

BARN RAISINGS

A Newsletter for the Therapeutic Riding Community

SUMMER 2003

Published by Ruth Landsman, Architect and Seth Harry, AIA
Equestrian Facility Master Planning and Design

This is our third edition of Barn Raisings, a newsletter for the therapeutic riding community. As we continue in our practice of architectural design and planning of therapeutic riding centers, we will bring you new developments and share our experiences and insight.

This year has been very busy for us. Many of the centers we have been working with are now in a position to begin their design process in earnest. They have achieved that milestone through hard work, and with their schematic design drawings and renderings in tow, they are in a better position to actively pursue fundraising avenues. This newsletter will focus on some of these centers and where they are in the process of designing and planning their new or remodeled facilities.

THE FUTURE J.F. SHEA CENTER!



The Fran Joswick Riding Program located in San Juan Capistrano, California will soon be operating out of a new facility called the J.F. Shea Therapeutic Riding Center. As the architects for this new facility, we began the design process on site and held a working design charrette there last summer. The design process has been very interactive with all vested parties and staff continually giving us input to the design. We are now moving through the Schematic Design Phase and beginning to work with the local community, and taking the project through the extensive California regulatory process. In addition to master planning and design documents, we have already produced many illustrative renderings which have assisted greatly in their fundraising efforts.

This will be a unique center with extensive facilities for training and educational seminars as well as on-site accommodations for out of town visitors. A large catering kitchen and conference facilities will also service fund raising events.

The latest rendition of the center is illustrated here. The new center, which complements the local mission style of architecture, also takes advantage of the mild climate with the inviting entry courtyard and outdoor viewing areas. As an in-town center, it is very important for the center to reflect the architecture and character of its community of San Juan Capistrano, as required by town codes, which is rich in history and precedents.

We continue to enjoy working with the staff of the Shea Center and the community of San Juan Capistrano. We feel confident that this new center will help the Fran Joswick Riding program achieve the goals and aspirations at the J.F. Shea Center.

NEWS ROUND-UP

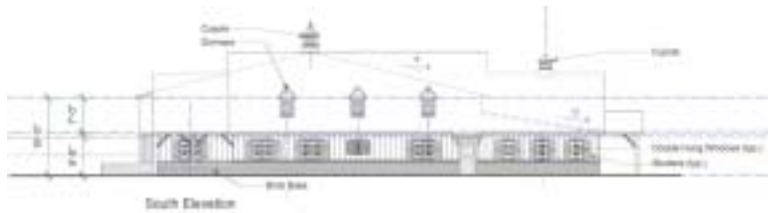
Leg Up Farm, a multi-disciplinary therapy center, is moving forward with their land development plan. We have been working with the Chairman of this center, Lou Castriota, for the past five years, and in that time through much hard work, he has secured land and funding for his project. Leg Up Farm will combine all of the traditional therapies plus non-traditional therapies such as therapeutic riding, swimming, massage therapy and sensory play.



Their new facility will feature a very large indoor arena, 100'x 300' (to include driving), a large barn, administrative offices and conferencing facilities and a large therapy wing to include a gym, pool, and greenhouse. They are working very closely with their local county for funding and community support.

We are moving into the Schematic Design phase next and are very excited to be a part of this unique program in York, Pennsylvania.

Another program that we are working with in Pennsylvania is **Quest Therapeutic Services, Inc.** located in Westchester, Pennsylvania. After working through their zoning hearing, Quest was granted permission to build their center on their land. We are currently moving forward on the Schematic Design Phase for their project and



working closely with the local community to create a center in scale and character with the rural residential neighborhood where it will be located.

Quest will emphasize hippotherapy and one on one therapy sessions. Their center will have two treatment rooms, as they do many of their activities off

the horse as well as on. Once their new facility is complete they plan to expand their program in the future to become a training/clinical affiliation site. They hope to begin construction on their new center this year and we wish them much success.

Closer to home, we are pleased to be the architects for a new therapeutic riding facility to be located in Boyds, Maryland. In 1997, William M. Rickman, Sr. Donated a 100 acre farm located on the west side of Bucklodge Road in Boyds, Maryland, to the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission. The park was named the Rickman Farm Horse Park and it was intended that the park would be developed by means of a private/public partnership. One of the goals of the program was to establish a therapeutic riding program at the park.

We will be working with the County as well as the new operator of the center to renovate and adapt the existing facility at the park. This will be a wonderful opportunity for that part of the County to have their own therapeutic riding program in addition to other horse-related programs for the local community.

THE HITCHING POST



✓ ***The Smith Center for Therapeutic Riding*** has recently embarked on plans to create a new facility on their existing property in Sarasota, Florida.

We began the design process this past Spring with an on-site design workshop called a “Charrette”. A “Charrette” is an intense, short-duration design and planning exercise, intended to cover a broad range of issues in a relatively short period of time, resulting in a viable



Jackie's comments

design concept or solution, and is a process that we have used very successfully with many of our therapeutic riding clients. This was our first charrette that we conducted outside, thanks in part to the beautiful Florida weather. We even had their “pet” horse Jackie stop by and give us her opinions.

Their new facility will be composed of a new covered arena, two new outdoor arenas, a new barn, and an administrative building. We are currently in the process of refining their Master Plan and are looking forward to moving the project forward with Schematic Design.

“DO” START WITH DESIGN by Seth Harry, AIA

The Winter 2002/3 issue of *Strides* (the NARHA monthly publication) ran an article detailing a woman’s efforts to shepherd her Program through the difficult and trying process of planning, designing, funding and implementing a new facility for the Therapeutic Riding Program at which she worked. As I read the article, I nodded along both knowingly and sympathetically, as I followed along with her on what is for us, a complex, but well trod path. However, I pulled up short when I read her admonition to “not” start with design. I was not alone in my concern regarding the potential message the author was communicating as shortly thereafter, we received a frantic phone message from one of our former clients, who had also read the article, and who — like us; felt that the writer had erred significantly in her advice:

The process of conceptualizing a new Therapeutic Riding Facility represents a daunting task, involving all aspects of the Riding Program, from the care of the horses, to the concerns and needs of staff and clients, to navigating the sometimes challenging aspects of the regulatory environment — not to mention the particularly difficult — but absolutely essential role of funding a Capital Improvement Campaign. While I was impressed with the writer’s accomplishments in facing these challenges on her own, a process she outlined in great detail in her article, I couldn’t help but feel that, as admirable as her efforts were, that they would have been — for the most part — largely unnecessary, had she only sought out knowledgeable planning and design resources rather than consciously avoiding them.

“I think people should absolutely start with Design,” said Sally Goddard, of BVRH Therapeutic Riding, in Rockford, Illinois, the client who phoned in her concerns about the article. We agree. Both Ruth Landsman and I are experienced architects, but more than that, we are both volunteers at local Therapeutic Riding programs here in the Maryland area, and Ruth has served on the Board of another local program. We got involved in the planning and design of Therapeutic Riding centers only when we realized that they represented a unique building type, distinct even, from a more conventional equestrian center, that was not being well served by the design community.

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Sixteen Therapeutic Riding Centers later, we have continued to add to our experience in working with the Therapeutic Riding industry, working closely with every new Program who engages us, and by carefully analyzing every project we've designed to ensure that it meets all the functional criteria that were set out for it, as we continue to apply new lessons learned back into every new project we undertake.

Contrary to the impediment the article's author envisioned, an experienced architect can greatly facilitate the process of working with a Program's volunteers, staff and clients in defining the overall planning and design parameters for their project. All of the steps identified in the article as being prudent to undertake prior to engaging the architect are, in fact, a standard part of the services we typically provide. We help document and inventory staff and equipment needs, define space requirements, identify potential issues with respect to planning and zoning, and other regulatory concerns, and assist our clients in identifying expeditious strategies for dealing with those issues, and/or negotiating relief on their behalf. We assist in establishing budget parameters and in managing the contractor selection and construction process.

And, perhaps most valuable of all, in those early stages of the process when we feel our assistance is perhaps most valuable, not the other way around, our preliminary design products greatly facilitate fundraising and Grant writing efforts, as Programs have much more detailed proposals and cost-estimates with which to articulate and explain the direction and intent of the proposed facility improvements, to both donors and Grant dispensing agencies and organizations.

In summation, our ability to assist our clients in all of the above frees up their staff to do what they do best, caring for their clients concerns, instead of stumbling through a process that is both unfamiliar and time consuming for them. The proof is in the pudding: The process outlined by the writer of the Strides article took 5 long and difficult years. BVRH, our client who called us from Illinois, went from conceptual design stage to full funding in 6 months, and was operating out of their brand new facility roughly 24 months after our initial meeting, for a fully accessible facility that included 2 indoor arenas, 30 stalls plus 10 grooming/instructional stalls, public reception and view areas, therapy rooms and classrooms, all administrative needs along with the usual wash stalls, tack rooms and vet areas. No wonder they enthusiastically endorse starting with design.



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While that may be an ideal scenario, it is certainly representative of the value of engaging a knowledgeable design resource early on in your planning process. To quote Sally once more: *"Our facility is the most wonderful building that I have ever seen and probably ever will see. We love it every single day. Our volunteers love it, our students and their families love it, and the horses love it. We couldn't be happier..."* And as to funding: *"Rockford is not a wealthy community. If we can build it here, we can build it anywhere..."*

While we have nothing but admiration for all of the Programs out there who are doing their best, every single day, and we wish them all the best in their efforts to improve their facilities to make them as useful to their mission as possible, no matter how they are able to do it, we would still recommend – "Do" start with Design.