

West Valley VIEW

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Nationally known horse trainers settle in Buckeye

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Buckeye residents Pegi and Chad Shields don't have to boast about their prowess in training horses.

If world and national awards could talk, the couple would have more than 50 lining up at the podium on their behalf.

And if horses could speak, well, owners would hear of stories about how the duo tag-team the training process, giving the horse the best of both worlds.

But the ones who do the talking for the Shieldses are their legion of fans, stretching from coast to coast.

"The way [Pegi] interacts with the horses and the people, she brings out the best, not only in the horse, but the rider, too," said Gina Carls, who lives in West Virginia.

Carls is getting ready to send a horse all the way to Buckeye just so it can be trained by Pegi.

"I haven't found anybody [near West Virginia] up to the standards she has," Carls said in a phone interview Jan. 14. "It's why I'm getting ready to ship a horse out to Arizona. I've exhausted every other option, so the horse is going to where I know it will get the help it needs."

"Our horses were so happy with both of these trainers," said Veronica Quinn, a Buckeye resident who enjoyed her lesson as a rider as well.

"Instruction was a pleasant experience, which has not always been the case before," she said.

So when Quinn heard that the Shieldses - who just moved to Buckeye about a year ago after having a horse training business for decades on the east coast - were looking for a new home, she quickly acted.

"My husband [Troy] and I thought, what if we can fit them here," she said of the couple's six acres of property at



PEGI SHIELDS of West Valley Show Horses guides Lauren Mae Tolles, 15, of Buckeye, through jumping practice at Rising Q Ranch in Buckeye Jan. 17.

20929 W. Elliot Road. "Our biggest fear was what if they leave the West Valley?"

Staying in Buckeye

So the Quinns decided to make their pitch, and the Shieldses listened. A few months later, the Shieldses moved their business - West Valley Show Horses - from Empty Acres to the Quinns' "backyard."

"Chad and I are eternally grateful," Pegi said of the Quinns. "This place reminds me the most of home [back in Maryland.]"

Minus the cold and snow, the reason the couple moved their business to Arizona in the first place.

"We hate the cold weather," Pegi said. "Out here, we just make sure we wear a hat [in the summer]."

There has not been much to disappoint at the new location, Pegi said.

The Quinns put up lights around a large arena, a barn, a jump arena, a wooden fence to surround the property and dedicated stalls for the training business - the Quinns already had 16 horses of their own.

"We tried to turn this place into a happy environment for people and horses to learn," Veronica Quinn said. "The whole place was put together with the horse in mind and potential student."

Pegi said her own horses have noticed, as they seem calmer than before.

"If you are teaching beginners, you can't have any chaos," she said.

Renaissance trainers

Pegi is anything but a beginner. She has been riding horses since she was a toddler, and she's been training them for 30 years.

"I love them like they are my family," she said. "I still love them like I did when I was an itty bitty kid. I'm blessed I can make a living not only on something that I love but I'm passionate about."

Pegi learned most of her horse training techniques in England and used to compete in Grand Prix Jumpers on the European circuit.

Chad is more of the traditional cowboy-type and learned his trade in the U.S.

The diverse background of the couple is what makes them unlike any other horse trainers, Pegi said.

"Between the two of us, we cover every aspect of riding one can do on a horse," she said. "We're good at what we do and we cover all aspects of the market."

The couple train horses in colt starting, western pleasure, dressage, hunters and equitation, to name a few. Pegi said they specialize in problem horses.

And unlike some trainers, the duo performs all the training, never passing off the simplest of lessons to anyone, she said.

Longtime Buckeye resident Bruce Heiden has been impressed with the couple so far.

The 59-year-old has always had horses and has mainly trained them himself, although he has had plenty of dealings

with horse trainers, he said. Recently, after several operations left him unable to train, he discovered the Shieldses.

"They are good people and good trainers," Heiden said. In particular, Chad is "a good roper, and good ropers don't necessarily make good horse trainers."

Of all the horse trainers Heiden has encountered, the Shieldses are "the best ones that I've run onto," he said.

Carls feels the same way as evident by sending her 2-year-old horse cross country.

"That's hard to do," she said of shipping off a horse that is "like family." But knowing the destination and the previous results makes it "well worth the money and suffering the distance."

Carls said when the horse returns to West Virginia, "It will be what you want and you can trust getting on that animal; and knowing that I can get on it and be safe means a lot."

For information, visit www.west-valley-show-horses.com or call 602-796-8764.