

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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For immediate release

### **Saddle Up! declares 2008 ‘Year of the Volunteer’**

FRANKLIN, Tenn. – Volunteers will be spotlighted throughout 2008 as Saddle Up! celebrates the Year of the Volunteer.

“Volunteers founded Saddle Up!, and they remain the lifeblood of the organization,” said Volunteer Coordinator Kim Kline. “Founders Alton Kelley, Nancy Wennberg, Charles Crafton and Lynne Evans created the vision of a program that would provide recreational therapeutic riding to children and youth with disabilities, and through their hard work Saddle Up! was born.”

From its beginnings of using borrowed horses and borrowed tack at Schandwin Farm in Franklin through the generosity of Helen Winter, Saddle Up! has grown from a program offering lessons one night a week to 10 riders during 12 weeks of the summer in 1990 to providing more than 4,200 year-round lessons to nearly 130 children and youth.

The volunteer corps has also grown from its modest start of four core volunteers to nearly 300 who serve in all phases of Saddle Up! from board leadership to barn duties. The majority of volunteers serve in lessons as horse leaders or sidewalkers for the riders. In fact, when lessons are in full swing, volunteers give an average of nearly 250 hours per week to make the lessons possible.

“Without our volunteers, we would either have to scale back the number of lessons we offer or we would have to increase our budget significantly to provide the people power they bring to Saddle Up! year-round,” Kline said. “All of us at Saddle Up! owe a debt of gratitude to the volunteers who, week in and week out, so generously give of their time and talents to make this program possible.

“When you look at Saddle Up!, there’s not an area in which we don’t rely on volunteers,” she continued. “In addition to lessons, volunteers work with our horses, assist in the barn, help in the office and provide major people power to our events. They are also leaders who serve on our Board of Directors and who help with fundraising, marketing and all the other areas related to a nonprofit business.”

Kline pointed out that Saddle Up! also benefits from group volunteer projects throughout the year, with diverse groups such as Scouts, churches, schools and corporations. The groups typically undertake one-day projects that vary from cleaning rocks out of the indoor arena to keep it smooth for our riders to spreading mulch and painting fences.

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## **Saddle Up! – add 1**

“We declared 2008 the Year of the Volunteer in recognition of all that volunteers do. It’s part of our ongoing effort to show our appreciation to these dedicated individuals,” Kline said.

Saddle Up! will recognize volunteers throughout the year in many ways. This will include a Volunteer of the Month, a special appreciation during National Volunteer Month in April, and monthly themes such as “Be My Volun-tine” in February.

Saddle Up! is the region’s oldest and largest recreational therapeutic equine program, and the only one exclusively serving children. The program is also one of only three in Tennessee to earn Premier Accredited Center status from the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA), the national organization that sets standards for more than 700 programs in the U.S., Canada and Spain. For more information, please call 615-794-1150 or visit [www.saddleupnashville.org](http://www.saddleupnashville.org).