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# HIGH MEADOWS FARMS

## Saying Whoa in Wolfeboro Is ... Wonderful!

By Beth Daigle



Horseback riding is a beloved sport that captivates many of those who try it. If you've never experienced the freedom and exhilaration, it may seem much like a storybook adventure. So many young children dream about riding, if not owning, a horse. While owning may not be an option, there are many horse riding barns that offer beginner lessons giving new riders a chance to live out their dream.



lessons, popular summer camps, pony parties, and other equine activities that expose and acclimate novice riders to the world of horseback riding. This summer will mark High Meadows Farms 10th year of camps and instruction.

Entering the driveway of High Meadows Farms is enchanting right from the start. The 1/2-mile winding road, flanked by trees and

trails, travels effortlessly upward toward a picturesque landing that is truly remarkable. The barn, which houses Sue's family of eight horses, stands directly ahead of view while the ideally situated Ballentine home is perched along the hillside to the right. The stunning scene is made complete with breathtaking views of the riding ring which boasts a spectacular backdrop of the Ossipee and White Mountain ranges.

Many who begin horseback riding are surprised at how quickly a passion can develop. The connection to these beautifully large animals is present almost as soon as the rider settles into the saddle.

Whether young or old, horseback riding is a wonderful activity to explore and there is no better place to do so than High Meadows Farms in Wolfeboro.

High Meadows Farms is owned and operated by Sue Ballentine. Sue was born and raised in Wolfeboro and after many years residing in Florida returned to the mountains of New Hampshire in 2000. Since then she has nurtured a growing horseback riding program that includes private and group



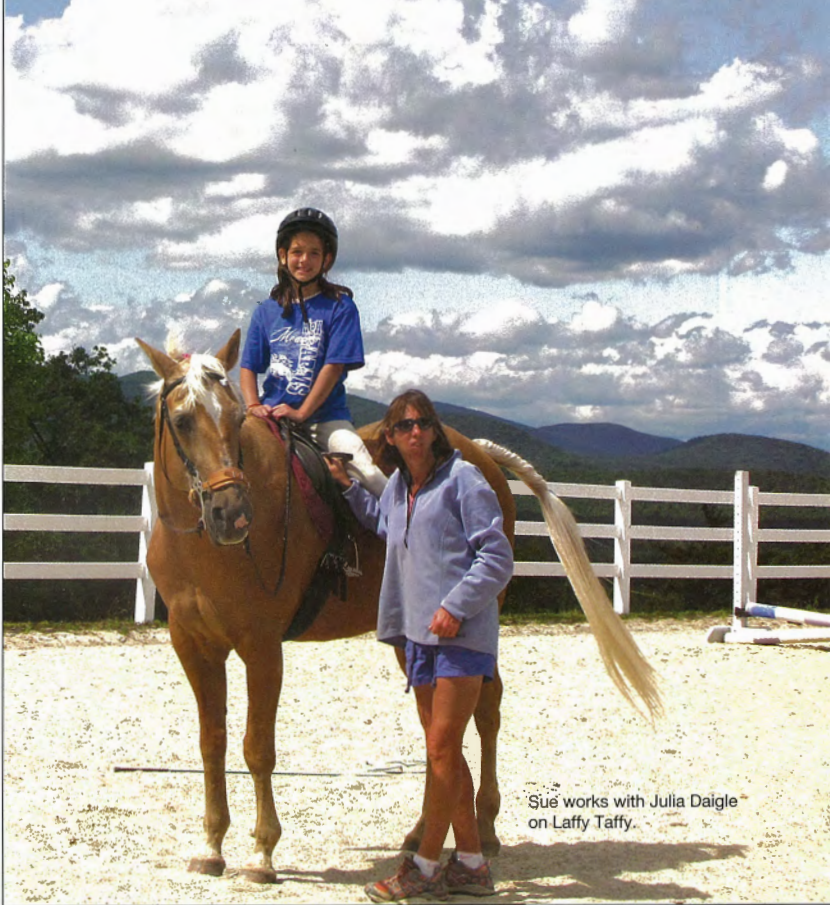
Julia and Ally Daigle groom Tinkerbell.

Sue first began riding at a very young age when she became involved in a camp-run riding program. She was the first in her family to have an interest in horses, but that didn't stop her from turning a youthful infatuation into a life-long passion.

Looking back, Sue recognizes the specific aspects of the experience that drove her desire. "The bond that you make with the horse and the love that forms between you and your horse is what kept me so involved," said Sue. "It was the one thing that I really felt confident about." The confidence building nature of riding is something in which many young people find value. The riding community and friendships that develop on the farms are also special. "Socially it was always fun. The relationships I made at the barn were my best friends," Sue recalls.

Those with the opportunity to ride often become committed to a riding lifestyle, however many are not able to experience this wonderful activity due to accessibility or cost. Working through these obstacles is something that Sue is determined to incorporate into her future plans. Her objective is to give many more children the chance to benefit from the valuable lessons associated with horseback riding. "My ultimate goal is to provide some kind of service where grant money would be available to kids who need it," Sue added.

Sue's teaching philosophy is to keep the mood light and fun. She has a constructive yet laid back approach that is a welcome divergence from other strict or high pressure programs. Riders at High Meadows are encouraged to provide feedback and express their personal desires during their lessons. Sue asks them, "What would you like to work on today?" and sets both long and short term goals so that each student can clearly identify their accomplishments.



Sue works with Julia Daigle on Laffy Taffy.

"I try to build upon the empowering feeling that comes from getting the horse to do what you want it to do and having a connection with the horse," explained Sue. "It's amazing when you think about it—to be on the backs of these amazing creatures and have them do all these things that we are asking them to do."

The self-esteem brought about from riding is very important while working with the horses, but also extends into many other areas of life. Sue has been witness to the most shy, timid riders breaking out of their shells and blossoming as they learn to control the horse while simultaneously recognizing the horse's unconditional love and respect.



These girls can't help but smile while doing the chores!

The impact of horseback riding is great and one student whose love for horses has grown with Sue and High Meadows is 16-year-old, Melinda. Melinda began riding with Sue at the age of 8 and travels two hours, back and forth, every weekend to ride with Sue. She remains in Wolfeboro during the summer months and thoroughly embraces the mellow and relaxed pace around the farm and town.

The family dynamic at High Meadows and the sisterhood that Melinda has formed with her fellow counselors has been a driving force in her dedication to the sport.

Today Melinda is head counselor and excels in working with young riders and helping to shape them into proud and enthusiastic riders. "During camp week we start out with

## Horsing Around at High Meadows

### High Meadows Farms

978 Beach Pond Road, Wolfeboro  
Call Sue Ballentine at (603) 352-287-9989  
www.highmeadowsfarms.com

**Specialties**—High Meadows Farms specializes in first time riders, timid or nervous riders, special needs riders, new or potential owners, and finding the right horse.

**Lessons**—Hour-long private and semi-private lessons are available seven days a week. Private lessons cost \$60 and semi-private/group lesson cost \$40.

**Camps**—Week-long summer camps are run in July and August from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The cost is \$375 per week.

**Shows**—High Meadows Farms participates in several pleasure/schooling and dressage shows from May through October and the Annual High Meadows Farms horse show is held on the second and third Sunday in August.

**Pony Parties, Girl Scout badges, home school programs**—High Meadows Farms offers customized parties, events, and programs that will allow your group the opportunity to learn about, care for, and ride the friendly horses at High Meadows Farms.

**Gear Requirements**—Riding helmets and boots are required for all riders and can be provided.

Ally Daigle with Pork Chop



our first pow-wow and kids will be afraid to say their name,” explained Melinda, “And by the end of the week, they are totally transformed; it is really cool to see.”

Melinda echoes Sue’s sentiment that riding is a dramatic confidence builder. “Riding has enriched my life so much and I’ve become such a different person that I am not really sure what I would be like without

it. You grow so much as a rider and also as a person—it’s such a great experience,” Melinda shared.

While Sue and Melinda welcome riders to the barn for one-hour lessons, many find it hard to walk away. On any given day at High Meadows, you might find a young community of riders gathered to assist in

the day-to-day activities or simply “hang out” in an effort to become better acquainted with the riding lifestyle. The hard work that is involved in caring for the horses and maintaining the stables, stalls, and pastures is no deterrent for these youngsters who, together, have bonded over their mutual passion.

Spring, summer, and fall are perfect times to ride, however, lessons are also offered throughout the year. Some of the most beautiful riding scenes involve trail rides over snow covered roads to the water’s edge of Lake Winnepesaukee. The tranquility and closeness to nature is unparalleled.

Whatever the time of year, horseback riding at High Meadows Farms is an experience not to be missed.

Sue will happily take on beginner riders as young as 2 years old and has trained a gentleman 86 years of age. Her motto is: “No one is too young or too old to learn how to ride a horse.”

**ToDo**



Sue and Melinda take students on a winter trail ride.