

GIDDY UP

SADDLE UP, GET READY TO RIDE

A saddle seat or pad supports the rider on an animal, namely a horse. The saddles mentioned in the Bible are generally considered to have been saddlecloths. The ancient Greeks sometimes used saddlecloths, but they had no saddles and often rode bareback.

The Romans did not use a saddle until near the end of the empire. The Native Americans of the Great Plains were famous horsemen and usually rode without saddles. To riders accustomed to the saddle, however, its advantages are decisive.

The saddle was likely developed either in France during the early Christian era or in the steppe region of Asia. In Europe, the saddle came into general use in the Middle Ages. The exploits of medieval knights would have been difficult without the saddle.

Saddles of various types include the packsaddle, to which the load of a pack animal is secured; the camel saddle; and the howdah, used by riders of horses. There are two main types of horse saddles, the Hungarian and the Moorish.

The Moorish saddle, which was used extensively by cowboys in the United States, has a horn which is essential in using the lasso. To hold it in place under the strain of the lasso, this saddle has two strong girths, each tightened by a cinch strap. The Hungarian saddle, of which the English saddle is an example, the McClellan saddle and the racing saddle have no horns.

The English saddle has padding, and the stirrup is hung farther forward than on the Moorish saddle or the McClellan saddle, neither of which is padded. For constant use, the hard saddle is believed in North America to be better for both the horse and the rider. The padded saddle has advantages in brief and occasional rides.

SOURCE: ENCYCLOPEDIA.COM

To hear Paris Wilson answer this week's Freshman 15 questions, visit statenews.com.

Self-serve soft serve lets customers create their own ice cream masterpiece. To read about G S Scoops, turn to page 4B.

FACES + PLACES

HELLO, MY NAME IS

Blanca Wardlaw

When Blanca Wardlaw saw Urban Dreams perform her freshman year, she immediately knew she wanted to be a part of it. "I started dancing when I was 8 and all I did was ballet," said Wardlaw, an interdisciplinary studies in social science and health studies junior. "Eventually I did jazz, hip-hop, tap and lyrical. So I danced until about two years before college because I was in high school just trying to focus on getting to college. But that never took my passion for dance away. It was still something I love to do."

Since then, Wardlaw has become the president of co-ed hip-hop and street dancing team Urban Dreams, which stands for United Races Blended as Notorious Dancers Representing Each Aspect of Modern and Street. Wardlaw performs with Urban Dreams at various events on campus, such as the MSU Grammy Awards, the Multicultural Extravaganza, MSU Showtime and other events hosted by student organizations and black caucuses. Wardlaw said for her, Urban Dreams is a perfect fit. "I just love Urban Dreams," she said. "It was like made for me, or I was made for it."

—Compiled by Abberis Farhad, photo by Jason Chiou/The State News

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Wednesday

Taking the reins Nottingham Equestrian Center thrives thanks to barn owner and boarders



PHOTOS BY KATIE RAUSCH/THE STATE NEWS

Caroline DeWitt, 14, of Holt, puts the bridle on her horse Briscoe before taking a lesson at the Nottingham Equestrian Center, 16848 Towar Ave. DeWitt, who has been riding for six years, is one of more than 100 people who regularly ride at the center.

By Julie Baker
THE STATE NEWS

Cheryl Connell-Marsh still loves to do the morning feed. After 25 years at Nottingham Equestrian Center, 16848 Towar Ave., she still loves to go in the barn in the morning when it's dark and quiet and the horses mostly are asleep. Their sounds spread through the barn and when she turns on the lights, she can see their eyes start to open. But even after the lights are on and the horses are awake, the only sound is that of them eating.

It's times like these that make her appreciate what she has made her life's work.

Before purchasing Nottingham in 1987 with her husband and two other couples, Connell-Marsh worked there for many years as barn manager and instructor. When the previous owner decided to put the center up for sale, she wasn't quite ready to part ways — especially since she had heard developers wanted to turn the property into townhouses. The nice thing about being an owner, she said, is that she is able to make changes and have control over how the animals are being treated. The previous owner had bought the center for her kids, but it clearly wasn't her life's passion, Connell-Marsh said.

But once she and the other owners took the reins, the center grew into a family. "We've really grown into a community for people," said Connell-Marsh, who lives with her husband in a house on the center's prop-

erty. "There are so few places to go in the area, it's important that people have a such a strong group that people can really rely on."

Inside the barns

The center boards horses, offers lessons, clinics, in-barn horse shows, horseback games for the kids on Friday nights and a book club. Two years ago, Connell-Marsh said the book club consisted of four people. At last week's meeting she said she looked around, and there were 16 riders faces there. "The riders seem to change a lot over the years, mostly because many of the students move away either when they graduate from high school or from MSU. But they almost always come back."

"We'll see them again and they'll walk in the door and say it's like coming home. It's like they never really leave," she said. "They're always there for you. There's a lot of love on this property." The center has two main barns, one that mostly hosts boarder horses and the other



Paula Urban, a secondary education and engineering sophomore, laughs after her pony, Punky, nuzzled her while she prepares him to head back to his stall after a riding session Monday on afternoon.

er hosts the school horses. There also is an indoor riding ring, which is where lessons typically take place; a number of outdoor rings for jumping and open spaces for grazing and riding trails. It costs \$465 per month for a stall board and \$350 per month for a paddock, or outdoor, board.

Barn manager Erica Bogel moved to the area to be near her then-fiancee and attend graduate school at MSU. At the time, she hadn't ridden for about a year and knew she wanted to get back on the horse. "If you really ride, you can only go so long without riding," said Bogel, who has been riding horses since age 4 and working in the barns since she was about 8. For a wedding present,

her husband said he wanted to pay for riding lessons at a local stable. So she started researching, found Nottingham, visited the barn and started lessons. By March 2007, about three or four lessons in, she started working at the barn to offset the lesson fees — something many of the students do. Eventually, that turned into a full time job as barn manager. "I really can't imagine not doing it every day," she said. "I wake up at 5:30 (a.m.) but I'm so happy to be up at 5:30 and coming here. Even if I've had a day where I'm physically exhausted, I'm so happy to be here."

Bogel said she teaches a "gentlemen's riding club" consisting of three boys, ages 7-9, who ride

ponies on Saturday mornings and make up most of the male population in the barns, not counting the horses or stray handouts who do maintenance work. Although she's not sure why the students and boarders are primarily women and girls, Bogel said it could be that Nottingham teaches riding in an English saddle discipline, instead of the Western style that is traditionally thought of as masculine.

Changing times

As the years progressed, the landscape near Nottingham changed. The property north of the center was bought by a boarder, who cleared it out and fenced it in so that the horses

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