

"I'm not trailering a horse for 16 hours, so you can ride down there," recounts Mason, when recalling her daughter's initial suggestion of riding at Woodridge. Eight years later, that's exactly what they're doing.

They spend every summer at the cottage, board their three horses at Woodridge and they ride nearly every day.

Quinn competes and there are only two weekends of the summer that are not taken up with horse shows.

"I'm not the kind of person who likes to sit around," says Mason, so she decided to take riding lessons with Milburn as well.

Full-time Muskoka resident Sue Irons began riding when she was young.

"Ever since I was a little girl, I've loved horses," she says.

Irons grew up in the Ottawa area and took riding lessons at the National Capital Equestrian Park. She met and married Rick Irons, who was from Toronto but was a cottager in Muskoka. They moved to Bracebridge in the mid 1980s.

"I got my first horse when I was 40," explains Irons. Then came Dexter, who, like her first horse, is also a quarter horse. Both horses have been retired and her newest horse is Present, a seven-year-old Trakener/thoroughbred cross that is boarded at Maple Lane Farms in Bracebridge.

"My day doesn't begin until I get to the barn," Irons states.

Sharing her love of being at the barn is Johanna Neuteboom.

"I've always had a love of horses," says Neuteboom, who learned to ride before she could walk.

In retrospect, Neuteboom sees that growing up on a farm was a wonderful childhood but like most teenagers, by the time she was 18, she wanted to get away from the farm and see the world. And, she did.

But during travel and career changes she realized she needed to somehow get horses back into her life.

"I was always looking for horseback riding places to get my horse fix," says Neuteboom.

After a move to Muskoka and a five-year stint working with the OSPCA in Bracebridge, Neuteboom began to parlay her passion for horses into a business. It started as a part-time horse sitting service.

"Horses are not that easy to drop off at the kennel," Neuteboom jokes, but it was an idea to connect and meet more horse people.

Last year, Barnboots was born. Neuteboom expanded into natural hoof care, equine sports massage, equine resource networking and arranging vacations for riders and their horse. As well, she offers workshops and clinics focused on a balanced approach to equine wellness and collaborative horsemanship in partnership with the Back of Beyond Equine Centre near Port Sydney.

Horses were the connection that brought Neuteboom and her partner, David Furlonger, together in Muskoka.

"Horses connect people," says Furlonger. He and Neuteboom think Muskoka is a perfect spot for horses. "It's a beautiful area and we're lucky enough to have supportive, horse-friendly neighbours and



**Sue Mason leads her horse Leo (above). She enjoys the friends she has made at the barn. Sue Irons holds on to Duchess and Dexter during a break from a ride by Lake Muskoka (below).**



Photograph: courtesy of Sue Irons

miles of backwoods trails."

Furlonger's fascination with horses began when he was in Alberta, where he lived for 23 years.

"That's where my love of horses actually got started. I never missed a Stampede and went to every rodeo under the sun," he says. "I've always had a lifelong dream of being a cowboy. I just love the romanticism of that era and what it stands for."

But, there were changes in his life. He moved to Ontario and for seven years worked in the resort business.

"I met Johanna and fell in love with her love for horses," says Furlonger. "Basically, that was my in. I knew a girl who knows everything about horses."

Furlonger spent the first year they were together getting back into riding with Neuteboom's Friesian,