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**Back Country Horsemen of America Volunteer in their Local
Communities
By Sarah Wynne Jackson**

Back Country Horsemen of America is known for protecting our right to ride horses on public lands and for donating millions of dollars of volunteer value each year towards maintaining trails, but their hard work doesn't end there. These horsemen and horsewomen see themselves as an integral part of their communities and they enjoy using their unique skills to benefit those around them.

Cowboy Canned Food Convoy

Each year, the Redwood Unit of Back Country Horsemen of California partners with Food for People (the food bank of Humboldt County) for the Cowboy Canned Food Convoy as part of the county's Annual Holiday Spirit Food & Fund Drive and Hunger Fighter Challenge.

Collected cans are gathered at Quality Body Works on West Del Norte Street in Eureka. Just before Thanksgiving, the Redwood Unit loads their pack horses with the bounty and delivers it to the food bank through streets lined with townsfolk gathered to see the horses. The food bank staff greets the horses with carrots and apples. Last year, the Redwood Unit of BCHC transported 440 pounds of non-perishable food donations to be distributed to those in need in their area.

The Redwood Unit of Backcountry Horsemen of California is based in Eureka. Many members live in outlying areas, primarily in Humboldt and Del Norte Counties. Their local public lands of interest include the Lost Coast, Redwood National Park, Humboldt Redwoods State Park, the Marble Mountain Wilderness Area, Trinity Alps Wilderness Area, Yolla Bolly Wilderness, several BLM management areas, and county park beaches.

Cans and Cash

The High Sierra Chapter of Back Country Horsemen of Nevada participates in an annual food drive for the Food Bank of Northern Nevada, which is sponsored by local television stations. Throughout the year, chapter members bring non-perishable food items to their monthly meetings, which are stored for delivery to the food bank during the holidays.

Last year, in addition to their gift of 350 pounds of food, the High Sierra Chapter presented the food bank with a generous check. At the chapter's

holiday party, member Don Daniel told the rest of the group that he would match money they donated to the food drive that night. Challenge donations totaled \$250 to make a donation of \$500.

Members of the High Sierra Chapter loaded their donations onto pack horses and delivered them to one of the three drop-off locations, the Carson Valley Inn and Casino in Minden. On a cold, dark December evening, the team rode into the parking lot amidst fire engines with flashing emergency lights, city traffic, and TV camera crew lights. Local people came to pat the horses and have their photos taken with them.

High Sierra Chapter Vice President Edward Acosta was interviewed on live television. The High Sierra Chapter BCHNV has set themselves the goal of increasing their donation this year.

Teaching Future Back Country Horsemen

Last summer, a 4-H leader with the Kalispel Tribe of Indians asked Back Country Horsemen of Washington to give their young people hands-on lessons about horses. Five members of the Northeast Chapter attended their three-day campout in July and assisted tribal program staff in teaching horsemanship to the 15 youth (grades 5-8), their high school age mentors, and some adult leaders.

Located near Cusick, Washington, not far from the Idaho border, the Kalispel Tribe leases land near Priest Lake, Idaho, an ideal place for the young people to camp and learn. The majority of them were tribal members, but the program is open to all youth in the area.

The Northeast Chapter volunteers first taught the basics of safety around horses, horse anatomy, Leave No Trace principles, and packing guidelines. After these lessons, each person had an opportunity to climb bareback onto a quiet, reliable pony for instruction in balance and posture.

Then the children worked one-on-one with the horses, learning more about safety, grooming, tacking up, mounting, and riding while being led by the BCHW teachers on the ground. Each group finished with a short trail ride through a meadow and around stands of trees, before unsaddling and leading the horses to nearby Goose Creek for water.

The kids raved about how much they enjoyed the horses and the Kalispel 4-H leaders asked the Northeast Chapter of BCHW to expand the program for next year.

Founded in 1976, Back Country Horsemen of Washington was one of the four original member organizations of the newly formed Back Country Horsemen of America. The Northeast Chapter was created in 1999.

It's Not Only About Trails

Back Country Horsemen of America recognizes the time and effort these member organizations volunteer to the benefit of the folks around them. BCHA is first and foremost a service organization, and that doesn't just mean on the trails. These stories are only a few examples of the many ways that BCHA member organizations seek to make our world a better place. Back Country Horsemen of America encourages all horsemen and horsewomen to get involved with local causes with their own unique equestrian style.

About Back Country Horsemen of America

BCHA is a non-profit corporation made up of state organizations, affiliates, and at-large members. Their efforts have brought about positive changes in regards to the use of horses and stock in wilderness and public lands.

If you want to know more about Back Country Horsemen of America or become a member, visit their website: www.backcountryhorse.com, call 888-893-5161, or write PO Box 1367, Graham, WA 98338-1367. The future of horse use on public lands is in our hands!

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