



## EVENTS

February 3-6  
Equine Affaire  
*Fairplex in Pomona*

February 17  
PVPHA general meeting  
*Empty Saddle Club*

February 28  
RHE Equestrian Committee meeting  
*Rolling Hills Estates City Hall*

April 4  
Chandler Project public hearing  
*Rolling Hills Estates City Hall*

## Poetry and Music Festival draws standing-room only crowd

by ERIN RYAN  
PVPHA RECORDING SECRETARY

On the lovely cool evening of Jan. 15, the PVPHA held its annual Poetry and Music Festival at the Empty Saddle Club, where attendees started off 2011 by listening to poetry and music and sharing time with neighbors, friends and fellow equestrians.

This year's festival was dedicated to the memory of former DISPATCH editor Jan Sawyer, who passed away this past summer.

The evening started in the kitchen with chili, cornbread and brownies provided by the PVPHA, before proceeding to the clubhouse for the night's entertainment.

The standing-room only audience was treated to many a rustic recital laced with poetry about beloved horses come and gone and adven-



DOREEN HOULE

**Charlene O'Neil recites her poetry at the PVPHA's 2011 Cowboy Poetry and Music Festival.**

tures that will live on in the imagination for years to come.

Attendees "were not disappointed with the array of talented performers," said festival director Pam Turner.

"Cowboy poet Steve Deming entertained us with his original work," Turner said. "Steve's poems really are

**See "Festival," page 5.**

## Plan to attend Chandler Ranch presentation

by NICOLE MOORADIAN  
DISPATCH EDITOR

Instead of its regular general meeting on Feb. 17, the PVPHA is hosting its first informational session on the Chandler Ranch/Rolling Hills Country Club Project.

The meeting, which is scheduled for 7 p.m. at the Empty Saddle Club, will offer a first look at proposals for the Peninsula's equestrian community. Attendees will find out what's planned and have the opportunity to share their thoughts.

This meeting comes about a month and a half before the Rolling Hills Estates Planning Commission's public hearing on the issue. U



**How do horses learn?** A California organization investigates equine intelligence. Read about how horses think, and find out what's in a whinny. **Page 6.**

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## NEWS BRIEFS

**Center hosts dressage show, jumping clinic**

The Peter Weber Equestrian Center Horse Show Series presented its first dressage show of the season Jan. 30.

Competitors were permitted to ride their choice of tests. Ken Anderson and Natalie Deutsch judged.

In addition, champion jumper Amanda Tallman hosted a second clinic at the equestrian center Jan. 22-23.

Tallman taught her first clinic for the Peter Weber Equestrian Center Show Series on Dec. 4-5, 2010.

Tallman won numerous awards as a junior rider, including placing in the top 10 riders during the 1997 USEF Finals in Harrisburg, Pa.

**Local show circuits set competition dates**

ETI Corral 8 and the local Los Serranos Awards Circuit have set their show dates for the upcoming season.

ETI plans to host shows on April 17, May 22, June 19 and July 31, with its finals show on Sept. 18.

LSAC shows will take place on April 10, May 15, June 26 and July 24.



CHRIS TABELLARIO

**Horse Funnies 2010 winner: "How much longer?"**

**'Horse Funnies' winner announced**

Better late than never: Chris Tabellario, with her photo of a horse patiently waiting for its rider at an outhouse, has won a full-color map of the Peninsula's trails.

"The Cowboy Poetry and Music Festival was so much fun, and everyone was so full, that we all forgot to announce the winner of the 'Horse Funnies' contest," explained PVPHA Membership Chairman Gil Houle. "Thank you, (Chris), for the great laugh!"

"Horse Funnies" is a monthly item in the DISPATCH featuring horse photos with humorous captions.

**Orange County IEL wraps up show season**

At the end of the season, Palos Verdes High School remained at the top of the ranking in the Orange County Interscholastic Equestrian League.

Palos Verdes Peninsula High School ended the season in the No. 4 slot, while Chadwick finished seventh.

Rolling Hills Prep, which only competed in three of the seven shows, ranked 48th among the 58 schools.

*News briefs are generally 2-3 short paragraphs and fewer than 100 words. To submit a news brief, e-mail the text to the DISPATCH editor at pvpha2010@gmail.com. The editor reserves the right to not include briefs and to edit briefs for length and clarity. U*

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# From the kitchen: Baked carrot crispies

*Adapted from a recipe published by the Moniteau Saddle Club*



## Ingredients

- 2 carrots, shredded
- 1 apple, shredded
- 1/4 cup molasses
- 3/4 cup flour
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup water
- 3/4 cup bran
- 3/4 cup oatmeal

## Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.
2. Generously grease a muffin tin.
3. Mix the carrots, apple, molasses, flour, brown sugar, water, bran and oatmeal together in a bowl until the consistency is thick and doughy. Add more bran if necessary to thicken the mixture.
4. Scoop dough into a muffin tin and sprinkle with brown sugar.
5. Bake in the oven for 30-50 minutes until well done. U

*Do you have a favorite recipe for horse treats? Share it with the rest of the PVPHA! E-mail your recipe to [pvpha2010@gmail.com](mailto:pvpha2010@gmail.com), and it may be published in the DISPATCH.*

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**When:** Sunday February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at 10 AM-12 noon

**Where:** Ernie Howlett Park

**RSVP:** Space is limited; call to reserve your spot!

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## TRAINER SPOTLIGHT: DEVON GIBSON & CHRISTY ARBUCKLE



PHOTO COURTESY SEAHORSE RIDING CLUB

## Trainers Gibson, Arbuckle produce winners in show ring

Seahorse Riding Club owner/trainer Devon Gibson and trainer Christy Arbuckle grew up riding and training horses in Palos Verdes. They have shown successfully throughout the years; Gibson wins consistently in the Open Hunters as well as in the Grand Prix ring, and Arbuckle has won multiple medal finals. Combined, the two have more than 25 years of instructor experience.

Currently, the pair has students competing at the HITS Desert Circuit Series Horse Shows. In January, students Emily Maclean aboard Just A Star and Celine Claessens on Tommy Bahama both won championship ribbons. Amateur riders Vicki Shinn, Debbie Veale and Georgia Claessens also participated and won many top ribbons.

Arbuckle's daughter, Kylee Arbuckle, was the winner of the ASPCA Maclay Medal last September, qualifying her for the national finals, and was Champion Junior Hunter

See "Seahorse," page 8.



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Continued from page 1...

# Festival: Event dedicated to memory of former DISPATCH editor

thought-provoking, and it was great to see that he has finally recorded them on a CD which some audience members were able to purchase.”

Other performers included poets Wanda Smith, Bob Hotel, Steve Deming, Janis Lukstein and Charlene O’Neil, as well as musicians Kathy Stowe and Craig Stevens, Diana Barber and Cross Town Cowboys Buffalo Brian, Dusty and Robby.

“(Lukstein) entertained us ... with her lively rendition about John Wayne, complete with some male audience members imitating the Duke’s swagger,” Turner said. “Now that was something to see!”

Longtime performer Paul Pitti, 87, had been hospitalized for pneumonia and was unable to attend, according to Turner. In his honor, the pre-show music featured Pitti singing cowboy songs of the 1930s and ’40s.

“We look forward to seeing him perform live next year,” Turner said.

Special thanks go to those who came up front and voiced their thoughts, poetry and music with the rest of us, as well as to festival director and emcee Pam Turner and sound engineer and stage manager Randy Turner.

Those of you that had a good time, feel free to spread

the word. In the unlikely event someone did not have a good time, it’s time for he or she to get up front and center next year and try his or her hand at some cowboy poetry. It may provide a different perspective.

“All in all, it was another successful and entertaining evening,” Pam Turner said. “If you missed this year’s show, well, there’s always next year!”

Additionally, as summer approaches time grows near for the PVPHA’s sing-along. The evening is centered around the fire pit with stargazing, a blazing fire and music for anyone who wishes to partake in the merriment.

In the meantime, enjoy the trails and ride! Wishing you all a good year to come. U

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## How intelligent are horses? It's an important question, given our unique relationship with these animals.

People often try to draw comparisons between cats and dogs and horses. It's difficult because each of the species draws on a totally different set of evolutionary values.

Cats and dogs are predatory animals, with well-tuned binocular vision to help hone in on their victims. They have an innate aggressiveness which you can guarantee even the most docile of cats or dogs will produce with the appropriate stimuli.

Horses have evolved as prey animals. They are the hunted. Their instinctive flight response and much of their complex interaction within a herd have grown from this basic premise: escape or be eaten.

There are some who dismiss horses as being instinctive rather than cognitive in their behavior. While equines do display a well-tuned and instinctive flight response, the suggestion is clearly ridiculous for anyone who spends time around horses.

Horses quickly learn to recognize commands and body language. They understand the sounds of meal time, such as the noise of a quad bike they know will be loaded with hay, or the rumbling of a grain crusher in a feed shed.

Yes, there is a herd mentality. But this can be seen in every herd species on the planet. The somewhat derogatory phrase also ignores the considerable complexities involved in relationships within a herd.

A Swiss consultancy firm was recently running management courses that explored equine herd dynamics. The firm's view was that much could be learned about how to lead people from the way horses behaved within a herd. The consultants drew comparisons between herd behavior and the way in which a company is run.

It escaped no-one's attention that the head of a herd is an older mare, not a stallion. The lead mare is unambiguous in her communication, has the trust of other mem-

bers of the herd, and, while her behavior may not always win her friends, she is always respected by her underlings.

Researchers have looked at three key areas in trying to assess horse intelligence: the ability of horses to solve increasingly challenging problems, the speed at which they learn a task, and their ability to retain that knowledge.

These can be difficult to measure, with some assessments of intelligence relying upon alertness, a horse's reaction to stimuli, their behavior around people, and their interaction with other horses.

Dr. Evelyn Hanggi, president and cofounder of the nonprofit Equine Research Foundation in Aptos, Calif., has studied equine intelligence extensively.

She says cognition and perception in horses has often been misunderstood.

Hanggi, in a review of her research at the Equine Research Foundation into equine cognition, perception, behavior, and training to the annual convention of the American Association of Equine Practitioners in 2005, said, "People proclaim that horses react only by instinct, that they are just conditioned-response animals, that they lack advanced cognitive ability, and that they have poor visual capabilities.

"Until relatively recently, there was little scientific evidence to address such beliefs."

She said public and scientific interest in equine learning and perception had been growing.

"A review of the scientific literature, as well as practical experience, shows that horses excel at simpler forms of learning ... which is not surprising considering their trainability," she said. "Most recently, and unexpected by many, Equine Research Foundation horses have solved advanced cognitive challenges involving categorization learning and some degree of concept formation."

*A version of this article originally appeared April 16, 2007, on [Horsetalk.co.nz](http://Horsetalk.co.nz).  
It is reprinted here with permission from the publisher.*

Hanggi said a comprehensive understanding horses' learning abilities is necessary to ensure the species receives proper training, handling, management and care.

"Traditionally," she said, "horses have rarely been classified as intelligent, and even today, gaps in knowledge, myths and misconceptions, and limited research affect how horses are understood or misunderstood by the public, the horse industry and even the scientific community.

"Common beliefs maintain that horses have a brain the size of a walnut; horses do not think; horses are merely conditioned-response animals; horses cannot generalize; horses have no sense of concept; horses are colorblind, have poor acuity and depth perception, and cannot transfer information from one eye to another.

"In reality, horses manage not only ordinary daily cognitive tasks but mental challenges as well," Hanggi said. "In the wild, they must cope with food and water of inconsistent quality or unpredictable distribution, predators that change locations and habits and a social system in which identities and roles of individuals must be discovered and remembered."

She suggests that domesticated horses may face even greater challenges, having to live in largely unsuitable or artificial environments. They must suppress instincts while learning tasks that are not natural behaviors, and must coexist with humans who sometimes behave bizarrely—at least from an equine standpoint.

Hanggi said trainers and handlers should incorporate intelligent use of both positive and negative reinforcement in a well-balanced program.

Suggestions that horses have poor spatial ability are

## *Horses are known to learn through*

🐾 **Habituation.** This is where the horse becomes used to a stimulus after repeated exposure, and its reaction diminishes or disappears. While this may involve human interaction, it equally applies to anything in its paddock, such as wind, snow or hail. Hanggi points out that this may be a simple form of learning, but it is important in allowing a horse to filter out non-vital information, enabling it to focus on more important things.

🐾 **Desensitization.** Hypersensitive animals can be desensitized by getting them used to the stimuli in increments. A trainer, for example, will introduce a bridle gradually to a horse, backing off if the horse shows an unfavorable response. Done properly, a horse will learn to willingly to accept gentle bridling. It is through both these forms of learning that a horse can be made familiar with major stress factors, such as gunfire.

🐾 **Pavlovian conditioning.** This is where a horse becomes conditioned to give a particular response. Hanggi gave the example of a trainer who pairs the word "trot" with the flick of a whip to get a horse to move to a trot. Done consistently, the horse will eventually respond to the verbal cue without the need for the whip. The use of food for reinforcement or even use of the word "good" can be part of this conditioning process.

🐾 **Operant conditioning.** Horses are effective at this form of learning, and it is a standard part of training techniques. When a horse begins to learn the meaning of a new stimulus, its response is initially random. Through trial and error, it will offer the desired response. A trainer using positive reinforcement at the right moment will encourage the horse to repeat the behavior. Its repetition will be hit and miss at first, but with continued use of positive reinforcement, the horse will learn the appropriate response to the stimulus. Operant conditioning can also work by encouraging a horse to do something in the knowledge it will avoid something it dislikes.

simply not supported by the evidence, she says.

She points out that vigilant horse owners have remarked on how well horses find their way around areas they have only visited infrequently. Horses also react noticeably when objects in their surroundings have been moved.

"Horses perform very well on spatial discrimination tasks," she says.

What then, of the suggestion that horses cannot recognize with one eye what they have seen only with the other eye? This, she says, is a myth used to explain why horses may startle at the same object when viewed from different directions. The Foundation's inter-ocular transfer research has demonstrated that horses can transfer visual information from eye to eye.

One theory that could explain why horses can be startled in such circumstances is that they may not always realize that an object is the same one when viewed from different angles.

Horses, she points out, are social animals that are comfortable in the company of other horses. One study revealed that 72 percent of participating owners thought that abnormal behaviors could be learned by horses observing others.

However, no research has yet been conducted to prove this. "It is difficult to accept that horses cannot learn by observation in any situation," she says.

"Many horse people believe—some even vehemently argue—that the learning abilities of horses don't go beyond the scope of associative learning and memory.

"Although a large amount of cognitive behavior can be explained by these mechanisms, it is critical for the wellbeing of horses to study whether they possess more

advanced learning abilities.

“If the cognitive abilities of horses are misunderstood, underrated, or overrated, their treatment may also be inappropriate. Equine welfare is dependent on not only physical comfort but mental comfort as well.

“Confining a thinking animal in a dark, dusty stable with little or no social interaction and no mental stimulation is as harmful as providing inadequate nutrition or using abusive training methods. Therefore, it is in the interest of both horses and humans to understand more fully the scope of equine thinking.

“In comparison with the cognition work with other animals, little research into advanced equine learning has been completed, which is astounding considering the importance of horses to humans.”

The Foundation, she says, has been working to change that over the past 15 years, and is considered the leading researchers into advanced cognitive abilities in horses. Its most important research focuses on categorization learning and concept learning.

“These are ground-breaking studies into advanced learning abilities and show that horses are capable of much more than many people believe,” she says.

Hanggi says that, until recently, little consideration was given as to why horses behaved as they did; “however, during the past decade, an explosion of sorts has occurred within the horse industry.”

Conferences, research articles, horse expositions, clinics, the Internet, television, magazines, books, videos and worldwide tours had all made available educational prospects never before seen on such a large scale.



KEVIN LAW

**Positive reinforcement is a useful tool in training horses, but make sure they don't end up training you. Hanggi gives the example of an impatient horse that may make a ruckus in a stall as it sees its dinner being prepared.**

**By hurriedly feeding the horse to settle it, the owner is actually providing positive reinforcement of its undesirable behavior. Before long, the horse will associate causing a fuss with being fed, and it may soon start causing a fuss every time it sees the person in the hope of being fed.**

### What's in a whinny?

There is much we don't understand about horse intelligence, such as what a horse can say in a whinny.

The question has been investigated by David Browning, an adjunct professor at the University of Rhode Island, and Peter Scheifele, a research associate at the University of Connecticut.

They described their work as “modest introductory research” to determine if there were any specific vocal expressions connected to stress in a whinny.

While many domestic animals tend to emit sounds of one simple tone, a whinny is considerably more complex, consisting of a constant tone, interspersed with varied harmonics. These harmonics were shown to increase as a horse becomes more agitated, degenerating to a squeal-like noise when horses fight.

The calmer the horse, the richer and more variable the sound.

“From skilled horse handlers to wide-eyed novices, everyone has the opportunity to advance their knowledge about equine cognition, behavior, training and care.

“Unfortunately, as is human nature, some equine authorities take advantage of those eager for information, creating a persona of near thaumaturgy (miracle-performing ability),” Hanggi says.

“It is up to the individual to differentiate between the sincere and the artificial, to search for truth among unsubstantiated declaration, and to become an eclectic in the world of horses.”

*The ERF investigates equine cognition, perception and behavior using non-invasive methods based on positive reinforcement. The center offers programs where participants learn how horses think and perceive their world, how to form strong bonds, and how to train, handle and ride horses based on eclectic horsemanship and positive reinforcement. For more information, visit <http://equineresearch.org> or call 831-662-9577. U*

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# Board meeting minutes

## Jan. 13, 2011

**Treasurer:** The PVPHA only spends \$63 per month to print the DISPATCH.

The PVPHA received a thank-you card from the Grimes family in consideration for flowers sent after Sararuth Grimes passed away.

Nancy Wildman has replaced Rachel Grech as the vice president of fiscal affairs. She will be coordinating the annual Poker Ride and keeping track of merchandise.

**DISPATCH:** The one respondent to the online survey said he or she didn't like the new layout and said it needed more local news. [*Ed. note: In every issue, all the news briefs, the front page story and the Trainer Spotlight columns are about local events or people.*] An upcoming issue will have a story on the Chandler Project. Allen loved January's article on riding aside and asked O'Neil to organize a sidesaddle demonstration when the days are longer. Ryan, O'Neil and Houle will do a write-up on the Cowboy Music and Poetry Festival.

**Hawthorne fence:** The board decided to solicit bids to

7:17 p.m. - 8:54 p.m.

*Attendees: Nancy Wildman, Gil Houle, Michelle Sanborn, Erin Ryan, Charlene O'Neil, Nicole Mooradian*

replace the entire length of the fence with new fencing.

**Membership list:** Allen requested all e-mail addresses and phone numbers be re-added to the list.

**Programs:** February's general meeting will focus on acupuncture. [*Ed. note: The acupuncture presentation was rescheduled and replaced with a presentation on the Chandler Project.*]

**Major clinician:** Houle planned to speak with some of the clinicians at the Equine Affaire in February.

**St. Patrick's Day Parade:** Hermosa Beach asked if the PVPHA would like to ride in the city's St. Patrick's Day Parade. The board discussed forwarding the information to the Happy Hoofers and the Hoofers In Training.

**California pipeline project:** A new water line on the Peninsula has already been approved; however, a representative would like to talk about it with the PVPHA. O'Neil will contact him to set up a presentation for one of the general meetings. U

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President's message:

## Thanks go to organizers for great Festival

by DALE ALLEN  
PVPHA PRESIDENT

The PVPHA started off the year with the annual Cowboy Poetry and Music Festival on Jan. 15. If you missed this one, you missed out on a lot of fun.

The program started off with the PVPHA serving chili and cornbread and brownies and ice cream. Then the main program started playing to a standing-room audience. The best part was that it was all free. Our thanks to Pam Turner for putting together this great program. I think she got a bit of help from her husband Randy. We would also like to thank the Empty Saddle Club for allowing us to have this event at their beautiful facility again.

The Rolling Hills Estates Planning Commission's public hearing for the Chandler Ranch/Rolling Hills Country Club Project has been postponed until April 4, 2011. U

### Help the DISPATCH!

Hate the new layout? Have an idea for a column or feature? Let us know! We've put together a brief survey for our readers, and we would really appreciate your input. You can access the survey online at:

<http://dispatch2011survey.tk>

Responses are anonymous.  
Thank you!

### HORSE FUNNIES

## 'Tiff really enjoys her mani-pedi!'

Submitted by Donna Hilgendorf. Photo by David Aguinaga.



Have you taken a funny picture of your horse in a crazy situation? Send it to [ghoule@cox.net](mailto:ghoule@cox.net) with a funny caption, and you could win a trail map!

Winner will be announced in 2012.

Continued from page 4...

## Seahorse: Trainers specialize in hunters, jumpers, equitation

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Gibson and Arbuckle enjoy teaching both the horses and riders as well as providing a fun and safe environment to help their clients reach any and all of their equestrian goals.

*Seahorse Riding Club offers enthusiastic instruction for all levels, beginner to advanced. For more information about Gibson, Arbuckle and Seahorse Riding Club, visit <http://seahorseridingclub.org> or call 310-541-5921. U*



PHOTO COURTESY SEAHORSE RIDING CLUB

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The DISPATCH is always looking for writers and photographers to help fill its next issue. Contact the editor at PVPHA2010@gmail.com for more information.

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**DEADLINE for the receipt of ads is the 20th of the month.**

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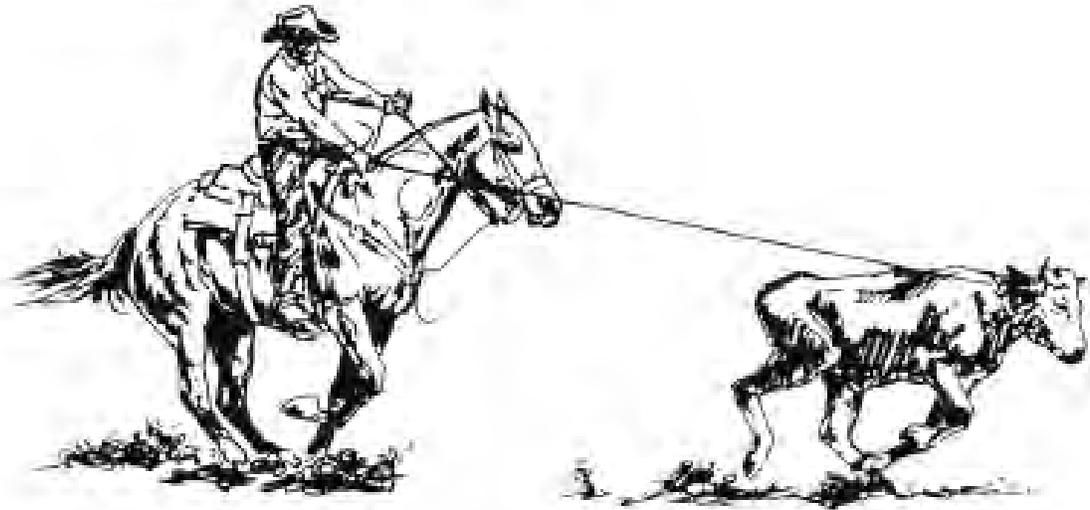
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