

This article recently appeared in Alexandria Township's annual letter. The letter, newly formatted and much improved, is a compendium of who's who and who does what in the township. It is mailed to all township residents.

*Alexandria Equestrian Association
Who are we? What do we do?*

Along about the turn of the century, Year 2000, that is, a group of fellow Alexandrians with a common affection for horses opted to officially associate themselves such that they might have a structure by which to sponsor events, make charitable donations and otherwise enjoy each other's company, human and equine! Fast forward 13 years and our non-profit, 501C7, Alexandria Equestrian Association, continues to do all of those things and quite a bit more.

From the starting gate our primary intention was to create new riding trails and maintain existing ones. Progress was slow initially, but AEA now oversees an impressive list of trails, some private, some public. AEA owes a huge debt of gratitude to township landowners for allowing the use of edges of their fields for trails. (Yes, our association is fully insured!)

AEA was pivotal in the creation and planning of a ten mile trail on the county-owned Schick Reserve here in Alexandria. It should be noted that this particular trail is not just for horseback riding, but also hiking, mountain biking and other activities. It was a pleasure working with the county on this project. Again our gratitude is owed.

The township, with intent to build a municipal park, purchased, coincidentally, an old horse farm. It had a few ramshackle run-in sheds and a very large barn, complete with multiple stalls and an indoor riding arena. It needed much work. Well, a big, beautiful park begins with but singular steps! AEA members were there with their tractors and front-end loaders demolishing buildings that were not part of the township's plan. What an awesome bonfire we had that year!! And what a park!!

Oddly enough, depending upon what section of the township your house sits on, you may be serviced by any one of six different firehouses. How about any one of five different rescue squads? AEA donates to them all. We have also made donations to Alexandria Historical Society, America's Grow A Row (a huge success story here in the township) Alexandria Park Pavilion Fund, Mylestone Equine Rescue and what used to be Dreams Come True Therapeutic Riding. You might ask where we get the money to make these donations. It's simple: From our membership dues as well as horse events that we sponsor at the park's indoor arena.

AEA recently completed the major project of footing renovation in the arena, bringing it 'up to snuff' for event rentals. Ten years of saving for the project finally enabled us

to usher \$17,500 to finish the effort. Going forward, revenue from such rentals will accumulate in a barn maintenance fund that will surely be needed in the future.

So, we do a lot of “horsing around”, but giving back to the township has always been a large part of what we do. After all, we are blessed to live in this place! Our proudest donation for the last three years has been our co-sponsorship of the Susan G. Komen Ride-For-The-Cure held at our park. It’s a ton of work, but this year the event raised over \$50,000 for breast cancer research!

Hey, it’s what we do!!

We welcome new members, both riding and non-riding. Check out our web site: www.aeanj.com for more details.

Pete Tucker for AEA