

OHSET coaches approaching second season

By Jodi Schneider McNamee
Correspondent

Sisters residents Julie Vosberg and husband Kerry Newell began their second season as volunteer coaches for the Oregon High School Equestrian Team (OHSET) Central District Sisters High School last Sunday.

OHSET is a family and team sport, and parental support is crucial and creates a family-friendly atmosphere.

“The kids have to do a lot of fundraising and have to be dedicated to the team,” Vosberg told *The Nugget*. “And the parents are an essential part of the meets and are expected to help in the transport of horses, set up fundraising events, work the time clock and gates. There is a lot of dedication involved.”

This year OHSET practices are held at an equestrian training center off Perit Huntington Road.

Vosberg grew up west of Corvallis and has loved horses since she could toddle.

“I was eight years old and in 4-H when I finally begged my folks for a horse,” she said.

Vosberg got her horse and competed in shows with her sister, Janie. She became a successful reining horse competitor and enjoys barrel racing.

Newell, like Vosberg, had a passion for horses and was a 4-H member in Kansas where

he grew up.

“Kerry’s family raised some world-champion show horses,” Vosberg said.

Newell owned horses since 1963 and started showing horses in the late 1960s. Ironically enough the couple met at a horse seminar at Colorado State.

“We’ve both raised and shown reining horses for about 25 years now,” Newell said.

“We own four horses and board them at the equestrian center where we coach,” added Vosberg.

The couple lived in Kansas for 30 years, moved to Central Oregon in 2014 and to Sisters last June.

“We started the season a little early this year because last season we were scheduled to start in December and then the snow storms hit,” Newell said.

The team practices once a week, has meets once a month starting in February and a final state meet in May for teams who have qualified to compete based on their placings during those previous three events.

Vosberg’s goal is to mix in sound horsemanship skills while the team is having fun and competing.

“Horsemanship never ends, you’re always learning more,” Vosberg said. “Horsemanship is putting the horse first. You really need to know your horse and take care of him.”

Susan Robinson, managing director of The Roundhouse Foundation, is the new advisor for OHSET.

“There wasn’t another parent available to take the volunteer position this season, so I did,” Robinson explained. “My son Jackson is a junior at Sisters High School and has been on the team for three seasons.”

Mom Lori Kennedy watched as her daughter Hailey, a freshman at SHS, rode her horse Indie around the huge indoor area waiting for practice to begin.

“She’s been riding for about four years,” Kennedy said. “Right now, her goal is to learn how to train horses.”

The first practice was all about meeting the athletes and their parents.

“We did an evaluation of the kids and their horses. Then we mapped out how we’d like to conduct practices and begin to build a solid team,” said Vosberg.

Unlike a lot of high school sports, riding is an activity that many kids view as a lifelong pursuit. As coaches, the couple want to set up the athletes to move forward to compete successfully in college rodeo, equestrian teams, or as skilled horsemen in the discipline of their choice.

“It means a lot to us because when we were kids we didn’t really have an organized system in which to compete, we were just on our own,” Vosberg explained.

“And kids at this age develop the habits that they are going to have for a lifetime. It’s so much better for these kids to get a solid foundation early on.”

To help raise funds for OHSET the team set up a box outside Ray’s Food Place in the bottle recycling area. Donors can redeem cans and bottles, then put their receipt inside the box.



Julie Vosberg is Sisters High School’s equestrian coach.

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