

Hope Reins empowers visually impaired kids to ride, care for horse

TAYLOR ASHLEY Correspondent

March 2, 2014; Page

NEW SMYRNA BEACH – Taking care of a horse is not something to neigh or whinny about – especially when you get right into **the** care, feeding and exercising of an animal that averages 1,000 pounds.

The experience can be even more daunting **for the** visually impaired. But **for** several local students, it was a sensory experience that involved a mutual trust, which empowered them at **the** same time.

The children visited **the** Marcody Ranch on Feb. 22 as part of a field trip experience with **the** **Center for the Visually Impaired** in conjunction with **the** Hope Reins program. **The** therapeutic activities of **the** program uses horse-related activities such as grooming and riding to positively impact **the** physical, cognitive and emotional well-being of individuals with special needs.

“When kids tell me that they can’t see, I tell them that it does not matter if they can’t see, because **the** horse can see,” said Hope Rosenthal, owner of Marcody Ranch.

Hope Reins also challenges kids like Sidney Mitchell, 9, Daytona Beach, who took a giant step up to **the** saddle.

“I don’t think I can do this,” Mitchell said with trepidation as she got ready to get on **the** horse.

A short 20 minutes later, she was disappointed she had to get off **the** horse.

“Mom, I want a horse,” exclaimed Madison Piela, 10, Deltona, after she fed a horse some treats. Devon Edwards, 12, summed up his day by saying, “It smells, but it was fun!”