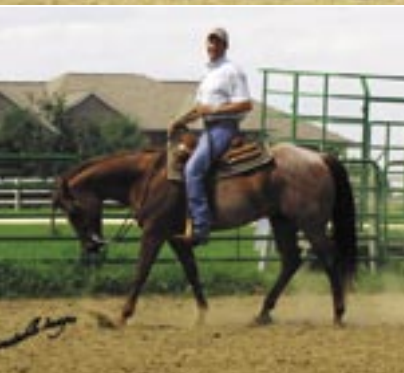


# CRYSTAL CREEK EQUINE CENTER

## MORE THAN A STABLE



Photos, top to bottom: trainer Carla Brieser, trainer Jess Bergantzel, Sherri Neff on Vicky Klemm's "Luke," and a student flying over one of the jumps in the jump field. - photos by Constable Images -

**by Cindy Rosborough, CCEC Owner & ISU Certified Master Equine Manager**

Crystal Creek Equine Center is much more than a boarding stable. On any given day you might find boarders riding or jumping in the 10 acre jump field, or clients lunging their horses in the round pens, or trainers working 2-year olds, negotiating the western trail course, or instructors giving pleasure or dressage lessons in the large indoor arena. It's all there at 2550 Hindman Road, Marion.

### Where We Started

Crystal Creek, often called the "old Midwest Stallion Station," was originally designed and built as a stud farm and training facility on of the east side of Marion. Boarders were never an important part of the early history until recent years when both the breeding market softened and we became part owners of the facility. Our goal from the very beginning was to become a center of excellence for horse owners in Eastern Iowa.

It was sort of a crazy goal for two people who had good ideas but no real experience in the horse business. But I was determined and my husband was supportive so we launched ourselves as "Crystal Creek Equine Center."

Our goal is to provide a friendly environment that is both fun for the rider and safe for the horse and...be fiscally sound. There are three keys to achieving this goal: good employees, a diverse client base, and flexibility.

### Where We're Headed

We have three full-time employees and several part-timers who feed and turn out horses and clean stalls on the week-ends. Unlike many other facilities, we provide both health insurance and paid vacation for full-time employees, as well as free board for a horse. As a result, we have dedicated employees who really care about the horses and their owners with little turnover.

There has been a perception that Crystal Creek is just a western pleasure place. But in

order to attract a diverse client base we need to accommodate a lot of different disciplines: western pleasure, dressage, jumping, pattern events and just plain riding for fun. We also need a mix of riders of all ages and levels.

We have quite a cast of equine characters as well, including: Mystique, a Clydesdale-Arab cross; Chyna, a newly-crowned Pinto World Champion Reiner; Night Heist, Katie Wills's Selle Francais stallion with "incredibly good looks and a wonderful personality," "Pig" a Superior Western Pleasure mare owned by Heather Hoyt Bergantzel; Rocky, the ugliest Appaloosa lesson horse ever; Mae, a Western horse turned Dressage Queen; and Petey, the clown of the barn. They each add to a diverse and fun environment.

We currently have three independent trainers based at the barn: two Western trainers, Jess Bergantzel and Carla Brieser; and a USEA jumping instructor, Katie Wills. Carla specializes in training "start to finish" stock type Western disciplines, including Pleasure, Trail and Western riding. "I am happy to say that some personal and client highlights include multiple Top 5 and Top 10 placements at World Level shows," said Carla. In addition to the three trainers, lessons for experienced riders are available from Anne Cizadlo, FEI rider and a licensed US Dressage Federation "r" Dressage judge, on request at the facility. Dana Pfab and Danielle Baker also give basic Western and English pleasure lessons to kids and adults alike.

Situated on 46 acres, we have a large indoor and a large outdoor arena, a small outdoor arena affectionately called "the beach," two round pens, a dedicated jump field and a dedicated Western trail area. "Crystal Creek has provided me the kind of facility I need to train both my young horses and my show horses," said Jess. "My clients and I love the jump field," said Katie Wills. "Until recently we didn't even know Crystal

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## **"CRYSTAL CREEK;"**

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Creek was available." Even with all this working area, accommodating the diverse disciplines is sometimes a challenge. Clients, trainers and employees all need to demonstrate a little flexibility and patience, especially in March when we've all been cooped up indoors too long!

### **Something different...**

If you find yourself all the way at the back of the facility on a Tuesday or Wednesday, you may even find Christine Woodford, DVM, of Veterinary Integrative Performance Services (VIPS). Christine specializes in motion analysis, chiropractic, and acupuncture care as well as dental care and preventive analysis. Having Christine at the facility offers our clients on site specialty services in

addition to their regular veterinary care.

We allow clients to use the veterinarian and farrier of their choice. Melissa Holcomb, DVM, of Abrahams Veterinary Service, is available at the facility every Wednesday for scheduled appointments or sudden emergencies. We hope in the near future to also keep a supply of commonly used non-prescription items (e.g. vet wrap and bandages, wormer, electrolytes, poultice, etc.) for sale at the facility.

### **The Door Is Always Open**

Crystal Creek is also the kind of place where clients and trainers are free to share both their concerns and suggestions with the owners. We try to respond as quickly as possible to any issues where the health and safety of either a horse or boarder is involved. This is one area where our employees do make the difference

- whether it's bringing in horses in gale winds or sleeping in the lounge during snowstorm to make sure the horses are taken care of if we lose power—I'd hate to be without them.

"I think it's a beautiful place with nice people who seem to really work together," said Katie Wills.

"I feel that the Crystal Creek team tries very hard to meet the needs of the individual horse and rider," said Dee Diesch. "It really is a multidiscipline facility where I feel free to try out different disciplines."

We hope that anyone will feel comfortable at Crystal Creek and will appreciate its unique character and concern for their horse. As Mary Ellen Gilbert, one of our newest boarders, said, "Coming back to Crystal Creek was like coming home."