and then she worked as Show Secretary for eight years, adding the work of the Vice-President for the final four, and now she has been President for the last four years. The Traviss' are dedicated Trailblazers. Kay adds "My father is show manager assistant, my mother is show secretary, and my sister is the treasurer."

"What makes The Trailblazers Riding Club different is our laid back feel. This is a schooling show. Riders are just learning, and how better to learn without the pressure of trying to be great?" says Kay.

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Being a volunteer for The Trailblazers is a very big time commitment. The club has shows one Sunday every month from May to September, and there is an additional monthly meeting



Lawrence King, show manager (pictured at left) and Paul Triviss, assistant show manager keep a close eye on the classes at the first Trailblazers' show of the year on Sunday May 26 held at the Sutton Fairgrounds in York Region.

to plan the year-end banquet. This doesn't include the hours spent doing the behind-the-scenes work: painting and building jumps, coordinating insurance, toilet rental, ribbons,

hiring judges, plus all the work that goes into organizing the year-end banquet.

Kay explains, "I dedicate my time because of the kids. I know that sounds cliché, but really seeing them enjoy themselves and feeling proud of their accomplishments means everything. I shouldn't just say kids either. The older riders just learning are just as exciting." Jill Denovan is a Trailblazer's rider and she says, "It is such a great venue for your first show, or your horse's first show. It is a friendly, laid back place where you can get some experience."

Denovan rides a black quarter horse gelding called Iggy, and she has competed in the Western pleasure and games classes. It was Iggy's first time trying out Western games at a show he had to be trailered to.

Cheryl Clews owner of Elite Equine in Queensville says "Trailblazers is a great show for people who want to go out and have fun at a horse show without all the pressure. We find competitors supportive and cheer each other on which is a great way for new riders to feel welcome and green horses to get exposure to shows."

Petra Routledge, the owner of Petra's Tack Shop in Sutton, also volunteers her time at the club as a sponsorship coordinator, and she says "We at Trailblazers have seen an increase in members and certainly in the

turn out of horses and riders. Our show has grown and we are very happy to see all the smiling faces from lead liners, English and Western riders along with parents, grandparents and coaches."

If you wish to learn more about the Trailblazers Riding Club, you can visit their website at <http://trailblazersschoolingshow.com/>.



Cortney Kay, President of the Trailblazers Riding Club, has been volunteering her time at this grass roots horse show for 13 years. The club began 44 years ago as a place for farmers to meet and take their horses trail riding.

Deirdre Smullen and Ryan Glover of the Bilby Ranch Show Team get their quarter horses Spatz and Belle ready for the Western Games at the first Trailblazers show of the season.

