

# A Helping Hand

NSBA TACK ROOM AND CLOTHES CLOSET ALLOWS EXHIBITORS TO HELP EACH OTHER BY PROVIDING A PLACE TO DONATE ITEMS SO THAT OTHERS CAN MAKE GOOD USE OF THEM • BY MARGARET STORRS • PHOTOS BY LARRY WILLIAMS

One of the newest National Snaffle Bit Association programs, operated under the auspices of the Foundation, is the Riders With Disabilities Tack Room and Clothes Closet, established to help Therapeutic Riding Facilities prepare their show teams for competition.

Individuals of the industry have the unique opportunity to further encourage RWD participants through continued support through their donations of show tack and attire.

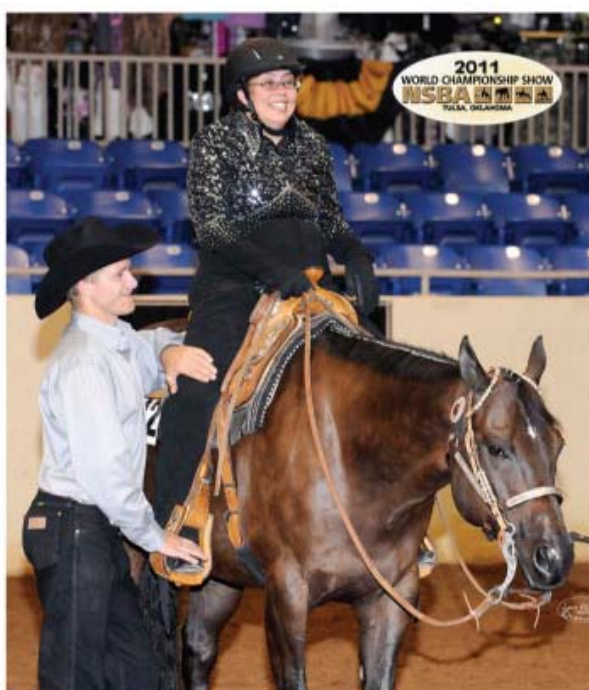
Devin Robertson of Zion, Illinois, a member of Partners for Progress, a Premiere Equine Therapy Center located in Mundelein, Illinois, was one of the first to take advantage of the program.

Robertson was able to take advantage of the NSBA Foundation's Tack Room and Clothes Closet to help make her first year at the NSBA World Show a great one.

"The Tack Room and Clothes Closet allowed me to focus on riding my horse instead of worrying about coming up with the money to buy a show shirt," she said.

As competitors, we all know how first impressions in the show pen can make a difference. The Tack Room and Clothes Closet is a great way for NSBA members to continue supporting RWD classes, their participants and the horses they ride, according to Rebecca Volkert, director of the NSBA Foundation.

"There are simple steps we all can take to make stories like Devin's a possibility for everyone," she said.



DEVIN ROBERTSON OF ZION, ILLINOIS competes in the Heroes On Horses Walk-Trot Western Pleasure- Supported Riders class aboard Grant Me A Legend, at the 2011 NSBA World Championship Show. She rides with Partners For Progress program in Mundelein, Illinois.

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the Partners For Progress program in its Equine Therapy Center some time ago.

"What I love most about riding is how it makes me feel," she said. "It is impossible to do anything but smile when you are the back of a horse. When I have a bad day, I head to the barn."

This year's Partners For Progress show team consisted of six riders, four staff members and four volunteers who traveled to compete at the 2011 NSBA World Show. "One of the things I love most about showing is the camaraderie," Robertson said. "I have made some great lifelong friends."

In addition to competing in the Riders With Disabilities events at the 2011 NSBA World Championship Show, Robertson was also eligible to compete in the new Heroes On Horses Walk-Trot Western Pleasure-Assisted Rider class, because of her past service in the United States Coast Guard.

"The Heroes on Horses classes really affected me," she said. "When they announced the veterans names I got pretty choked up."

Robertson won the Heroes On Horses Walk-Trot Western Pleasure-Assisted Rider class this year and said she has her sights set on riding as an independent rider next.

"It was a great experience," she said. "My goal for next year is to defend my title as World Champion in the Heroes On Horses class and to possibly show in the unassisted class. I would like to be the only one that I count on to win."

A fierce competitor, what Robertson enjoys most is the exhilaration of competition.

"Before I was diagnosed, I barrel raced, played soccer, football, softball and enjoyed outdoor activities like kayaking, rock climbing, hiking and biking," she said. "The best advice I can give to anyone is to always believe in yourself and never be afraid to try something new."

Equine Therapy Centers like Partners For Progress are nonprofit organizations that provide horses and the tools needed for learning and showing.

"The NSBA Foundation's Tack Room and Clothes Closet gives programs like ours the start we need to form a proper show team," said explains Diane Helgeland, executive director of Partners For Progress. "Acquiring the show clothing and tack needed for both riders and horses is a project that could take years to get. As most of our programs run on a tight budget, the NSBA has helped give us the jump start we needed to start showing."

Helgeland said that, from the start, the NSBA has made their riders feel like part of the show.

"This is most important in helping the world become more assessable to individuals with unique abilities," she said. "Our riders loved the NSBA World Show and some are committed to working harder for next year."

Getting involved in supporting your fellow NSBA members is simple and easy.

"The Tack Room and Clothes Closet provides a way for NSBA members to help," Volkert said. "The mission of the program is to help riders facing challenges to be able to experience horse showing and ultimately 'share the dream.'"

Duplicate or items no longer needed, such as show attire, tack, halter and bridle bags, coolers and sheets, can be donated at sites at the NSBA World Show and Quarter Horse Congress. Donations are accepted all year and can be mailed.

"The NSBA office may be able to match your location with a Therapeutic Riding Facility near you for direct shipping," Volkert said.

Donations are matched with the specific needs of Equine Therapy Facilities. It is at no cost for facilities to participate and donors will receive a tax deduction benefit. A complete list of items needed can be found on the NSBA website.

"While the main focus is to help riders prepare for NSBA classes, it could also help riders prepare for any of the special classes offered by the AQHA Equestrians with Disabilities program, Palomino and Appaloosa Challenged Riders event or those experiences offered at the Paint, Buckskin and Pinto World Championship Shows," Volkert said. "Items will be saved by NSBA and distributed as the need arises. All it takes is a little ingenuity and some big hearted people to make a difference."

For more information on how you can help visit NSBA's website at [www.nsba.com](http://www.nsba.com). The address for donations is: NSBA Office, 1391 St. Paul Ave., Gurnee, IL 60031



DEVIN ROBERTSON said she got choked up when they announced the names of the servicemen competing at the NSBA World Championship Show. The audience honored the veterans with standing ovations and salutes.