

Boys and Girls Ranch dedicates new arena



The Glenn Ista Arena was dedicated in May at the Boys and Girls Ranch.

Serving children at risk makes the North Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch unique as far as ranches go, but visitors of the facilities can expect to see something there that qualifies it as a true ranch.

"You can't be a ranch without horses," said Ranch President Gene Kaseman.

Horses are an important part of the Boys and Girls Ranch, and their importance is growing.

On May 8, the ranch celebrated the opening of the new Glenn Ista Arena, a 12,000-square-foot facility that allows the ranch to operate its therapeutic riding program year-round and for community events.

Therapeutic riding utilizes the recreational aspect of riding and basic care for the horse to encourage physical, psychological, social and educational benefits for people with and without disabilities. Participants are instructed in riding skills and take part in numerous therapeutic activities with their horse. Therapeutic benefits are both mental and physical with improved feelings of self-worth and competence, mastery of skills, and processing thinking patterns.

The arena was named after Glenn Ista, a retired Walcott farmer, who provided half the funds for the construction of the arena. Ista, 96, could not attend the dedication, but Verne and

Becky Ulven, who moved onto the Ista farm, spoke on his behalf.

"He has always had a love of animals and a passion for helping others," Becky Ulven said.

The Boys and Girls Ranch, a Verendrye Electric Cooperative member-owner and one of VEC's top accounts, dedicated the new arena during its annual BLT Day. The tomatoes used on the BLT sandwiches were grown by students in the greenhouses at the ranch. With donations from Verendrye, the ranch was able to begin a greenhouse technology program a few years ago. The funds allowed the ranch to build a greenhouse that is used year-round. The greenhouses use electric floor heat for the main source of heating in the winter.

Kaseman said the greenhouse technology program allows students to gain enough experience to work in a greenhouse.

"It's been a wonderful project and it all started with Verendrye," Kaseman said.

The ranch has been hosting the Annual BLT Day for five years as a way to open the facilities to the public. Visitors were able to tour one of the greenhouses, buy plants and flower boxes, ride on horse-drawn carriages provided by Custer's 7th Cavalry North Dakota Memorial Regiment and look at classic cars.

The ranch serves approximately 1,200 boys and girls and is the eighth largest employer in the Minot area.



Above: Boys and Girls Ranch President Gene Kaseman, speaks at the dedication of the Glenn Ista Arena in May. Left: Spencer Rafferty, 4, gets a look at one of the ranch's therapeutic horses during the dedication of the Glenn Ista Arena.