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Why Vickie rides

Horseback lessons offer fun way to exercise muscles

By JILL FREDEL, The News Journal

Posted Monday, October 9, 2006

As Sabbah makes his way around the ring, rider Vickie George fields questions.

What does she know about embryonic stem cell research? Has she heard about Botox as a therapy?

Not typical horseback-riding talk. But not all that unusual for someone with multiple sclerosis.

George, 50, has been coming to the Center for Therapeutic and Educational Riding at C-Line Stables near Townsend every Friday morning for about six months. She gets her muscles stretched, works on her balance and strength, and as a pleasure rider before her diagnosis, enjoys just being on a horse.

"When you live inside the disease every day, you forget what it feels like to move freely," she says.

George, who lives in Newark, is a guest lecturer at the University of Delaware and Delaware Technical & Community College and for the MS Society. She also has developed exercise and training programs for people with disabilities at the Brandywine YMCA and at her Web site, www.yesyoucanusa.com.

She was diagnosed with progressive MS on June 30, 1995, after she noticed her right leg felt funny while out running with her yellow Lab, Ginger.



The effects of multiple sclerosis mean Vickie George spends a lot of time in a wheelchair, but on Fridays, therapeutic horseback riding gives her back the feeling of moving freely. (Buy photo)

The News Journal/RON SOLIMAN

For four years, she says no one could tell she had the disease. As she lost strength in her left leg, she needed one cane, then two. She had similar problems with her right arm and hand. Enter the scooter. Then her left arm and hand. She now uses a motorized wheelchair and has an assistant.

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