

## More on REACH Huron – A Happenin' Place

by Carolyn Parks-Mintz

*Part 2 of a two-part series on Central Huron's gem of a facility*

One of the goals of REACH Huron is to be a centre of excellence for the equine and agricultural industries.

REACH is achieving that and much more.

As I toured Clinton's Regional Equine & Agriculture Centre of Huron with Executive Director Richard Harding, it was readily apparent that the facility is a community centre extraordinaire.

The brainchild of Harding, supported by Municipal Council in 2006, REACH Huron came to fruition in 2009 as an exceptional purpose-built centre offering a wide variety of programs to the surrounding area.

As noted above, its initial *raison d'être* was to provide topnotch educational opportunities for the equine and agricultural disciplines.

"We wanted to support these two areas, generate economic expansion, and bring people to the community," says Harding.

"The ability to attract first class educators and instructors means we can offer high quality educational opportunities and services to the region," Harding goes on.

Whether renting the space to facilitators or organizing programs to meet community needs, REACH Huron is able to effectively offer a broad range of programming at reasonable fees.

In addition to an ag and equestrian agenda, REACH Huron has a busy culinary program running out of its spanking new commercial kitchen under Chef Devin Tabor.

Cooking courses coming up in March and April are The Best Cuts (all about meat), Cooking for Kids, Desserts to Die For, Dine and Vine (how to pair local food with Ontario wines) and Cook for a Day—Eat for a Week. All are one evening courses.

The large arena at REACH welcomes riders and horses to Community Ride Times on Saturday afternoons and Monday and Thursday evenings—a chance to exercise your four-footed friend and socialize with other riders.

Roping practice, team sorting, equine reproductive services, riding and lunge lessons are also part of what REACH offers.

On Sunday afternoons, its great arena space literally goes to the dogs. From 4:00 to 5:00 pm, it becomes an off-leash indoor park for canine critters to let loose and run, while the folk who bring them hang out.

Proving its versatility, 80 kids ages 5 to 16 are enjoying indoor soccer in the REACH arena—and it's not too late to register. The program runs until April 26<sup>th</sup> on Tuesdays.

"Horses and Humans" is a unique course offered at REACH through Equine Assisted Learning as a Special Needs Program of Community Living.

It is an empowering program that combines experiential learning and natural horsemanship techniques to help participants develop interpersonal, communication and relationship skills.

The Central Huron Afterschool Program (CHAPs) next session runs from March 20 to June 16 on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and includes nutritious snacks, homework help, and lots of fun.

CHAPs kids, from Grade 3 and up, are instructed in archery, riding, cooking, arts and crafts, and theatre arts.

A March Break Kids Camp will happen from March 14 to 18, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm and involve cooking, arts & crafts, drama, group games, riding, leadership building, and archery.

Equine Courses during March and April under the “Learn About” Lecture Series will cover herd health, performance horse injuries and prevention, English saddle fitting, and equine photography.

As well, March 26 and 27 will feature Advanced Equine Massage, the second in this very popular clinic especially designed for horse owners. Note the introductory clinic is a prerequisite to this course.

In addition to well-attended Performance Horse Handler and college/highschool culinary co-op programs, REACH Huron will welcome very special performers and clinics this spring.

From March 23 to 27 under the auspices of Equine Bodyworks, WPRA Champion barrel Racer Molly Powell will conduct two clinics on this popular rodeo event.

And at press time, there was just one spot left in Molly’s clinics.

On April 8<sup>th</sup> the REACH arena will ring with the sounds of full contact jousting and games as the Knights of Valour Troupe and their noble steeds challenge one another.

Public performances of this medieval sport, that start with Birds of Prey demonstrations, are at 1:00 pm and 7:00 pm, and school groups can take it all in during the morning.

Award winning dressage rider and instructor Olivia Wentworth-Stanley will demonstrate this complex equitation on the flat and also conduct clinics from May 6 to 8.

School packages, student co-op placements, and archery lessons are also available at the REACH one-of-a-kind community centre.

In addition to its plethora of activities, REACH Huron has room rentals for meetings, workshops, birthday parties, and weddings – and can cater your event too.

And expansion plans are in the works. Fundraising is underway to construct a show barn, show rings and additional parking space.

“REACH Huron has the capability and land base to host a show of 300 horses,” says Harding. “We’re going to design for that.”

There are numerous opportunities to be part of this remarkable facility and its operations, whether as a donor, a volunteer, or a sponsor.

To learn about REACH Huron programs, activities, shows and more, go to [www.reachhuron.ca](http://www.reachhuron.ca) or call 519.482.3998.

You’ll be glad you did!