

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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McKeever's First Ride is Successful in Atlanta

May 10, 2011- Waterloo, Iowa – For the third year in a row, McKeever's First Ride brought therapeutic horsemanship to the greater Atlanta area with great success and smiles and tears. The event, hosted by Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, and supported by many area businesses as well as industry leaders and volunteers, brought well over 30 physically challenged children and adults into Chastain Horse Park for a day full of activities.

Deenie McKeever, program founder, was on hand as Mistress of Ceremonies, bringing her special love and enthusiasm for horses and the healing power that they can provide to the disabled population. "It was all too amazing to take in! We saw kids and adults nervously mount horses- and dismount with huge smiles and renewed courage to face whatever's next. In the case of one boy- that means upcoming surgery- to which he now plans to wear his McKeever's First Ride cowboy hat! We saw family members and volunteers, as well as participants, encounter the "spirit of the horse" and came away exhilarated."

"Children's Healthcare of Atlanta was thrilled to collaborate with Deenie and the Orthotic & Prosthetic Assistance Fund to host this year's event," stated Janet Lombardo, Manager of the Orthotics & Prosthetics Program at Children's. "The McKeever's First Ride participants enthusiastically tried horseback riding, horse grooming, cow roping and equine assisted learning activities designed to promote physical strength and balance, and to provide opportunities to overcome challenges. The horses certainly 'worked their magic' and it was very empowering to see kids with prosthetic legs climb confidently into the saddle and to witness one adult who was missing both hands figure out a way to successfully manipulate the reins."

McKeever added, "At the end of the day, it was heartwarming to hear folks share that they felt renewed in their desire to serve others and to make their lives count...to ask more of themselves- which was my dad's exhortation. He encouraged others to rise above adversity and to practice "Carpe Diem"! That is certainly what happened at McKeever's First Ride. I'll be excited to hear about the exciting ripples that result from this year's event. CHOA was an incredible partner in hosting Atlanta's McKeever's First Ride. Great things lie ahead!"

The program, named to honor O & P pioneer, Dan McKeever, offers the chance to discover the possibilities that lie within all of us, and asks us to adopt the "Yes, I can!" attitude towards life.

SPS President Ron May added, "SPS was honored to be a small part of this event. The benefit to children is rewarding to everyone involved, the children, their parents and siblings, as well to all the care givers, volunteers and supporters. These efforts being driven by Deenie McKeever, in honor of her father, Dan, are especially close to all of us here at SPS. SPS was founded over 60 years ago by Dan McKeever. It's a privilege to contribute in some small way to an effort of such great value."

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta served as our hosts this year for a wonderful event for their patients and greater Atlanta community. CHOA not only solicited sponsors, participants and volunteers, but also brought their special flavor to the day with fun and fitness for all.

For more information on McKeever's First Ride or any of the seven First Clinics currently being hosted across the country, please contact the OPAF office at 319-235-4318 or rlb@opfund.org.

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