

Young riders strut stuff in spring show

By Stephanie Martell
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FORT MILL — She has a passion for ponies. He is brimming with entrepreneurial spirit.

So what happens when you put two highly motivated people together in one house? If those two people are Cathy and Scott Kodell, the result is Leg Up Equestrian, a unique center for riding lessons and equine education on Collins Road in Fort Mill.

Leg Up started in 1997 as a “free pony ride on the side of Rea Road & Colony Extension on the Fourth of July,” laughs Scott, who goes simply by “S.” Since then, the program has moved twice before settling on Collins Road in 2004, where it has blossomed.

Cathy describes Leg Up as not just a riding academy, but a “comprehensive equestrian and horse mastership program.” It “uses love of horses to teach life skills” like patience, confidence, and attention to detail so young students can “rise above the mediocrity,” she says.

At the heart of the program are Cathy’s 10 Levels of Achievement, a progressive curriculum she has developed to teach not only riding skills, but horse mastership and character development of the rider as well.

“Not everyone will be a pro,” Cathy says. “The focus is on the experience.”

The curriculum has something for all ages and skill levels: early grade-school Pony Pals classes, summer camps, and even apprenticeship and instructor training for advanced students.

“The horses are our teachers,” she says.

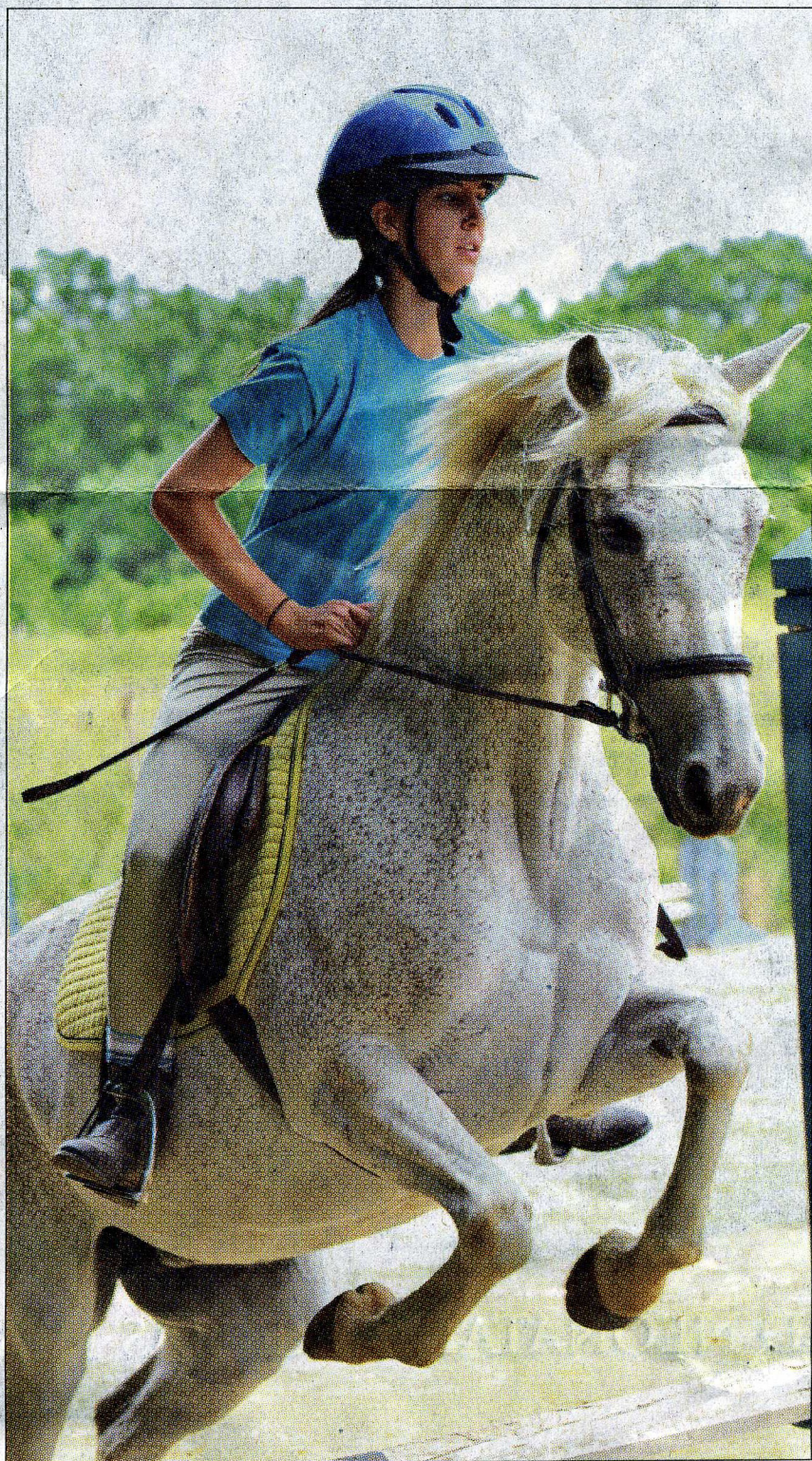
“They are generous creatures who want to please. They mirror what you give them. You get what you give. You give love, you get love,” she says.

Leg Up Equestrian’s Spring Show for students was held May 19-20. The center hosts two annual shows to check each rider’s progress and to give every student a chance to “have the show experience,” as Cathy puts it. She explains that some horse shows can get prohibitively pricey, and the lack of feedback can be a frustrating experience for young riders.

“Even if you did well, you don’t know why you did well. I think it can lead to a lot of ugliness,” she says.

Cathy and instructors Jessica Thompson and Jenna McClintock judged each other’s students in this year’s event, providing written feedback for everyone.

“S,” a Tulane graduate and self-pro-



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Brooke Scudder puts On A Whim through the paces.

claimed former “city boy with very little horse sense” until he met Cathy, describes building a business together.

“I think you have to have a passion for

whatever you do,” he says. “We complement. She’s very hands-on...but I can see the overall concept. It’s a good healthy balance.”