

VALLEY NEWS

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FREE



Sarah Zeintek of Buffalo, NY sits atop Opal, a miniature horse at the AuSable Chasm Equine Center. Travis deValinger, Equine Center manager, and trail guide Sam Potter standby.

Photo by Matt Bosley

Happy trails at AuSable Chasm

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AUSABLE CHASM — Visitors to AuSable Chasm now have a new way to experience the outdoors.

The AuSable Chasm Equine Center has opened for its first season at the AuSable Chasm Campground, offering trail rides on horseback for both adults and youth.

The equine center includes over a dozen horses of all different sizes, from minatures to belgian drafts. Having such a wide array of horses to choose from ensures that people both large and small can ride a horse that suits them.

All rides are accompanied by an experienced guide, and riders are given a breif orientation on safety and technique before mounting up.

The horses, which are boarded year-round in stables less than a mile from the campground, have been selected for their gentle temperment and trained to walk the 500 acres of wooded trails.

"We wanted to help make the Chasm a more multi-attractinal place," said Travis deValinger, manager for the Equine Center. The center oper-

ates separately from the campground and tour company, but the two have a partnership to share business.

Originally a part of Emerald Springs Ranch in Saranac Lake, deValinger has nearly 25 years of experience with horses. He has plenty of long term goals for the Equine Center, noting a desire to add more trails, riding lessons, wagon rides in the fall, and sleigh rides during the winter.

"We'd like to be all things equestrian at some point," he said.

DeValinger also hopes to develop a non-profit side to the Equine Center that would allow it to act as a refuge for rescued horses, a cause that has long been part of his life.

Some of the horses already at the equine center came from bad situations, said deValinger, and may have even been euthanized were it not for his willingness to rehabilitate them.

"I'm ultimately in this for the horse and because I love the horse," he said.

DeValinger also hopes the trail rides will give youth a unique opportunity to experience horses.

"A lot of [trail riding] places shy away from

See **HORSES**, page 15

Horses

From page 1

kids; we try to go with the kids," said deValinger. "We wanted to make a place available for young people."

The AuSable Chasm Equine center is open year round with guided trail rides available throughout the day from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., weather permitting. For more information, call 834-9933.