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## 10th Annual Fun Show lets PALS riders display talents

By Alyssa Goldman | IDS | October 07, 2010

Libbie Holmes, a horseback rider with spina bifida, started participating in the People & Animals Learning Services, Inc. program in 2006.

"The first time she started riding she was so terrified," Jennifer Lung, head riding instructor said. "She had such a death grip on the horse."

But now she rides Cody, the PALS horse with the most attitude.

"Now, she bosses Cody around," Lung said.

This Saturday, Libbie, along with 41 other PALS riders, will have a chance to show off what they have learned at the 10th Annual Fun Show.

PALS is the only therapeutic riding center in Monroe County and surrounding counties that is accredited as a North American Riding for the Handicapped Association Premier Accredited Center. PALS provides high therapeutic animal assisted activities such as therapeutic horseback riding, hippotherapy, animal care and pet encounter therapy to children and adults with physical, learning, cognitive and emotional disabilities.

"The people who participate in PALS benefit in many different ways," Fern Bonchek, PALS executive director, said. "Riders have an increased self-esteem, balance and coordination. Some riders have even spoken their first words while riding one of the horses."

For the Fun Show, the riders will demonstrate a trail/obstacle course, English equitation and dressage. The instructors place their riders into different classes based on their abilities.

The riders all receive trophies and ribbons based on their participation, but they also receive advice and critiquing from the celebrity judges, which include IU Provost Karen

Hanson and former IU soccer coach Jerry Yeagley and his wife Marilyn Yeagley.

"The event is basically a celebration for riders," Bonchek said. "It is a wonderful opportunity to see a lot of the riders in action. Many of the riders have limited abilities to participate in activities such and this, but they can show what they have learned

and receive awards for it."

And the PALS riders are eager to ride.

"The riders work hard to prepare for the show," Lung said. "Right at the beginning of the fall session everyone starts asking about when the Fun Show is. Most of the riders have been practicing for at least three weeks."

The riders also make sure to dress up a little for the event — usually donning a white-button up shirt and some riding boots, Lung said.

"They are so excited," Bonchek said. "They look forward to it. At the end of each Fun Show they ask me when the next Fun Show is. They are just out of control about it. They have such a great time."

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