

Joe. He also found it remarkable to receive such a grand welcome from the CMSA "family," encouraging the Coalters to attend cowboy church and potluck suppers, and even offering riding tips while bonding over campfires.

"Tell me another sport where my family can participate together...where you have a wanna-be cowboy, a city girl and a special-needs teenager," Joe rationalized, "and no-one cares about all that!" he exclaimed.

An especially poignant moment for Kelsie and her parents came a year ago in April 2006 when the teen was riding in a CMSA event in Columbus, Ohio. Joe had gotten word that the celebrated wild mustang "Nevada Joe" (adopted in 2002 by the Federal Bureau of Land Management in a Wild Horse Project,) would be appearing at the same location as Kelsie's CMSA ride that day. Trying to calm his own excitement about introducing Kelsie to this famous horse, Joe was keenly aware that Nevada Joe was the Ambassador of the North American Handicapped Riding Association (NAHRA,) traveling across the country to educate people about therapeutic riding.

While it was a big treat to see Nevada Joe up close and personal and meet his owners Diane

"Oh, the riding has helped Kelsie's posture in the saddle, and also how she sits in a chair at school.

What it's also done emotionally is...

immeasurable." –Joe Coalter

and Ernie Purcelli, the biggest thrill came later. Diane had asked Kelsie to ride Nevada Joe in her NAHRA clinic, and Kelsie meanwhile developed a special bond with Nevada Joe.

Then, in a stunning development, Diane bestowed Kelsie with an incredible honor, inviting her to join cowboys and cowgirls from around the world at the CMSA World Championships in Las Vegas. She asked Kelsie to lead over a dozen NAHRA riders in opening the CMSA Championship.

"And when Kelsie kicked it off, everyone at CMSA just erupted because she's part of their family," relayed her proud dad. The heartwarming spotlight featured a shootout CMSA-style with therapeutic riding, and each participant got the chance to ride Nevada Joe.

Kelsie returned home from Las Vegas with several prizes, including a special World Championship jacket embroidered with her name and CMSA nickname, "The Petticoat Kid." Also, Kelsie's teachers have recommended her for an Ohio achievement award, attributed in part to her involvement with CMSA.

So what's the next big goal for this special teenager? Her dad, whose passion for cowboy mounted shooting resulted in his recent election as President of the Northern Ohio Outlaws, was quick to answer. "One of our greatest hopes is that someday, Kelsie will enter the arena all by herself," Joe said. "I believe that through the grace of God and our CMSA family, it may be possible."

THE LOWDOWN ON DOWN'S...

Down's syndrome is a chromosome abnormality, and is the most common single cause of birth defects, with an occurrence in 1 out of every 660 births. While is usually, although not always results in mental retardation and other conditions, it also can cause congenital heart defects in children. Doctors say Down's syndrome can be detected in a fetus in the first few months of pregnancy, by examining the chromosomes through a procedure called amniocentesis or chorionic villus sampling. Mothers who become pregnant after age 40 are at increased risk for having a child with Down's syndrome, although the latest guidelines from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (HealthDay News; January 2007) suggests all pregnant women should be offered screening for Down's syndrome, regardless of their age.

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