

New equestrian center has more room for teaching

By KATHERINE CUMMINS
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William Woods University freshman Christine Scott leads B.J. out of his stall for a workout last Wednesday afternoon. The school recently added 22 new horses to its program after converting the small indoor arena into additional stable space as part of renovations included in construction of the new Rowland Applied Riding Arena. (Fulton Sun/Justin Kelley photo)

Equestrian studies division chairperson Laura Ward says there are a number of advantages that come with the new Rowland Applied Riding Arena on the William Woods University campus.

There is the increased flexibility in scheduling classes, more free time for students to ride and work with horses they are projecting, more time for maintenance, more stalls housing more horses.

The most important improvement, however, is one Ward said she had not thought of until after the structure was completed; more room.

"We would have horses going in and out (of the ring) at the same time, we were kind of getting in each other's way," Ward said. "Before, I didn't know we were walking on top of each other, because that's the way it's always been.

"This has allowed us to spread out."

Students, even western riders like senior Karen White who do not use the new arena, say they appreciate the space.

"Free riding on Friday was amazing. Usually going in there's 10 to 15 horses in there," White said. "The last time I went in, there were five riders, and the time before that, only one. It was really nice."

Ward said teachers and students alike also appreciate the better class schedule made possible by the addition of a new riding ring.

"Before, in order to fit all the riders in, we started classes at 7 a.m. and, depending on the day of the week, went until 8 or 9 every night," Ward said. "We had students here until 11 p.m. trying to get everything done. It was a very demanding schedule."

The Rowland arena was designed with a rectangular ring instead of oval specifically for dressage and hunting and jumping classes.

"It makes a difference in how you can ride or train a horse," Ward said. "It is better for the areas of dressage and hunters and jumpers because they literally have to learn how to ride corners."

Even the floor of the new arena is specific to the riding styles.



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"The footing has been specially formulated to give the best performance for dressage and hunter/jumpers," Ward said. "It's made of sand and SandTies, which helps prevent the sand from compacting and makes it more stabilized. It's like riding on bouncy carpet."

Sophomore Kate Whitten said she already has noticed an improvement during her dressage classes.

"I'm amazed at how much difference the footing makes for the horses, they seem to like it," she said. "It's a lot softer on their feet - they just bounce on it."

Building the new arena also enabled the school to convert the old small indoor arena into more stables with stalls for an additional 22 horses - bringing the university's equine total to 150.

"It has made a world of difference," White said. "It's nice to have big stalls and more horses."

Construction of the new arena was made possible in part through a \$300,000 donation from Sarah and Landon Rowland of Kansas City, who in the past created the Gayle S. Lampe Equestrian Achievement Award endowed scholarship.

"Landon and I have been terribly impressed with the growth of the equestrian program, and I think they've done a very significant job of servicing the equine industry," Sarah Rowland said. "They train trainers that really spread out across the country and keep this sport alive.

"I believe in the value of the equine experience, and it seems to me that William Woods is an important link in that," she continued. "We thought if we could help in some way to ensure that it keeps going, that would be a good thing."