



# ACCESS ADVENTURE

## *Challenging the Limits of Disability*

Summer, 2006

Volume 1, Number 2



*When John Muir first arrived in California by ship, he was bewildered and overwhelmed by the raucous energy of San Francisco in 1869. He asked a passerby the quickest way out of the city. "Well where do you want to go?" the stranger inquired. "Anywhere Wild!" exclaimed Muir*



Simpson Percherons at Fernandez Ranch Celebration



Simpson Percherons at Rush Ranch Days

### **Mission Statement:**

To provide wilderness and open space access for people with disabilities using innovative, wheelchair accessible horse-drawn carriages.

### ***We're off and running! (Well, trotting, really...)***

Access Adventure kicked off the 2006 season at Rush Ranch Days, hosted by the Solano Land Trust and the Rush Ranch Education Council. We welcomed an estimated 700 visitors to a spectacular opening day that featured twenty horses working. These included a champion six horse hitch, team plowing demonstrations, antiques, a working chuckwagon, the debut of the new Thornlea wheelchair accessible carriages, a pony ride and the towering Rock, North America's biggest Percheron.

Guests enjoyed learning about the natural and cultural history of the beautiful 2,070 acre property, blacksmithing, falconry, sheepdog demonstrations, art, poetry, old-time music and dancing. A great day!

### ***Simpson Percherons step up to support Access Adventure***

The historic Rush Ranch, located on the northern reaches of San Francisco Bay, serves as the headquarters of Access Adventure, part of more than 12,000 acres owned by the Solano Land Trust and Muir Heritage Land Trust. Just twenty minutes down the road, perched on the banks of the Sacramento River in Rio Vista you'll find our neighbor Dan Simpson.

You might say Dan is a big fan of draft horses. He has collected nearly 200 of them! Simpson Percherons, under the direction of champion horseman Jason Bexson, his lovely wife Val and a crackerjack crew turned out a sensational display of gleaming blacks and grays for Access Adventure's opening day. When we need horsepower, Simpson Percherons steps up in a big way. [www.simpsonpercherons.com](http://www.simpsonpercherons.com)

### ***Fernandez Ranch Celebration***

Access Adventure joined the Muir Heritage Land Trust to celebrate the acquisition of the historic 702 acre Fernandez Ranch west of Martinez, overlooking San Francisco Bay. This stunning property is now protected from development for all time. Access Adventure can operate here after the replacement of a bridge and the development of equestrian trails over the land. This special day included guided hikes, carriage rides and refreshments. Honored guests included naturalist Gary Bogue, our own Michael Muir and Congressman George Miller. Beautiful water colors of trust lands, painted by Juanita Hagberg were presented to the honorees.

Dan Simpson, Jason and Val Bexson and the sharp crew of Simpson Percherons turned out again, this time with a champion six horse hitch of grays and the mighty Rock put to the Thornlea wheelchair carriage, providing rides throughout the morning. Old friends turned out to see us again, and we made some new ones. Congratulations to everyone involved in the preservation of this priceless treasure, the Fernandez Ranch.



# ACCESS ADVENTURE

Page 2 of 3



Vera, Andy, Marianne and Dan Reinmuth at Rush Ranch Days



## **Spotlight on Vera and Andy**

Vera Aiteman, 23, Vallejo, CA is one of Access Adventure's first riders. Vera, who has cerebral palsy, attends Solano Community College, which has an outstanding adapted physical education department. An Access Adventure presentation there led Vera and some of her classmates to the Rush Ranch. Vera's dazzling smile and her spirit of adventure tell the real story of our program. She began riding with us when we had a single wheelchair accessible cart and returned to Rush Ranch Days to try out the new Thornlea carriages. "It was absolutely amazing! I think anybody, regardless of their disability, whether or not you have one, should get out here...to enjoy the scenery and fresh air. Everything is so pretty and the horse is so gentle. Thank you, Andy!"

Andy, a 17 year old English Shire gelding, has worked the last twelve years as the well-loved employee of Dan and Marianne Reinmuth's carriage company in Brentwood, CA. Seeking a less strenuous semi-retirement for this handsome, gentle and well-trained horse, the Reinmuths have generously provided Andy to Access Adventure to pull the Thornlea carriage at Rush Ranch. He serves as an ideal lesson horse for new volunteers learning the art of harnessing and driving.

## **Anywhere Wild!**

"Anywhere Wild!" is a new program inspired by the ongoing adventures of HorseJourney (an international team of horsemen and horsewomen with disabilities that has traveled thousands of miles through seven countries driving wheelchair accessible horse-drawn carriages). Anywhere Wild! provides remote, scenic, multi-day wilderness experiences for people living with mobility challenges, traveling anywhere horses can go.

Our first adventure took place in the Los Padres National Forest, May 3-6. We traveled through Fort Hunter-Liggett, once the vast estate of William Randolph Hearst, to our campsite in the oak woodland beneath towering rock formations. Deena Kirby, All Seasons Carriage Company, Acampo, CA brought her black team of Percherons, Rod and Bud. They powered the Thornlea trolley with a full load of passengers each day. Jerry and Barbara Garner from Wabash, Indiana (the carriage builders) were with us, enjoying their first trip west of the Rockies. John Walker and Moka Davis turned out with Jesse put to a gig. Sheryl Venton was an outrider on Sisco. Wildlife abounds in this hidden, unchanged part of Old California, and we had exciting close encounters with a mountain lion and a bobcat.

We have completed a mule-drawn scouting session of the remote north-eastern corner of California that will be the site of our **Fall Fandango**. Next up is a tour of the **Lost Coast**, July 29-August 6. From the charming Victorian town of Ferndale we travel over to the Pacific at Petrolia, where the Mattole River meets the sea. Our drive through the legendary redwood country ends at Bear Harbor on the wild and rocky Pacific.

## **Access Adventure Awarded Grant and Matching Funds**

Bay Area Barns and Trails Trust announced a \$2,500 grant to benefit Access Adventure with John and Mary Lou Fazel, Orinda, CA providing \$2,500 in matching funds toward the purchase of our new Thornlea carriages. The trust is devoted to preserving equestrian lands and trails in the great outdoor San Francisco Bay Area, helping to acquire, maintain and restore publicly accessible barns, trails and pastures. [www.bayareabarnsandtrailstrust.org](http://www.bayareabarnsandtrailstrust.org) We are also grateful for donations from the Hanna Family Trust (\$1,000), Michael and Cathy O'Shea (\$250), the Muskat family (\$100) and Marilyn Terstegge (\$25.00). We have raised \$14,725 through June 30<sup>th</sup>. Thank you!

Access Adventure is growing fast and we need your help! We must raise an additional \$6,000 for the cargo trailer needed to transport our carriages. Ambitious plans are underway to restore the historic stable at the Rush Ranch, and completely rebuild the surrounding paddock area. Please consider a generous donation to fund this work. Checks made payable to Solano Land Trust with the notation "Access Adventure" are tax deductible.



# ACCESS ADVENTURE

Page 3 of 3



*"We focus on what is possible, not on what we have lost. The worst disability is a bad attitude."  
Michael Muir*



Chuck Licastris meets Rock at Rush Ranch Days

*"... I awoke from emergency surgery paralyzed from the neck down. Life changes. Last April opened new doors for me. Once again, thanks a lot for a good time."*

Each month we offer recreational carriage driving events at Solano Land Trust and Muir Heritage Land Trust Properties



Rush Ranch, Solano Land Trust

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## Core Values

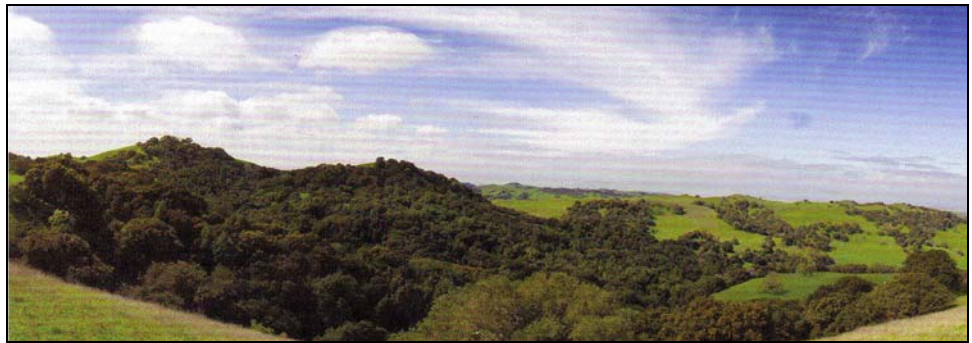
We believe a close relationship with the natural world enhances the quality of life for everyone. With innovative design and technology, we use horse-drawn carriages that lift aboard people with mobility challenges, accommodating wheelchairs, providing recreational and educational opportunities relating to nature.

We advocate the acquisition and preservation of wilderness and open space lands as a precious resource for all people. We support the development of equestrian access on public lands.

We maintain thoughtful, caring and safe standards of husbandry relating to our working partners, the horses that serve Access Adventure.

We promote the inclusion of people living with the challenges of disability in the pursuit of a rich, full and active life. We raise awareness about the benefits of access to nature for all people.

Access Adventure is a volunteer, grassroots organization promoted through community outreach and sustained by local support. Our services are provided to people with disabilities without charge.



Fernandez Ranch, Muir Heritage Land Trust Photo by Stephen Joseph

## Sign Up for Access Adventure!

Our programs are available without charge to anyone living with mobility challenges, after medical clearance to participate. To obtain an application, please contact our office. The work of Access Adventure depends entirely on community support and a devoted crew of volunteers. Get involved! We have a new intern program for juniors, age 12 and up, including volunteer programs for juniors and adults with disabilities. Come join the crew at the beautiful Rush Ranch to learn the art of horsemanship and carriage driving. Training for volunteers and interns is held weekly at Rush Ranch. Interested groups are invited to book a driving or picnic event with us.

Welcome to our new volunteers! Karen McCracken, Tony Phillips, William Stewart, and Ross Wickham. We can't do this work without you!

**Wish List:** Stock trailer (tall), Events Coordinator, Volunteers (all ages, all skills), building materials, horse feed and supplies



Rush Ranch, Solano Land Trust Photo by Bud Turner