



Jane Higgins/Daily Republic

Katy Sconva, foreground, and Ann Dee pet Fandango, a colt, at Rush Ranch during an event supporting Access Adventure Saturday.

An adventure for everyone

Event benefits program for disabled, underserved youth

BY SUSAN WINLOW
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SUISUN CITY — Wherever Rock went, a crowd was sure to follow.

And that was exactly what happened Saturday morning at Rush Ranch in Suisun City. Rock, the largest Percheron draft horse in North America, was a star attraction at an event supporting Access Adventure, which provides outdoor programs and events for the disabled and underserved youth. Rush Ranch is the headquarters of Access Adventure.

All ages, with various disabilities and reasons for showing up, braved the chilly morning for a 2.5 mile

walkathon through a portion of the scenic 2,070-acre Rush Ranch off Grizzly Island Road.

"We need more opportunities and programs for the disabled to let everyone know they're part of this life too," said Elaine Miller, a Fairfield resident who works for Valero Refinery and presented a silent auction gift basket and check on behalf of the refinery.

The walkathon, dubbed "Walk with Rock," was led by Rock and his owner, Danielle Simpson of Simpson Percherons out of Rio Vista.

At 10 a.m. the walkers fell in step behind the giant horse. Following the walkers was a wheelchair acces-

sible wagon pulled by a pair of draft horses owned by Access Adventure. The team was driven by Michael Muir, Access Adventure's director and the great-grandson of John Muir. When Muir isn't driving his horses, he gets around in a wheelchair because he has multiple sclerosis.

Sitting behind Muir in her wheelchair and wearing a big smile was Shauna Downing of Napa. Downing has cerebral palsy.

"Shauna really wanted to come and check it out. This is a first for her," said Brenda Sweeden, her weekend caregiver.

Sitting next to Muir at the front of the wagon with another big smile was Kailen Anderson, 20. Anderson, a student at Golden Hills and Solano Community College came for the day with his sister, Julia Anderson, 10,

and parents, Cheryl and Gary Anderson.

"It's cool" said Kailen Anderson, who is one of many who also volunteer at the ranch through his school.

Muir called it "heart-warming" to see how many people come out to help and, he added, they're getting work experience.

"We don't do things for them," Muir said. "They do things for us."

In addition to the walkathon there was a silent auction, raffle, lunch, wagon rides and a horse fair that included a colt named Fandango, a Friesian and Appaloosa cross.

For more information on Access Adventure call 432-0152 or go to <http://www.access-adventure.org>.

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