

Gulf Coast Donkey and Mule Association hosts 1st Annual Summer Seminar (A.S.S.)

David Sessum

Over Labor Day weekend, Gulf Coast Donkey and Mule Association held a clinic at the amazing Nueces Canyon Ranch in Brenham, Texas. The weather was great and the clinic featured many sessions for donkey and mule enthusiasts at any level with many different disciplines covered.

On Saturday September 1st, Mary Kitzmiller of Kemp Texas who recently competed in the 1st ever Wild Ass Challenge sponsored by the Mustang Heritage Foundations, organizers of Extreme Mustang Makeover events, was on hand to conduct clinics on many different topics, including horsemanship, and performed a demo on her mustang that she will compete with at the Supreme Extreme Mustang Makeover event in Fort Worth, Tx. Over lunch, Mary also gave a great explanation of bits and the appropriate selection.

A youth clinic was conducted by Tristan Fowler of Weatherford, Tx. Tristan has shown donkeys and mules for many years, and last year competed at the Reichert Celebration, a national level horse show with his mule. Tristan covered many topics, including showmanship, trail, and answered a lot of questions regarding his methods of exhibiting donkeys and mules of all sizes. Tristan also covered judging criteria for horse judging during the lunch break, and all youth participants thoroughly enjoyed his educational sessions.

Mike McClennan of Brenham, Tx, a driving judge and international driving competitor, presented driving dressage. Mike worked with each individual who attended his clinic and presented some great tips for training level dressage animals. Mike was assisted with his portion of the clinic by Debbie Lee, also of Brenham, Tx.

Michelle Fowler of Weatherford, Tx presented trail tips and worked with donkey and mule exhibitors regarding how to approach trail obstacles and how to successfully complete each obstacle for a maximum score.

Gayla Rankin of GLR Ranch located in Brock, Tx conducted a clinic for miniature donkeys regarding halter conformation and in hand trail training. Gayla also sponsored a gift for each clinic attendee.

David Sessum and Jay Jaxtheimer held general question and answer sessions with clinic participants regarding training and riding donkeys and mules. Over lunch, David presented a session on ethical and legal questions regarding donkey roping in Texas.

Stephen Parsons, a certified farrier from Angleton, Tx who specializes in donkeys and mules, presented a session on proper nutrition related to hoof care and various hoof maladies associated with donkeys and mules.

Tom O'Carroll, an international level driving competitor and judge presented a session on proper harness fit and safety, as well as reinsmanship and training of driving donkeys and mules.

Saturday evening featured a potluck with the main course prepared by GCDMA members, Thomas and Krystal Rohan. Musical entertainment was provided by David Sessum and Steven Parsons.

Sunday September 2nd featured a trail challenge coordinated by Michelle Fowler and Sandi Costa. The course was designed by Sandi and Michelle and all participants competed in a gambler 's choice format. Sandi graciously provided trail obstacles for the course and she and Michelle served as judges for the event.

Overall, the event was a great success and thanks go out to all of those who helped coordinate this event. Plans are already being made for next year's event, so please contact Gulf Coast Donkey and Mule Association for topic suggestions or questions at gcdmass@gmail.com, on the web at www.gcdma.org or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/gcdma

To view great photos taken at this event by D'Anna DeAtley, D2 Photography please visit our Face Book page.