

BURBANK LEADER

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Published Wednesday, September 6, 2006 12:38 AM PDT

News

Readin' and ridin' pays off

By Rachel Kane

Early Labor Day morning, 52 horses and their student riders trotted themselves out before a panel of judges in a competition with no losers.

Every rider at the first Riding for Reading benefit at the Los Angeles Equestrian Center won money to be donated to their school's library.

Just for participating in the event, 40 riders' school libraries will receive \$75, the top-10 riders' libraries will receive \$100, the reserve champion's library will receive \$250 and the champion's library will receive \$500.

All together, Riding for Reading donated nearly \$5,000 to schools in the Los Angeles area with students in first to 12th grade.

Jenny Terry, 17 of Westlake Village, who is enrolled in a home-schooling program through Brigham Young University, won the champion prize and chose to donate the prize money to a public school in the Burbank area.

"It was really cool," Jenny said of winning first place. "I think it's such a nice class to win because of what it stands for and I'm really proud of my horse because he was donated."

Catch a Star, the winning steed, had a problem with stopping short on jumps and being easily spooked, so he couldn't be sold.

"He had problems and issues we had to work out," Jenny said.

According to the judges that day, the issues worked out just fine. In fact, the whole operation went off without a hitch, said Marnye Langer, president of Riding for Reading.

Since 1995, Riding for Reading has operated solely in Northern California and has donated more than \$20,000 to school libraries in that area.

The idea of Riding for Reading has been in the works for nearly a decade, Langer said, but reading and riding have been close to her since her childhood.

"My background, I grew up around horses, not necessarily in an affluent sense, and in some difficult times in my life my horse was my savior," she said. "And my reading."

Now that the organization has made its first impact in the libraries of Southern California, Langer hopes to expand the program to national status in the next three to five years.

"People are so excited about this that raising money is so easy," Langer said.

And the riders are excited about it too. Every participant receives a goody bag containing items donated by equestrian companies.

The gifts included certificates from saddle companies, T-shirts and caps to commemorate the event and 10 pairs of Ariat riding boots for the top 10 winners.

The Riding for Reading program also supports and contributes funds to the Ayn Rand Institute's essay writing scholarships.

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