

STAFF PHOTO BY LISA CASSIDY

Gilson Ferraz, 10, of Framingham, brushes Willie, a 13-year-old Quarterhorse, at Dunvegan Farm in Wrentham on Monday in a program started by Barbara Zenker of Weston and Kim Summers of Medfield.

CITY Slickers

By Liz Mineo
STAFF WRITER

For the past six weeks, Sonete Kammer has enjoyed the vaulting lessons at Dunvegan Farm in Wrentham as much as her son, Lineker, 10, who is actually the one taking them.

Though he grew up in his grand parents' farm

Resident introduces horses to urban youth

playing with horses and other farm animals, the boy had never been close to a horse since he moved to the MetroWest area six years ago from his native Brazil.

"This is an opportunity for him to relive his memories," said Kammer as she filmed her son doing vaulting exercises on "Willie." "I'm so

HORSES, see page 5

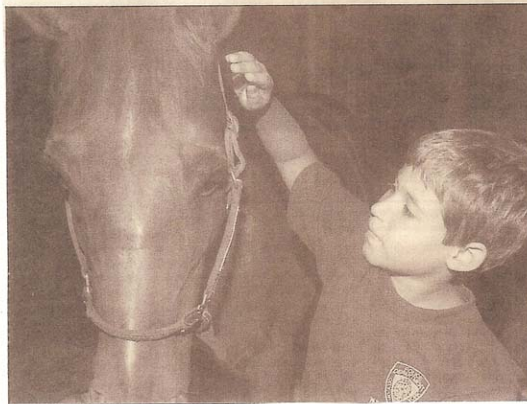
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Children learn to 'horse around'



HORSES, from page 1
happy to see my son's dream come true."

She's not the only one who is happy.

Lineker and five other Framingham Brazilian boys were taking part in "City to Saddle," a program that offers scholarships to groups of children who couldn't ordinarily afford horsemanship activities.

The program was founded last year by Barbara Zenker of Weston and Kim Summers of Medfield. Zenker, a devoted rider, and Summers, an experienced equestrian instructor, wanted to share the beauty and fun of horsemanship programs.

"It was an opportunity to learn life skills, such as patience, kindness, compassion, courage and confidence," said Zenker, who contacted the Brazilian boys through St. Tarcisius Church which offers masses in Portuguese for the large Brazilian community in Framingham.

Horsemanship programs can be very expensive. The average price for a vaulting lesson is between \$20 to \$30 once a week, and up to \$200 a month if it's twice a week. Riding lessons can be between \$40 to \$75 per session.

Summers, who at age 10 became a working stable assistant to help pay for riding lessons and showing expenses, knows it well.

"We wanted to bring children into our programs who might not otherwise have access to them," said Summers. "We wanted all kids to have the opportunity to do it."

The program for the Brazilian boys is the second of its kind. The first one took place last year at the Dana Hall School Riding Center Summer Horsemanship Program in Wellesley and brought eight youngsters from Dorchester.

Zenker and Summers hope to raise more money to expand the program to other communities.

Both programs were funded through donations. The funds helped pay trainer fees and some equipment for the boys such as water shoes and girths. The lessons are invaluable, according to the trainers.

Various children from Framingham enjoy riding and taking care of Willie, a 13-year-old Quarterhorse, at Dunvegan Farm in Wrentham on Monday during the City to Saddle program co-founded by Barbara Zenker of Weston.

Top to bottom, Yuri Catao, 10, gets on backwards; Victor Santos, 9, pets Willie; and Andre De Miranda, 10, takes a ride.



The boys learn more than riding a horse or how to do tricks. They learn to be calm, gentle, patient and sensitive from being around horses. A horse doesn't respond to yelling and prefers a gentle voice and a calm rider, said Zenker.

Luiz Fernandes, 10, has learned unforgettable lessons.

"Horses are humans with four legs," he said. "They have feelings too. When they're angry, their ears are pointing back, and if they're straight it means they're happy."

Nine-year-old Victor Santos had never been close to a horse and he'll always remember it.

"I once saw a horse back in Brazil," he said. "I'd like to have a white horse next to my house so I could ride it every day and do cool tricks on it."

On Monday afternoon, Lineker was having the time of his life riding Willie.

"Willie, you're awesome," he said as he caressed the 800-pound pony. "You're the best horse in the whole world."

Anyone interested in the program or making a donation can contact Barbara Zenker or Kim Summers at citytosaddle@aol.com or at P.O. Box 456, Weston MA 02493.

STAFF PHOTOS BY LISA CASSIDY