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TheNewsDesk**Horse riders 'Still Hot to Trot'**BY ROB HEDELT
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Leaning back slightly in the saddle, Jan Grubic gave a light pull on the reins and made a soft clicking sound to reverse her steady quarter horse around a rope gate on the training ring.

Later, the veteran Westmoreland County horsewoman was just as successful, her Princess just as surefooted weaving through pylons and other obstacles on a course set up in a ring at Beaver Dam Stables in King George County.



Sharon Painter of Spotsylvania rides Miss Cash while trying to get her to kick a ball during an exercise Sunday at a Fun Day sponsored by the Still Hot to Trot chapter of the Old People's Riding Club. The event was held at Beaver Dam Stables in King George. (Photo by Suzanne Carr Rossi/The Free Lance-Star)

A dozen or so other riders cheered Grubic's performance on the horse also known as Zips My Pleasure, as they would for riders all Sunday afternoon at a Fun Day mix of relays, challenges, trail rides and camaraderie for the gathered horse lovers.

"This is what our group is all about," said Sue Berry of the King George-based Still Hot to Trot chapter of the Old People's Riding Club, "people who love horses getting together to have fun, learn and help each other."

Berry, the chapter's president, said it was started last year after horse enthusiasts in the region expressed an interest in starting a group that could expand horse-related activities.

"We'd have two or three people getting together for trail rides or other activities," she said. "The idea was that with a much larger group would come more opportunities and activities."

Because many of the riders were a bit older, and wanted to accentuate the sort of experiences others their age would enjoy, the OPRC chapter is restricted in membership to riders over 21.

Its membership, which jumped from seven the first year to 18 this year, is made up largely of riders in their 40s and 50s, though there are members in their 60s as well.

Sharon Painter, a 60-year-old horse enthusiast from Spotsylvania County, said she came to Sunday's event to continue her return to the sport.

"I'm just getting back my horse legs and horse arms," she said, riding a horse named Miss Cash. "This is a great environment to get help and encouragement as I'm doing that."

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Melanie Swick rides Breezy while she practices putting a rope back on a gate during the Fun Day on Sunday sponsored by the Still Hot to Trot chapter of the Old People's Riding Club at Beaver Dam Stables in King George. (Photo by Suzanne Carr Rossi/The Free Lance-Star)

Painter's friend, 56-year-old Nick Houchin of Westmoreland County, gave pointers from the back of his own mount, Blue, who stepped with authority through the obstacles and relays.

"I earn my living in construction, but riding and training horses is what I do for fun," he said. "I love it."

Taking all this in from a small patch of shade was Debbie Kline, who has three horses on her family's small acreage near Warsaw.

Having broken her back in a fall from a horse years earlier, she now picks and chooses when to ride, and took a bye yesterday.

But she is thrilled about joining the OPRC chapter.

"When I moved to this area from Oklahoma, I wanted to get to know others who enjoyed horses," she said, noting that the group has provided friends, support and a chance to engage in a range of club activities.

A list of those on a group flier includes clinics, field trips, guest speakers, horse camping, education and training, dinners, overnight adventures and experience with multiple disciplines.

"Some people like motorcycles, others have other interests," said Kline. "We love riding horses."

Berry said the group appreciated being able to use the facilities at Beaver Dam Stables, where horses are boarded and bred and have the run of trails and training grounds on more than 200 acres.



Lori Banker (center) watches as Debbie Cline gives 'Fancy', Kim Harley's horse a treat at the Still Hot to Trot event. (Photo by Suzanne Carr Rossi/The Free Lance-Star)

Lori Banker of King George was at the Fun Day yesterday with her 13-year-old son, Ian, whose pony Cowboy was one of the best-humored and most easily managed mounts moving.

He had the support of a group of riders that included some old enough to be his grandparents.

"Many younger riders enjoy speed and the thrill of competition," said Berry. "For our group of older riders, the focus is having fun and being safe doing that."

Inquiries about membership can be emailed to membership.oprc.stillhottotrot@gmail.com.

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By Free Lance-Star Newsroom Editors on June 24th, 2012
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Tags: Beaver Dam Stables, Fun Day, horse club, King George County, Old People's Riding Club, Still Hot to Trot

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