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December 2020 – NEWSLETTER

2021 Ride Schedules & Other Important Dates

January 10, 2021..	Board of Director's Meeting..	11:00 a.m...	Gladwin Fairgrounds, Gladwin, MI
March 27, 2021.....	Annual Banquet/Annual Meeting.....		Doherty Hotel, Clare, MI
May, 2021.....	Spring Work Bee.....		Details TBA
May 13 – 17, 2021.....	Proposed May Blossom Ride.....		South Branch Trail Camp
June 3 – 14, 2021.....	Proposed 1 st June Ride.....		Oscoda to Empire
June 18 – July 3, 2021.....	Proposed 2 nd June Ride.....		Empire to Oscoda
August 7 – 14, 2021.....	Proposed August Family Ride.....		Scheck's and Goose Creek Camps
August 2021.....	August Work Bee.....		Details TBA
September 7 – 27, 2021.	September Double Cross (trophy X2).		Mackinaw to Oscoda to Empire
October 8 – 16, 2021.....	Proposed October Color Ride.....		Rapid River to Cadillac

Board Briefs

1. **2021 RIDE CALENDAR** – Proposed 2021 ride calendar has been approved and sent to MDNR and USFS for approval. See proposed dates in this newsletter. Please remember that we don't normally get our ride permit from the MDNR until mid March so dates are subject to change until we have our permit.
2. **2021 CALENDAR - ALL EVENTS ON THE 2021 CALENDAR ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE OR CANCELLATION.** At this time, restrictions for covid are changing often and we have no idea what will happen as the months go by. Please keep up with MTRA event changes on our facebook page. If you have any questions, call the MTRA office.
3. **2021 ANNUAL MEETING/BANQUET** – Arrangements are being made to have our annual meeting/banquet at the Doherty Hotel, Clare, Michigan on March 27, 2021. Details will follow in the February newsletter. **BECAUSE WE ARE NOT SURE OF GATHERING RESTRICTIONS, PLEASE DO NOT SEND IN YOUR BANQUET RESERVATIONS UNTIL AFTER THE FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER COMES OUT.** You might want to call the Doherty to make your room reservations.
4. **2020 VIRTUAL TRAIL RIDE** – What a great idea and HUGE success. Thank you Melanie Moser, Tracy Evans, Suzy Rowland, Chloe Willetts, Kristin Humble, Joan Gibbs, Jan Wolfen and all the volunteers who delivered t-shirts and trophies to finishers for your hard work to make this happen.
5. **SPRING WORKBEES** – Due to Covid, permits were not issued for 2020 workbees. Add the high water levels and lots and lots of rain and wind through the spring and summer and our trail is a mess. We still have fall and winter snow and wind to add to the mixture. Much help will be needed in the spring. Please plan to attend the May and August 2021 workbees. The April newsletter will contain trail assignments for the Board Members. If you have a section of trail that you would like to help maintain, please call the assigned board member and offer your assistance. It is a great way to meet people and appreciate our lovely trail.
6. While you are out riding in the Michigan woods, remember that it is hunting season. Please wear bright colors (MDNR recommends orange) and it is a good idea to put orange on your horse too.
7. Next meeting will be January 10, 2021 at 11:00 a.m. at the Gladwin County Fairgrounds.

From the secretary's desk:

Interesting facts about the MTRA trophies: The cedar wood that the MTRA trophies are made from came from Kathy and Ray Balzer's farm in Tennessee. For the new members, Ray Balzer was a board of director member for many years and also served as MTRA President and MTRA Trail Boss. The logs were cut on the Balzer farm and trucked to Michigan where they were sold to the Amish in the Gladwin area. They were cut to size and the tops are beveled and painted by Amos Beechy, an Amish carpenter. The shape and size of the trophies were originally designed by Phyllis Garn, an original member of MTRA.

Once the tops are painted, the trophy blanks are taken to MTRA member Joan Gibbs, who uses MTRA's machine to stamp in gold flake, the date, location and the trail symbol on them. This year's virtual ride trophies will not be stamped but engraved. The double cross bases were stamped by Joan.

The MTRA organization is a group of avid horsemen who are awesome volunteers. Our Association could not continue without everyone pitching in to do what they can.

MTRA Virtual Ride a Success! By Kristin Humble

What an amazing adventure! The MTRA's virtual ride was a huge success. We offered a chance for members to log miles on their own trails and ride the MTRA shore to shore trail *virtually* this year. By logging miles weekly from August 1st through October 31st, they could see their virtual trip across the state as they made progress from camp to camp. The magic was built into our spreadsheet by member, Suzy Rowland, who created a way to automatically calculate weekly totals and show riders their progress on the MTRA trail map. Using this great visual was an awesome opportunity for members to get motivated to ride as they chased the reward of earning an MTRA Virtual Ride Trophy and T-Shirt. These prizes were designed and created by another member, Tracy Evans, who put in a tremendous amount of work as hundreds of Virtual Riders flooded her webstore (www.mtrawebstore.com) to register for the virtual ride and order their T-shirts.

Our first ever virtual ride had over 500 followers on our Facebook page, "MTRA Virtual Ride 2020", including members from 4 countries, and 9 states! There were 247 riders who competed in the single cross (235 miles) and 47 riders who competed in the double cross (470 miles). With almost a month left to finish the journey we have already had 91 finishers of the single cross and 12 finishers of the double cross. We expect finisher numbers to continue to rise as the ride nears its completion date.

One of the highlights of the ride has been following the Facebook page where members posted an astonishing 6.4K comments and reactions to each other's posts. Posts ranged from current photos, old memories, trail updates, get togethers, tech tips, mileage accomplishments, tributes to fallen riders, beautiful scenery, recommendations of places to ride, general questions, safety strategies, videos of rides, finisher photos, GPS trail maps, and of course lots of fun with family and friends. We sure do have an amazing club. We even had multiple members make generous donations towards the shipping costs of the prizes to help make this a bigger fundraising event.

Overall, the virtual ride was a complete success and an amazing motivator for many people to get out and ride. So many people were "chasing those miles" all fall and felt so accomplished when they achieved their goal. MTRA enjoyed hosting the event and hopes to see its future success as a club fundraiser. Ride on!

It is time to renew or purchase a new subscription to Horsemen's Corral. MTRA has an article in this magazine each month. If you are looking for a Christmas present for an MTRA member, a subscription to this "horsey" magazine would be a great gift. Send \$10.00 to the MTRA office in Ovid with the name and address of the person to receive the magazine.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN RUNNING FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS IN MARCH 2021, PLEASE CONTACT THE MTRA OFFICE BY JANUARY 7TH.

MTRA has some volunteer positions available. If you would like to help MTRA, volunteer for one of the following positions;

1. **Historian:** This position keeps all MTRA records and history including but not limited to recording work bee information including pictures and volunteer hours, pictures from annual banquets, newsletters, board members and their terms, presidents, photos from MTRA rides and any special events. You will not be required to attend these events, however, you will need an email address to which members can send photos and information.
2. **Facebook Administrator:** As an administrator you will need to be facebook and MTRA knowledgeable. You will answer questions that members and prospective members ask in a timely manner. Other duties will be to read all posts to be sure they conform to MTRA policy and to change cover photo. Facebook is an important means of promoting MTRA and our page needs to be fun and current.
3. **Web Page Host:** This person needs to be computer literate and comfortable making updates to our web page, including our newsletter, calendar, ride information and work bee information.
4. **Graphics Person:** The MTRA ride certificate and the registered Michigan trail horse certificate need to be updated. If you have computer and graphic skills, you are who we are looking for.

In all of these positions, you will be working with the Secretary and Treasurer to help get you the information you need. If you are interested in any of these positions, please contact the MTRA office at (989) 723-1425 or mtra.office@gmail.com

THANK YOU to Kristen Humble who volunteered to write the article each month for the Horseman's Corral magazine. She does an amazing job highlighting MTRA.

MTRA is also accepting resumes for the position of Bus Driver, Trail Boss, Secretary and Treasurer.

MTRA Employment Opportunities... If you would like to share your skills with the association we all know and love, please submit a resume and/or letter of interest to: MTRA Employment Director, 2475 McNamara Road, Gladwin, Michigan 48624. The MTRA offers employment in the following areas:

Trail Boss - responsibilities include **management of the trail rides** including safety of persons and horses on those rides.....**Bus Driver** - responsibilities include all aspects of bus management and transport of riders between trail camps.....**Secretary** - responsibilities include management of the office of the MTRA including all communications, ride management duties and maintenance of files.....**Treasurer** - responsibilities include assistance to the Secretary, website, financial duties and reports. All of these positions are part-time/seasonal jobs.

From the President's Desk

Well here we are at the close of 2020. Thank god. It has been a tough one on MTRA, our country and our world. Speaking from experience it is no fun and downright scary. Hopefully the end is in site on this dreadful Covid-19 with the vaccines coming. The year was not very productive with no work bees, no trail maintenance, no rides except that awesome Virtual Ride which helped greatly keeping our coffers full enough to be able to do payroll and insurances and bus maintenance.

Our board has learned how to do messenger meetings and phone meetings and emails. We had only one in person meeting this year. So has been interesting to say the least. Our BOD's have stepped up to keep things flowing and it is appreciated.

Our new campground in Cheboygan has followed suit for the year and is currently in limbo again as ground located is to narrow to be of use to us. We are back at trying to find a new solution moving almost as high as you can go on the chain with DNR. Hopefully things start moving a little better in a positive direction.

It looks promising for many fronts for next year and hoping you can step up and help us out on work bees, trail maintenance, or many of our other needs for people, become a board member or employee.

COME ON 2021