

# IVEY RANCH PARK ASSOCIATION

WORDS: PROMISE YEE PHOTOS: RENORDO BOWEN

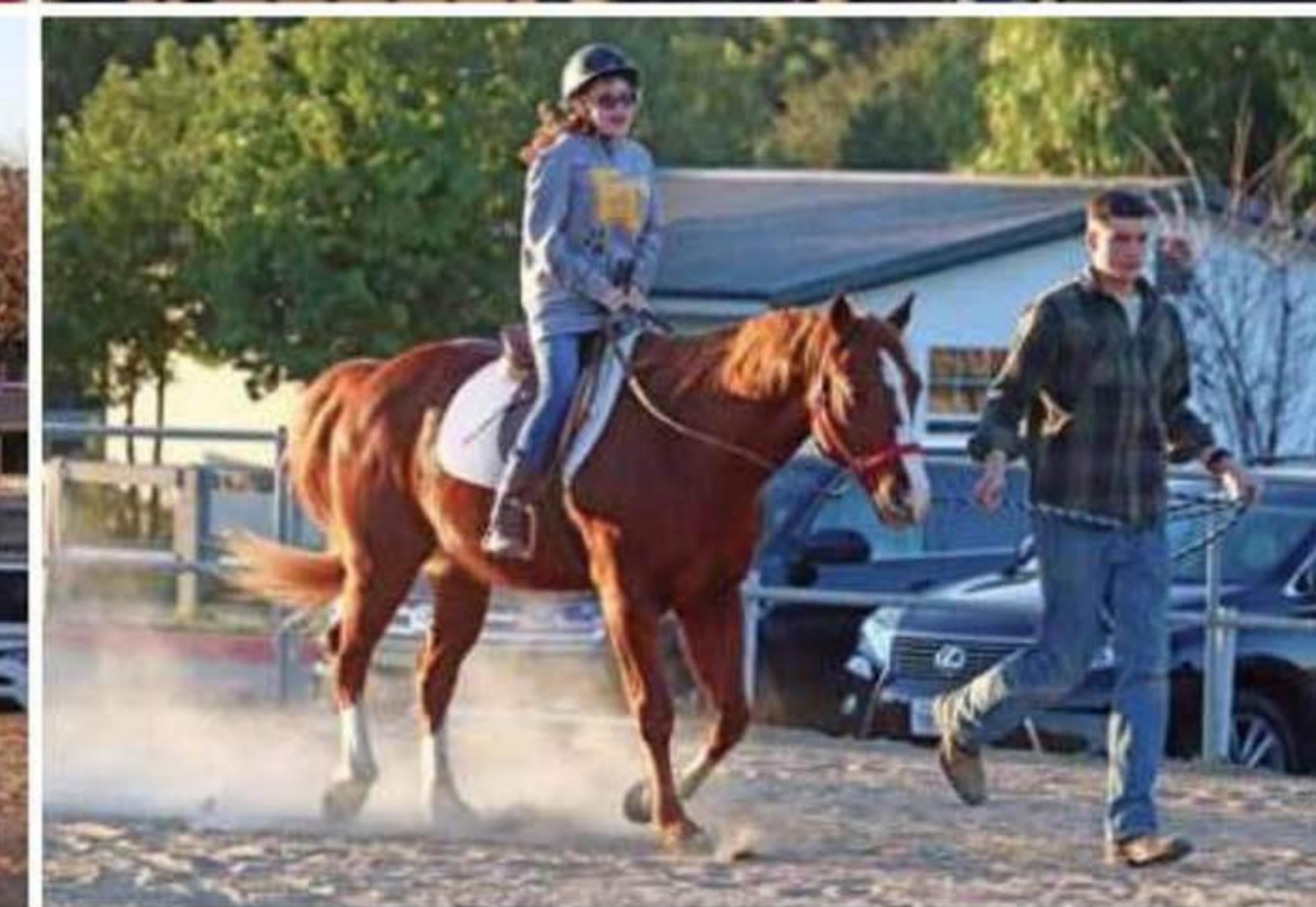
The Ivey Ranch Park Association is internationally known for its therapeutic horse instructor training program and therapy riding sessions, yet the nonprofit began as a small group of parents who wanted to do something better for their special needs kids. Tonya Danielly, executive director of Ivey Ranch Park Association, said when the ranch first offered daycare services for kids with special needs in 1981, other options were limited.

"Children with special needs could stay at home with a parent, or families could institutionalize their child," said Danielly. "It gave California two-parent working families another option." The first daycare class had six students. Soon recreational outings and in-home respite care were also offered. A parent outreach group was formed in the mid-1990s to educate families about services. A fundraising group was also formed to keep operations running.

Ivey Ranch got its first horse in 2003, which it used in its recreational program. Today, the ranch has 22 horses that serve 140 able-bodied and challenged riders a week. Those who benefit from therapeutic riding include children with mental, physical, developmental, and behavioral challenges, as well as adults with PTSD, eating disorders, and Alzheimer's disease.

The twelve-acre ranch expanded in 2008, and leased four additional adjacent acres from the city to accommodate its expanding equestrian program. Despite the financial crisis of 2009, expansion continued on schedule. Tough financial times worked to the ranch's benefit as contractors worked for lower fees, and building materials that weren't moving were sold for less. In all, the planned \$3 million-dollar barn expansion ended up costing \$1 million-dollars to complete.

Ivey Ranch hit another milestone in 2012, when it was accredited by PATH (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship) and CHA (Certified Horsemanship Association) for training therapeutic horse instructors. It is the only dually accredited facility in the state, and draws students from around the world. Each year, 100 instructors are trained through the program. Ivey Ranch is a place where the entire community comes together—the special needs population, able-bodied individuals, veterans, seniors, and animal lovers. The focus is on service—not on a person's handicap or special need. The horses provide a bridge between people's differences, and help create an easygoing



environment where things flow naturally.

The ranch employs 30 people, including four full time staff. Ivey Ranch's programs are supported by numerous volunteers like the Grooming Gang that cleans stalls and turnout, groom, and give TLC to horses two days a week. Additional volunteers help walk horses and spot students during therapy riding sessions.

Mornings on the ranch still begin with the "before school" program at the ranch house. Kids in the program enjoy breakfast and board

games before their school bus arrives. Outside instructors exercise and ride horses. Afternoons are bustling with activity. Horse therapy sessions are held, volunteers are on site to help out, and riding lessons are given. "It goes from a quiet sunrise to kids everywhere," said Danielly. "It's an anthill of activity with grooming, feeding, cleaning. The animals and everybody loves it."

It costs over a million dollars a year in cash and in-kind donations to keep the programs running. It's a credit to our fine community that

operations continue and expand. We're fortunate to have such a wonderful program like this in Oceanside.

For more info on how to volunteer, please visit [iveyranch.com](http://iveyranch.com)