

## SUMMERTIME EVENTS

Kaiti Saunders, Area Chair

Summer's here, and eventing in Area II is in full swing. After our seemingly endless winter, what a treat to be able to hack out in tank tops and hose off horses after a ride instead of bundling them up in layers of jammies.

And I'm sure I'm not the only one who is thrilled to be mostly done with

shedding season! All of our critters from ponies to pups seem much happier sporting lighter summer coats, and I know our household at least is enjoying not having animal

hair festooned throughout! (Seriously, how does horse hair end up on clothes that have Never Been To The Barn??).

My social media is jam-packed with photos of people preparing for competitions, at events, or rehashing their last

show. While the first wave of spring competitions are successfully complete, there are so many more to come, including some new events this spring and some old favorites having a second competition or in a new time period. We are so lucky here in Area II to have the



*This former barn cat's summer competition plans include the All-Star Sunbeam Lazing Club*

opportunity to compete most weekends! Don't forget to thank our organizers and officials who devote so much time making this sport possible.

Our Young Riders have been busy getting their final qualifications in for the July NAJYRC Championships. Later in

### STAY INFORMED!

Keep up to date with Area II information, events, and news by bookmarking our website:

<http://www.usea2.net/>

And don't forget about USEA's award winning website with all of your competition information, results, and news, at:

<http://useventing.com/>

this newsletter, check out the updates and great pictures from the recent event at Virginia where many of them proved their readiness to defend last year's gold medal at Championships.

We also lost a great member of the Area this week and one of USEA's consummate volunteers and supporters. Please check out our tribute to Seema Sonnad and think about volunteering at a local event in honor of her. This sport is what it is because of folks like Seema, and, of course, all of you. If you're looking for opportunities, please contact me or any of the Area II Council and we will help get you set up.

Wishing you the very best this summer season,

-Kaiti

## YOUNG RIDERS GET READY FOR CHAMPIONSHIPS

Many of our Young Riders ran at Virginia Horse Trials to get their final qualifications. Riders also had vet evaluations for all long listed horses. Camp for horses and riders under consideration for the team m will begin July 8 at Morven Park. Selection occurs at the end of camp and riders will leave for Kentucky July 13.

Meg and Rich, with help from our Young Riders, were able to raise enough money to pay for all expenses for camp and championship weeks. We are looking for a golf cart donation that Sinead and Meg can use during championship week. We also need some parents to reserve their own golf carts to help get the riders and grooms

around during championship week. Please email Rich at [rcfrankel@msn.com](mailto:rcfrankel@msn.com) if you can help.

This will be Rich's last year volunteering for Area 2 Young Riders and he will not be attending Championships in Kentucky. If you plan on attending the NAJYRC, and you can help Meg out, it would be greatly appreciated. Please email Meg directly [megkep@gmail.com](mailto:megkep@gmail.com) if you can help.



*Young Riders Grace Fulton and Skyler Decker celebrate after a great XC run at Virginia CCI\**



*Young Rider Makaela Kantorowski, her horse Ringfort Swan Song, and family are polished for the jog at Virginia*

This will also be Meg's last year volunteering for Area 2 Young Riders. The Area will be looking for applications for next year's coordinators. This position is critical to the success of Young Riders Please email the Area Chair at [kaiti.saunders@gmail.com](mailto:kaiti.saunders@gmail.com) if you are interested in volunteering to be a coordinator next year and beyond, or talk with one of us. The position begins immediately after Championships in July.

-Meg Kepferle and Rich Frankel

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## YRAP LEAPS INTO SUMMER

Our second YRAP team competition of the year was held at MCTA @ Shawan Downs we had 10 Teams of riders that were scrambled together. The Mill of Bel Air, a North County retailer for feed and supplies, provided lovely halters with leads to the winning team. Ribbons were awarded on Sunday to the 7 teams that finished.

YRAP also held a Team competition is at VHT. At VHT the Teams will be arranged by level so LOTS more team ribbons are available. The teams at VHT are also open to all Jr/YRs and college students (recent grads too!)

Other opportunities for team competition will occur later this year and Chris Donovan will put you on a team OR you can choose your own team mates. Send Chris a note before your riders check in, so we can get you all entered.

WoW Camp is right around the corner. This year we are adding another riding session on Monday 6/29. Monday afternoon will be a fix-a-test session. Details about camp can be found on the usea2.net website. Those who don't plan to go at least BN should consider the NJ Regional PC Camp that runs alongside the YRAP camp.

Additionally, put a placeholder on your calendar for our August 1-2 Clinic and Benefit Show at Morningside (First day is AM dressage school and PM jump, second day is a combined test and then XC school depending on heat)

There are numerous clinics throughout the year by ICP instructors and the sponsored activities for YRs that we will promote through the mailing list through-out the year. Please confirm you are getting our emails you can also check our Facebook page for listings.

-Chris Donovan

## REMEMBERING SEEMA SONNAD

This week, Area II lost one of our preeminent riders, volunteers, mentors, and eventing supporters. Seema Sonnad was a friend, a mentor, and a dear member of our community.

It's hard to wrap one's brain around how big a soul Seema was and how huge a hole she leaves. Seems like most everyone in Area II and in American eventing knew Seema in one way or another. She competed, volunteered, and officiated throughout the country with her trademark boundless energy and constant enthusiasm. She spent hundreds of events volunteering, riding one of her beloved dark



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bay thoroughbreds, serving as an official, helping a young rider adjust her tack, or cheering on one of the hundreds of friends she seemed to have.

Seema represented the heart of this sport: her drive, her passion, and her commitment to the community and the individuals within it. She was as quick to raise a glass with you after a great XC run as to help you dust the dirt off your breeches when you took a tumble (and she always had a well-stocked cooler). She'd find something good in every horse, and every person.

She mentored tens of riders starting out their careers, supporting them in ways big and small. Just a small example: in 2000, she found - and bought - my first upper level horse. I was barely out of law school, dead broke, and said on a whim I wanted spots and a great jump and didn't care about anything else. She found Spot ("Presto"), a Paint/TB cross out of the middle of nowhere Minnesota, shipped him home to Ann Arbor, and introduced him as a potential bigtime horse. He promptly bit her. She bopped him on the nose and remained an enthusiastic cheerleader for his career all the way up to advanced. Not many folks

would've seen promise in that rank, post-legged beast and fewer would've not held a grudge but Seema knew from the start he was a star and adored him regardless.

I'm only a minor footnote in the number of folks she has helped. We could fill an event course with the horses she has found for people, the legions of young riders and runners and academics she has sponsored and mentored, the friends who loved her. She was fantastic at finding horses, and a whiz at pairing a rider with a diamond in the rough. She had a soft spot for dark bays with snips, but found a place for horses of all types and colors, matching them up with riders in incomparable ways.

A dedicated volunteer to the core, most of us can recall a time at a local event in the pouring rain, where she'd be standing at the start box in a purple rain slicker taking numbers and comforting pre-XC nerves. An event needed last-minute jump judge or XC control and she was there: calm, patient, and a voice of reason.

Seema sent gifts or presents out of the blue to people having bad days (or good ones). I can't begin to count the times that I or another friend or acquaintance came home to a card or

unexpected package on the door step after she'd seen something that made her think of one of us. A selection of Cubs onesies for a coming baby, a collection of cartoon prints that looked like a beloved horse, an assortment of bacon-chocolates (yes, really) - Seema was a master of the perfect gift. Maybe she found such great presents because she was a master of the search: you'd see someone post on social media that they were looking for a particular esoteric type of bridle or bit and she would immediately send three different sources on where to find one, likely at a major discount. But I suspect it's far likely that she just thought more and harder about others than most of us do.

I had tea (always tea with Seema, not coffee) with her about a month ago in DC, and she talked about her running and riding plans and we caught up about the state of the sport and horses we know and love. She adored her beloved Keegan and was so excited about this year's season even as she was trying to help us find volunteers to serve in USEA positions.

That was Seema - always looking beyond herself. She touched so many of our lives so irreplaceably...we will miss her terribly. -Kaiti Saunders

What is Optimum Times? Regular news from USEA's Area II, including updates on Area events and programs, happenings in the Area, and stories about our members. Let us know what you think, submit articles or pictures for our Scenes From Area II feature, or offer comments or suggestions.