

HOOFBEATS

Now everybody can ride

By Pat Murphy, Contributing Writer

Good news, folks: If you'd like to learn to ride but you don't have a horse, we have the answer.

Doesn't matter if you're just a kid or a grown-up and still a kid at heart. Or maybe you're a guy with a secret urge to be John Wayne. Cindy McClelland can help you. She has her own string of super gentle horses and gives lessons in a beautiful arena, or you can go out on scenic trails.

Her location is tucked away beside olive trees and vineyards and is a peaceful, confidence-building place. She's been giving lessons safely for 19 years, but this beautiful blonde only looks 19, so go figure. Cindy always has plenty of help and has been training top Dunn School students to assist riders during the lessons. There are special classes and trail rides for adults.

"It's a funny thing that deep in their hearts, most kids love horses. When we start, everyone learns how to safely walk around a horse and basic safety on the ground," says Cindy. "My horses are very quiet and have great ground manners. I can have little kids safely leading a big horse around. Those horses just seem to know how to act and what to do. We do grooming and haltering and managing tack, with assistance like placing saddles on horse's backs, working with the cinches and later bridling.

"Students also learn the parts of the horse.

This is combined with riding, so it's an hour lesson for \$40 per lesson and in a small class of five or six. We have beginning, intermediate and advanced classes.

"Although we ride Western, everyone learns how to post, because many of the students go on into Pony Club where they ride English. As they progress, we learn side passing, diagonals and opening and closing gates, etc. On our trail rides, about 10 people can go and we have an experienced rider at both front and back of the line of riders. We also have access to several different private ranches we can ride on." This is a very special advantage.

"On March first," she continues, "we started another nine-week program with Dunn School. The kids come after school and not only learn riding, but also learn how to take good care of their horses. I also teach feeding principles, barn maintenance, care for equipment and eventually how to help others. So if they wanted to apply for a job, they would be prepared.

"We all had so much fun, and it was especially interesting to work with the girls from China. They had never been around horses in China, but when they came to America they became fascinated with them, as they are such a part of American culture."

In summer, Cindy has a kid's rodeo camp and the boys really like this and come with their cowboy hats to take part in all the fun. The camps start in June, when school lets out



Hailee Heuer and Dallas



Cindy and her horse.

and runs from 8:30 am to 12:30 noon, Monday through Friday. Each camp has a theme and many activities, including art projects and crafts. There is even a horse decorating contest. At the end, there is a show where kids can show their parents all the skills they have learned. They even learn how to rope. The

good news is, it's all very affordable.

So if you're a closet cow person, put on your boots and trot over to see Cindy. She'll even take visitors to the Valley on a scenic trail ride! You can reach her at (805) 886-2215. The website is www.santaynezvalleytrailrides.com. Or e-mail thelittlebigridingschool@yahoo.com.



One of Cindy's Rodeo Camps.



Cindy and her riders: Izibell Alvero, Alexia Schwake, Megan Connelly, Hailee Heuer.