



A Legacy of Horsemanship

Weymouth Center for the Arts & Humanities introduces a new equestrian youth program with the help of the Southern Pines Garden Club's annual Home & Garden Tour.

Story by Elizabeth N. Sugg

Photos by Mollie Tobias

There's an event on April 15 that combines 175 years of Sandhills history and the 75th Southern Pines Garden Club's Home & Garden Tour, the proceeds of which will go toward the repair and restoration of pastureland surrounding the recently renovated barn and stable area at the 100-year-old Weymouth Center for the Arts & Humanities.

This is not simply a beautification project. It's also a landscaping necessity to complete the facility's readiness to begin a youth riding program in partnership with the Boys & Girls Club called Weymouth Equestrians. The six-week curriculum, which is free and available to children from grades six through 12, will not just be groundbreaking as the only afterschool program of its kind in Moore County, but it also promises to be life-changing for the participating students.

The pioneering effort to bring horses back to Weymouth's stables has been led by a self-described

"barn rat," and president of the organization's board of directors Ashley Van Camp. Van Camp is also the proprietor and founder of Ashten's Restaurant, a Southern Pines dining destination, and a horsewoman who grew up riding throughout the legacy properties gifted to our community, such as the Walthour-Moss Foundation, Weymouth Woods and more.

"The idea to bring horses to all children has been in my head for many years and began when I was young," says Van Camp. "I saw that dividing line between those with access to horses and those who never even dreamed of it because horses were so far out of reach for them. The idea didn't grow legs until I came on the board at Weymouth and the barn was empty."

The other driving force behind the program is the multifaceted Katie Wyatt, executive director of Weymouth, who has had a busy first year and eight months at the helm of the Center, overseeing long-needed restoration of the James and Katharine

Ashley Van Camp and Katie Wyatt.

Van Camp and Wyatt have been the driving force in developing the new Weymouth Equestrian youth program in collaboration with the Boys & Girls Club.



Renovated stalls at the Weymouth stables

Boyd house and other areas of the 26-acre property bequeathed to our community.

A performing musician and co-founder of Kidznotes, a youth music education program that teaches orchestral training to underserved communities in Durham and Raleigh, Wyatt moved with her family to the Sandhills when her husband became a professor of Jazz Studies and the Music Industry at UNC Pembroke. She soon became involved at Weymouth, including sitting on the board.

Walking through the Weymouth house and across the gardens that lead down to the stables, Wyatt spouts off renovation costs from memory as the caretaker-in-motion she is, pointing out one spruced-up area after another. In preparation for the new educational program, Weymouth Equestrians, Wyatt says, "The barn and stables saw the reconstruction of all doors, scraping and disposal of lead paint, complete electrical rewiring, painting of the entire interior and exterior of the barn. It was extensive!"

This will be a reawakening of Weymouth's equestrian legacy as the original home of the

"So many valuable skills and life lessons are learned at the barn, such as responsibility, confidence, teamwork, verbal and non-verbal communication, work ethic and friendship."

Moore County Hounds, today the oldest and largest fox hunting club in the Southeast. The curriculum of Weymouth Equestrians is all about horsemanship, the art of riding and handling horses, a skill that has been passed down through generations for centuries. Students will learn basic horse knowledge and safety and, throughout the weeks, gain the skills to lead, groom, tack up and feed a horse as well as muck a stall. Basic riding skills of walking and trotting will be taught, and the students will gain exposure to veterinary and farrier care as well as barn management.

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ethic and friendship,” Van Camp says passionately. “Watching my son acquire these skills as a child has just strengthened my belief that horses are just darn good for kids.”

The Southern Pines Garden Club (SPGC) has long ties with Weymouth Center, writing a check to help save the property’s flowering cherry trees in 1977 when the cultural organization first began. Founded in 1948 to fund the horticultural rehabilitation for restoration of the 1820s Shaw House, now home to the Moore County Historical Association, SPGC members began opening their own homes for an annual tour to fund its landscaping projects to benefit the community.

For 75 years these tour dollars have closed the loop to make good things happen, and to return the fields and paddock areas back to the condition needed to begin Weymouth Equestrians is just the latest example of this garden club’s community initiatives.

This year’s tour will be April 15 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and it is noteworthy for its collection of approachable “idea” houses and home gardens, which are sure to inspire. Tickets are \$25 with the proceeds benefiting the project at Weymouth.

There is a closely held meaning of legacy relating to inheritance and bequests in a will, and then there is a wider definition we can all participate in: the long-lasting impact of positive events, actions, and in the Weymouth Equestrians’ case, a program that can take place and help shape a

young person’s life. It’s time to saddle up.

For tickets to the garden tour, visit southernpinesgardenclub.com.

For more information on Weymouth Equestrians, visit weymouthcenter.org. 🐾