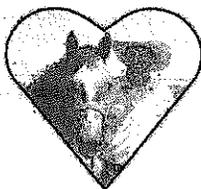


Hey Neighbor



## For The Love Of Horses

By Frank J. Buchman

### Honored Expert Horsewoman Assists Handicapped As Certified Instructor At Therapeutic Riding Center

Not only is Mycah McColm a talented horsewoman, but she's enthusiastic about helping handicapped people enjoy and work with horses too.

"I started riding horses when I was three years old, and I've always loved working with horses," clarified the recently honored National FFA Equine Science Placement Award winner.

"Since I've been helping with horseback riding lessons for the disadvantaged, I've become more excited about assisting them," McColm emphasized. "I've seen how much they enjoy it and develop after becoming involved with horses."

Upon return from accepting her latest recognition in Indianapolis, the Riverton FFA Chapter member was back at her full-time job as a certified therapeutic instructor for the Horses Of Hope horseback riding center at Baxter Springs.

"My mom, Shelly, and an area trainer, Vallerie Sweeton, started this cen-

ter 10 years ago, after they saw the benefits from helping a young disabled girl learn to ride and work with horses," McColm reflected.

Personally, McColm began competing in horse shows on the local level when she was five years old. "I've always liked to show horses, and I've had several different horses and continued to ride in tougher competition," she informed.

Successfully entering registered Pinto, Paint and Quarter Horses competitions, McColm has been involved in world championship events for several years. "I've competed in the American Quarter Horse Youth World for the past four years and ended up in the top ten for the past three years," she critiqued.

Exhibiting in halter, showmanship, hunter under saddle, hunt seat equitation and western horsemanship, McColm has been riding her four-year-old gelding Chrome On My Zipper.

"He's double registered as a Quarter Horse and a Paint, so I've also shown him to top ten honors in the World Paint Youth Show," she added.

Sheep, swine and "a few cattle" have also been exhibited by McColm at 4-H events in years gone by. "I've also displayed my other livestock successfully in state and national shows," she related.

Home schooled so she had time to hit horse show circuits competitively to collect national titles, McColm was still able to become involved in vocational agriculture classes at Riverton High School. "I enrolled all of my livestock in the Supervised Agriculture Experience program and kept records on them," she noted.

Crediting her advisor Jacob Larison for his strong prodding, McColm pointed out that she was an FFA state winner in the diversified livestock competition one year and the following year the state



Over 300 handicapped clients are given the opportunity to work with horses at the Horses Of Hope therapeutic horseback riding center in Baxter Springs. National FFA equine science placement award winner Mycah McColm, Riverton FFA Chapter member, is a certified instructor at the center, where she's worked for ten years. Here, she explains the labeled parts on one of 30 horses at the center.

honoree in outdoor recreation.

"I was a national finalist in both of those divisions at the National FFA Convention," McColm said.

After graduating from high school in 2006, McColm expanded her horse work. "I waited until this year to fill out an application in the equine science placement division," she relayed. "I wanted to be in my last year of eligibility to apply for this award so I'd have the maximum hours of experience and the most income from my work with horses."

Named the state winner in that division as well, McColm became one of the few FFA members in history who've claimed three state proficiency awards.

"I really think my experience in previous interviews for national awards helped me at the convention," McColm insisted. "Of course, it wasn't really scary anyway, because all I had to do was explain my work. I know my work. I love my work."

"I was just thrilled when my name was called out as the winner. I was really excited and am still very excited," she exclaimed.

Her deep involvement in the Horses For Hope program was the main ingredient for McColm collecting the national title. "I've really been helping

here since it began," she remembered. "We first had classes in an old hog barn on the farm, and then some land was sold, and the indoor riding facility was constructed."

Initially her work was feeding and managing of horses in the program, with assistance to the disabled riders on a limited basis. "When I became a certified instructor of the North American Riding For The Handicapped Association, I was able to really expand my work with the riders and the horses," McColm stated.

Over 300 handicapped people from a wide area participate in the Horses Of Hope programs over a year's time. "There are a variety of disabilities including brain disorders, Down's Syndrome, mental retardation, cerebral palsy and stroke patients along with many others," McColm pointed out.

A total of 30 horses are available in the programs. "Many of these are retired show horses who have been donated to us," McColm explained. "We take horses on a trial basis initially to see if they will work in our unusual situation."

"Most of the horses are at least 15 years old, and we do have several horses in their 20s. We're always in need of qualified horses, because our good old

horses don't last forever," McColm welcomed.

Demand for Horses of Hope services has been so great that a sister site has been started at Buffalo, Mo. "We have a lady who runs that facility, and Valerie and I go over there every week to assist her," McColm confirmed. There is also an able-bodied program at the facilities, teaching basic horsemanship skills.

Classes for persons with disabilities are also included in American Quarter Horse Association shows, and McColm takes three of her Horses of Hope clients to those competitions.

"There is a set pattern for the exhibitors to ride, and they have regular horse show outfits including riding helmets," McColm detailed. "My Team Hope riders have completed successfully all over the state and also have won national awards."

In her collection of many horse show successes, including Kansas Quarter Horse Association year-end awards, McColm recognized, "I always ride in honor of all special needs clients at Horses Of Hope."

Active in leadership of her Riverton FFA Chapter, McColm served as chapter

secretary and treasurer, was on numerous successful competition teams, won the district public speaking and horse judging contests on several occasions and placed third in the state FFA horse judging event.

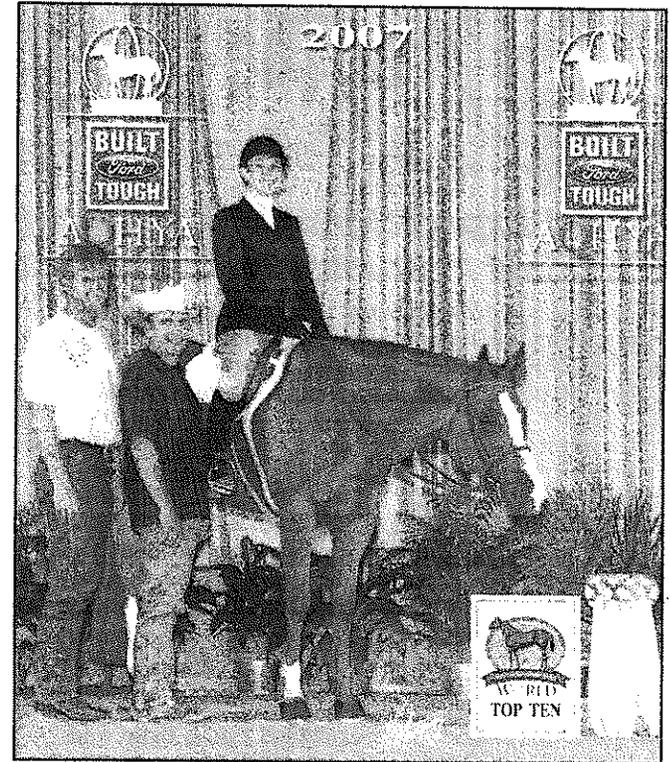
Her dad, Allen, is a banker at Columbus, and mom Shelly serves as director for Horses Of Hope.

"My parents have never pushed me to be involved with horses or to work in the therapeutic riding program, but they've given me the opportunities and always encouraged me," McColm stressed.

"I sure appreciate all that Mr. Larison has done," McColm asserted. "He's been very supportive of my different activities and pushed me to the best of my abilities."

Continuing to work at the Horses Of Hope until next fall, McColm plans to enroll in mental health and speech pathology curriculums at Missouri State University.

"I fully intend to return home and expand work in therapeutic riding and therapy for disabled people," McColm indicated. "I will also compete in the amateur division of horse shows, because certified therapeutic riding in-



Mycah McColm of Baxter Springs has shown her gelding, Chrome On My Zipper, to top ten honors in both the American Quarter Horse Youth Association World Show as well as the World Paint Youth Show. The young horsewoman was recognized as the equine science placement award winner at the recent National FFA Convention in Indianapolis, Ind. (K.C. Montgomery Photo)

structors are not considered professional horse trainers.

"I will always use the leadership skills I've

gained through my FFA experiences along with my love for horses and my desire to help others," McColm concluded.

## Honored Expert Horsewoman Assists Handicapped As Certified Instructor At Therapeutic Riding Center

Not only is Mycah McColm a talented horsewoman, but she's enthusiastic about helping handicapped people enjoy and work with horses too.

"I started riding horses when I was three years old, and I've always loved working with horses," clarified the recently honored National FFA Equine Science Placement Award winner.

"Since I've been helping with horseback riding lessons for the disadvantaged, I've become more excited about assisting them," McColm emphasized. "I've seen how much they enjoy it and develop after becoming involved with horses."

Upon return from accepting her latest recognition in Indianapolis, the Riverton FFA Chapter member was back at her full-time job as a certified therapeutic instructor for the Horses Of Hope horseback riding center at Baxter Springs.

"My mom, Shelly, and an area trainer, Vallerie Sweeton, started this center 10 years ago, after they saw the benefits from helping a young disabled girl learn to ride and work with horses," McColm reflected.

Personally, McColm began competing in horse shows on the local level when she was five years old. "I've always liked to show horses, and I've had several different horses and continued to ride in tougher competition," she informed.

Successfully entering registered Pinto, Paint and Quarter Horses competitions, McColm has been involved in world championship events for several years. "I've competed in the American Quarter Horse Youth World for the past four years and ended up in the top ten for the past three years," she critiqued.

Exhibiting in halter, showmanship, hunter under saddle, hunt seat equitation and western horsemanship, McColm has been riding her four-year-old gelding Chrome On My Zipper.

"He's double registered as a Quarter Horse and a Paint, so I've also shown him to top ten honors in the World Paint Youth Show," she added.

Sheep, swine and "a few cattle" have also been exhibited by McColm at 4-H events in years gone by. "I've also displayed my other livestock successfully in state and national shows," she related.

Home schooled so she had time to hit horse show circuits competitively to collect national titles, McColm was still able to become involved in vocational agriculture classes at Riverton High School. "I enrolled all of my livestock in the Supervised Agriculture Experience program and kept records on them," she noted.

Crediting her advisor Jacob Larison for his strong prodding, McColm pointed out that she was an FFA state winner in the diversified livestock competition one year and the following year the state honoree in outdoor recreation.

"I was a national finalist in both of those divisions at the National FFA Convention," McColm said.

After graduating from high school in 2006, McColm expanded her horse work. "I waited until this year to fill out an application in the equine science placement division," she relayed. "I wanted to be in my last year of eligibility to apply for this award so I'd have the maximum hours of experience and the most income from my work with horses."

Named the state winner in that division as well, McColm became one of the few FFA members in history who've claimed three state proficiency awards.

"I really think my experience in previous interviews for national awards helped me at the convention," McColm insisted. "Of course, it wasn't really scary anyway, because all I had to do was explain my work. I know my work. I love my work."

"I was just thrilled when my name was called out as the winner. I was really excited and am still very excited," she exclaimed.

Her deep involvement in the Horses For Hope program was the main ingredient for McColm collecting the national title. "I've really been helping here since it began," she remembered. "We first had classes in an old hog barn on the farm, and then some land was sold, and the indoor riding facility was constructed."

Initially her work was feeding and managing of horses in the program, with assistance to the disabled riders on a limited basis. "When I became a certified instructor of the North American Riding For The Handicapped Association, I was able to really expand my work with the riders and the horses," McColm stated.

Over 300 handicapped people from a wide area participate in the Horses Of Hope programs over a year's time. "There are a variety of disabilities including brain disorders, Down's Syndrome, mental retardation, cerebral palsy and stroke patients along with many others," McColm pointed out.

A total of 30 horses are available in the programs. "Many of these are retired show horses who have been donated to us," McColm explained. "We take horses on a trial basis initially to see if they will work in our unusual situation."

"Most of the horses are at least 15 years old, and we do have several horses in their 20s. We're always in need of qualified horses, because our good old horses don't last forever," McColm welcomed.

Demand for Horses of Hope services has been so great that a sister site has been started at Buffalo, Mo. "We have a lady who runs that facility, and Vallerie and I go over there every week to assist her," McColm confirmed. There is also an able-bodied program at the facilities, teaching basic horsemanship skills.

Classes for persons with disabilities are also included in American Quarter Horse Association shows, and McColm takes three of her Horses of Hope clients to those competitions.

"There is a set pattern for the exhibitors to ride, and they have regular horse show outfits including riding helmets," McColm detailed. "My Team Hope riders have completed successfully all over the state and also have won national awards."

In her collection of many horse show successes, including Kansas Quarter Horse Association year-end awards, McColm recognized, "I always ride in honor of all special needs clients at Horses Of Hope."

Active in leadership of her Riverton FFA Chapter, McColm served as chapter secretary and treasurer, was on numerous successful competition teams, won the district public speaking and horse judging contests on several occasions and placed third in the state FFA horse judging event.

Her dad, Allen, is a banker at Columbus, and mom Shelly serves as director for Horses Of Hope.

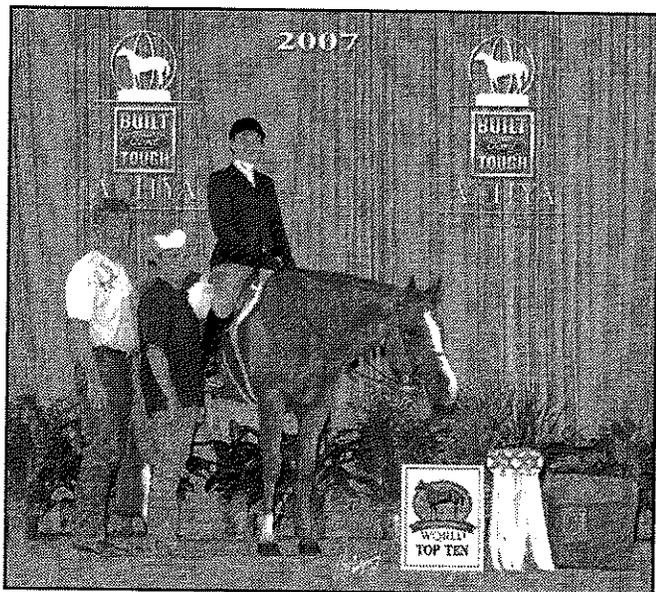
"My parents have never pushed me to be involved with horses or to work in the therapeutic riding program, but they've given me the opportunities and always encouraged me," McColm stressed.

"I sure appreciate all that Mr. Larison has done," McColm asserted. "He's been very supportive of my different activities and pushed me to the best of my abilities."

Continuing to work at the Horses Of Hope until next fall, McColm plans to enroll in mental health and speech pathology curriculums at Missouri State University.

"I fully intend to return home and expand work in therapeutic riding and therapy for disabled people," McColm indicated. "I will also compete in the amateur division of horse shows, because certified therapeutic riding instructors are not considered professional horse trainers."

"I will always use the leadership skills I've gained through my FFA experiences along with my love for horses and my desire to help others," McColm concluded.



Mycah McColm of Baxter Springs has shown her gelding, Chrome On My Zipper, to top ten honors in both the American Quarter Horse Youth Association World Show as well as the World Paint Youth Show. The young horsewoman was recognized as the equine science placement award winner at the recent National FFA Convention in Indianapolis, Ind. (K.C. Montgomery Photo)



Over 300 handicapped clients are given the opportunity to work with horses at the Horses Of Hope therapeutic horseback riding center in Baxter Springs. National FFA equine science placement award winner Mycah McColm, Riverton FFA Chapter member, is a certified instructor at the center, where she's worked for ten years. Here, she explains the labeled parts on one of 30 horses at the center.