

Saturday riding lessons a joy for young equestrians

Saturday mornings are lesson days at Erica Lucas' Coral Reef Riding Academy in western Lake Worth.

This particular Saturday, she's mid-ring with a new rider, Callie Roberts, 6, of western Lake Worth, who's riding a new pony, CD.

"Don't run over the instructor," Lucas says to Callie, adding words of encouragement to both student and horse. "Let's go at a trot."

Callie's father, Neil Roberts, watches from the fence. "Callie has always loved horses," he says. "Ever since her first pony ride, she has been wanting to ride. We thought it would pass, but here we are two years later."

Callie rides by him. She's serious, intent and clearly enjoying herself.

"Callie is dressed by 7, ready to go to her 9:30 lesson," Neil Roberts says. "She signed up for summer camp and now she takes lessons every Saturday morning. She wants to do this."

He's determined his



Christine Davis

daughter will continue riding. "I guess I'll sell my jalopy if I have to," he says.

While Lucas works with Roberts, her other students saddle up horses and ride around in the paddock.

Saranity Belker, 8, of Lantana, is riding a brown and white miniature Paint, Spike. With her is half-sister Haleigh Belker-Baker, 11, of Wellington, who's riding a Tennessee walker, Shine.

"My sister is the best rider," Belker says. "I just started riding two years ago. I want to be a jumper."

Belker-Baker has been riding for five years. She used to show locally, but has exchanged competing for pleasure riding. Sometimes she gives sisterly advice.

"Working on equitation

and knowing how to control your horse are important," she says, noting that her sister is doing well with both.

Nina Lopez, 11, of Lantana, is riding a brown and white Paint, Cash. "I want to be a jumper and be in a lot of shows," Lopez says.

Breanna Goren, 6, with her little sister, Alexis, 4, of Boynton Beach, both have had health problems. Breanna was born with cancer and Alexis has stomach problems. Their mother, Roberta Goren, thought riding might help alleviate her daughters' stress.

"Both girls are getting along better since they've taken up riding a half-year ago," Goren says.

This day, the girls will ride Sunny.

"Breanna is often afraid, but not of horses. She's found her courage," says the girls' father, James Goren. "And Alexis, who is a squirmy worm, has calmed down a little bit."

Erica Lucas moved to Florida from Cleveland



Neil Roberts and daughter Callie, 6, enjoy a Saturday morning with CD the pony and Erica Lucas (right) at Lucas' Coral Reef Riding Academy in western Lake Worth. Roberts said his daughter loves riding lessons and he's determined to let her continue. "I guess I'll sell my jalopy if I have to," he said.

two years ago. Besides running the Coral Reef Riding Academy, she's a comptroller who does hedge fund research.

She offers summer camp, after-school programs, private lessons and

horse rentals.

"I took lessons for 15 years," she says. "I know what I don't like. I like to make my students feel independent on the horse and that they feel it's their own horse."

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