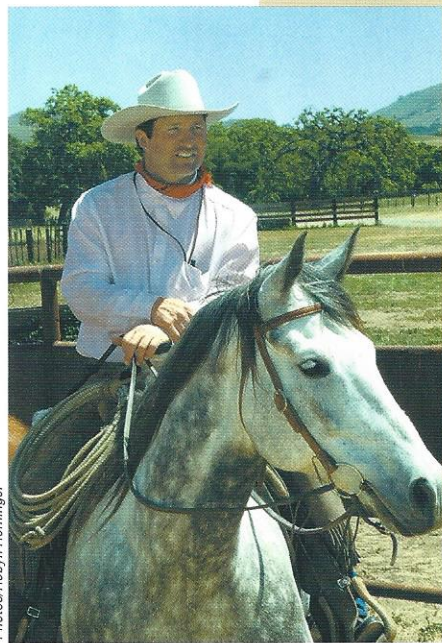
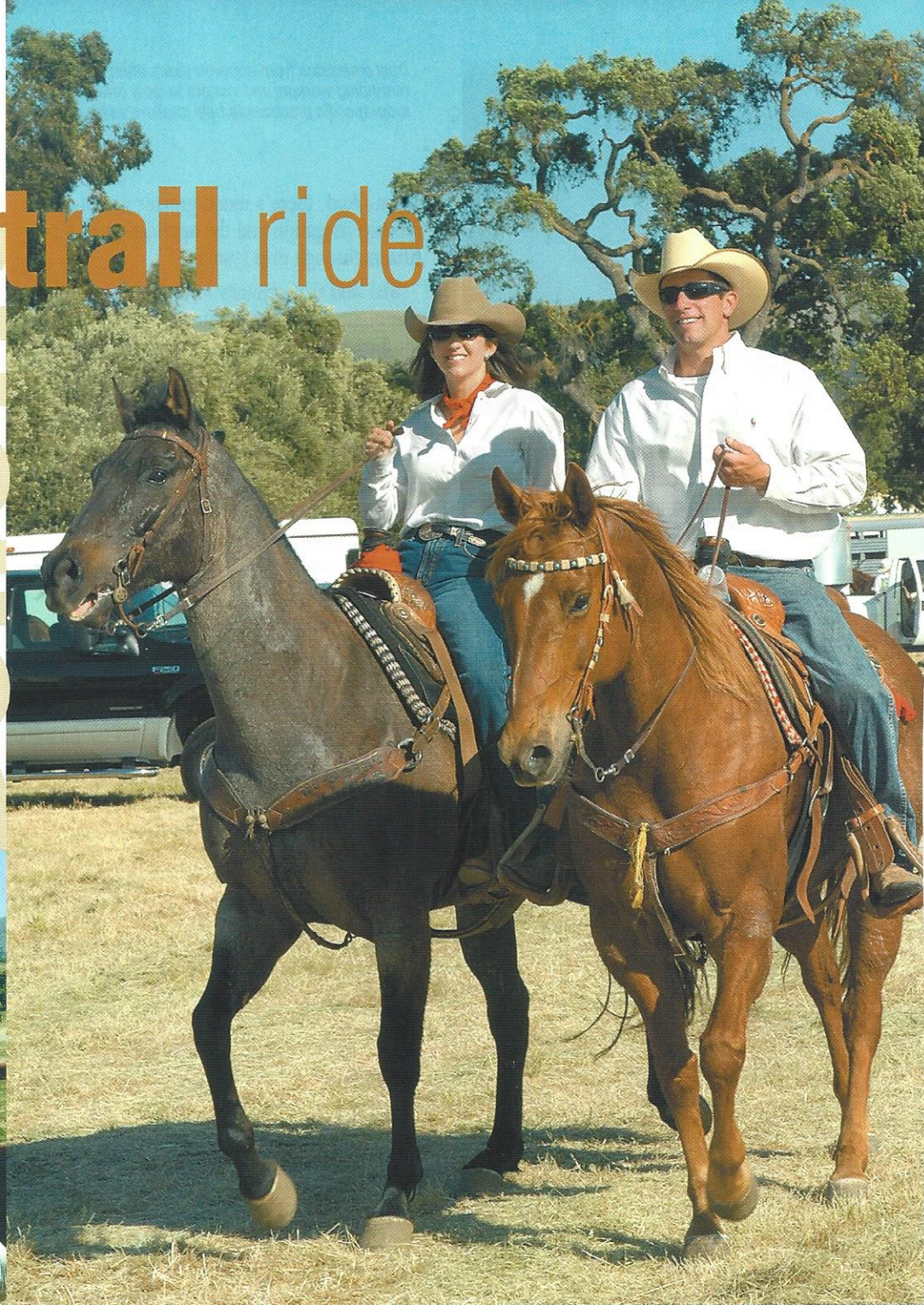


Benefit trail ride



Photos/Robyn Rominger

In photo above, San Benito County Farm Bureau President Tom Tobias hosted the trail ride at his ranch near Tres Pinos. Right, Angela Bellino and Anthony Pomo were part of the volunteer wrangler team.

More than 100 horse lovers helped raise thousands of dollars during a benefit trail ride for schoolchildren in Tres Pinos, a small, rural community in San Benito County.

The horseback riders saddled up to raise money for the Tres Pinos E3 Foundation, which provides educational enrichment programs including art, music, drama, language arts and life sciences at Tres Pinos School, a K-8 school in a town of 500 residents.

The event was hosted by Santa Anita Ranch and Tobias Ranch, neighboring ranches that were once part of a vast Mexican land grant. The Tobias Ranch is owned by San Benito County Farm Bureau President Tom Tobias and his family, and the Santa Anita Ranch is owned by the Schwabacher family. Both operations raise commercial beef cattle on rolling, oak-studded hills about 50 miles east of Monterey.

The \$150-per-person benefit trail ride took place on a Saturday afternoon and was followed

proves to be an enriching experience

by **Robyn Rominger**



by a dinner and auction. It was the largest fundraiser that the educational foundation has sponsored to date; previous fund-raisers have included bulb sales, a rummage sale and selling notecards featuring student-designed artwork.

"This is an extension of what we've done over the last couple years, which is raise funds to help supplement the public school program," said Leslie Schwabacher, president of the board of the Tres Pinos E3 Foundation, whose family owns Santa Anita Ranch. "The trail ride was a way of helping to continue funding that and have some stability for the foundation itself, so that it doesn't change from year to year for the students, depending on which parents are there."

Schwabacher said that the idea of the trail ride originated last year.

"What we were considering was, what do we have to offer?" she explained. "You hear the stories about Palo Alto and they have these huge fund raisers and they make \$1 million in a day, and you just think, 'How can we ever do anything like that?' All we could think of was, what do we have to offer to help our schools? The scenery and the ranch environment was what we had, so we tossed it out as an idea and last fall, we geared up to actually do it."

Marie Hoffman, who serves on the E3 board of directors, said, "We met at a small cafe in Tres Pinos, three or four of us, and chatted about having a fun little trail ride and barbeque. And lo and behold, here we are."

Hoffman and her husband Greg, whose two children attend Tres Pinos School, own Redbeard Communications, a marketing firm that donated its services to publicize the benefit trail ride. Many area businesses, including several farms and nurseries, donated goods and services for the event.

The theme of the trail ride was early California and it highlighted the history of the ranch. The land was originally granted to Manuel Larios in 1839 by California Gov. Juan Bautista Alvarado and was called Santa Ana y Quien Sabe

Ranchos. It comprised 48,322 acres of grazing and farming land. The land was held by Larios until his death and then sold by his heirs in 1866 to Don Joaquin Bolado. Bolado, a native of Santander, Spain, came to California via Mexico, lured by the gold mines of the Sierra Nevada. He soon determined that this sort of speculation was not for him and he became a businessman in San Francisco and Monterey; eventually he became engaged in stock raising and general farming in San Benito County.

"Joaquin Bolado bought this ranch with six

sacks of gold," one for each of Larios' heirs, said Jackson Schwabacher, Leslie's husband.

Today, the ranches continue in much the same tradition under the stewardship of the Schwabacher and Tobias families.

Before the trail ride began, the riders and their horses gathered in a large arena, where Jackson Schwabacher introduced the honorary trail boss, 82-year-old Jack Kirby, by saying, "He's run this outfit for 36 years."

More than 100 people went on the three-hour guided trail ride including volunteer wranglers, identified with white shirts and red bandanas, as well as a veterinarian, all of whom were ready to assist the horses and riders along the way.

"We're in charge of safety for all the people on the ride," said wrangler Ken Griffin as he rode Hondo, a sorrel quarter horse gelding.

Fellow wrangler Justin Brooks, who rode a bay quarter horse gelding named Billy, said, "There are some inexperienced riders and outside is different from an arena. A horse could spook from the leaves on the trees or squirrels, and you could have a wreck. That's why they have people with more experience to help with different situations."

The participants rode horses along paths that wound through the hilly terrain.

"We don't have roads on every ridge," Tobias



JACK KIRBY

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said. "We figure if you want to go somewhere, get on your horse."

The riders' attire ranged from cowboy hats and fringed leather chaps to English riding helmets and breeches. Many horse breeds was represented, ranging from American quarter horse to thoroughbred, as well as color breeds such as paint and palomino.

Tim Foley, the superintendent of the San Benito County Office of Education, and his wife, Nants, rode English during the trail ride.

"I'm very excited about the Tres Pinos E3 Foundation's initiative," Foley said, as he rode his elegant Lipizzan horse. "We're one of the smallest school districts, in the shadow of the Salinas Valley—it's a good way to fund a no-frills school."

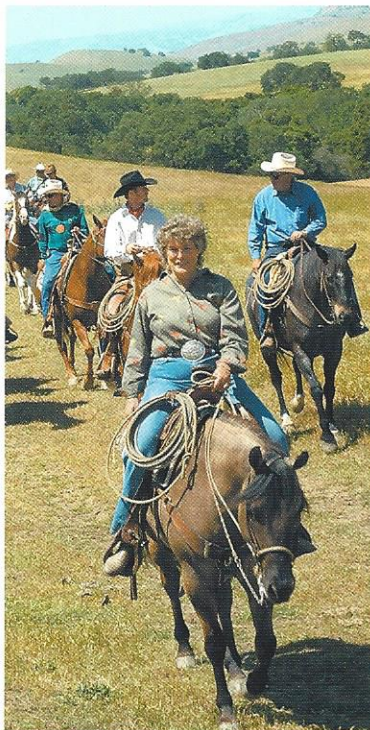
Morya Gualarte of Salinas rode Western on her quarter horse, Pepalena Dry. "It's always good to get them out of the barn and on the trail," she said. Gualarte said her family is full of horse lovers, including her mother, daughter and 16-year-old granddaughter, and they've been on various benefit trail rides. "We go four generations strong."

Some of the riders participated in a "poker run," a game in which riders collect playing cards along the trail and when everyone gets back to the ranch headquarters, whoever has the best poker hand wins.

At the halfway point, all the participants enjoyed a snack break near a watering trough.

Carisa Dana, who serves on the board of the Tres Pinos E3 Foundation, and her husband, Clark, provided sausage sandwiches and other refreshments to the hungry horseback riders during the snack break.

"We are here just volunteering today and paid to have dinner to support the school," she said. "The E3 Foundation funds the music program, drama program, art program—things that the schools don't provide for children in a regular cur-



Photos/Robyn Rominger



In photos clockwise from left: Trail riders rode through oak-studded foothills; three wranglers made sure everything went smoothly during the trail ride; a horse quenches its thirst at a horse trough; Carisa and Clark Dana, whose children attend Tres Pinos School, volunteered to serve food during the trail ride snack break; and Paul Feisthamel hangs up his saddle after the trail ride.

riculum. That's what the E3 Foundation is all about: funding these programs so that our kids can have those like we did when we were in school. It's a pretty awesome organization."

Carol Feisthamel, who rode English on her appaloosa named Leo's Girl Friday, described the trail ride as "fabulous."

Her husband, Paul Feisthamel, rode Western on his quarter horse named John Wayne. "The important thing is that this is for the schools," he said. "They're probably not going to get that much more from the state, so this is one way to help them out while at the same time enjoy what God gave us."

After the trail ride ended, the riders dismounted and tied their horses to their horse trail-

ers. The riders retreated inside their trailers to change into their dinner clothes, while their horses rested and ate hay from hanging feeder totes.

The trail ride was followed by appetizers in a barn decorated with old ranch memorabilia, including a covered wagon and branding irons, and wood shavings on the floor. Guests, some of whom wore Stetson hats and flashy Western wear, bellied up to the bar at the

"watering hole." An "old rancho dinner" featuring prime rib was served to more than 300 dinner guests inside a huge tent as they were treated to live music and entertainment by cowboy poet Roger Blackburn of Mariposa County. The evening also included a raffle as well as live and silent auctions, where guests could bid on everything from silver spurs to a wild pig hunt.

Organizers of the educational fund-raiser said it was an enriching experience.

"It's just amazing how much people are willing to give for education," Schwabacher said. "We netted slightly more than \$61,000, so we are thrilled! It's way beyond what we thought."

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