



Happy December, fellow Ionia Riders!

2019 was sure the year of Workbees! We started off on March 31st, cleaning up the down timber in the campground and making campsites ready for the camping season. Many thanks to members of Bits-n-Bridles 4-H club for once again, helping clear leaves and debris so we continue having nice grassy sites! After 3 more workbees (and 2 in 2018), we were able to have a Grand Opening of our Confidence Course on May 16, just weeks before our first 2019 event.

The 3rd Annual Forbidden Trails Ride was June 29, and even though we moved the event earlier in the year, we still had very warm weather. Hopefully June 27, 2020 will have wonderful riding weather for the 4th FTR! Thanks to the Ionia Dog Trials group for allowing us this access to extra trail mileage on this date.

Our new ~100 x 100 arena is next to day staging. If you have an anxious horse you want to expose to trail riding, you'll have a safe place to "work out the kinks" before hitting the trails. We'll also be encouraging 4-H groups to hold their practices there, as well as potentially inviting clinicians and outside events in the future. Overflow parking is being arranged further down the road at the barn lot.

It has not yet been decided if we will have a campout for our Annual meeting in August or September, but our Chili Cookoff will be the first Saturday in October, on the 3rd. Mark your calendar for six months prior to these events so you don't forget to make your camping reservations.

Thanks to the great success of our 2019 events again surpassing all previous years, we are able to hire a professional to do some drainage work, install matting, stone, and gravel on Phase 1 of our Confidence Course. With our wet then cold fall weather we are concerned we may not be able to complete the work before late spring (after thaw and dry time). We really want our course built right, so we WILL make this happen.

A "Thank You" dinner was held on November 19, at the Lamplight Grill in Ionia, inviting all who helped build the Confidence Course. We'd like to thank all those loyal volunteers again! Russ Goodemoot, Karen Kauffman, Robbin & Jay Stout, Curt Walls, board members Lea Burger, Chris Blievernicht, Mickey Dawson, Jennifer Ross, Nancy Simmonds, Maggie VanDyken, Kristie Walls, and Ronald Walker. Without the generous efforts of these few, the course would not exist. Our hope is, in 2021 when we have another Thank You event, our numbers will be even more!

Please renew your membership now, and keep the momentum going! Also consider attending board meetings to contribute your ideas for our events and Phase 2!

Happy Trails!

Kristie Walls, IHTA President