

Carmel farrier's horseshoeing work is all about balance

BY JODI HERSEY
SPECIAL TO THE WEEKLY

Erica Toothaker has been around horses all her life as both a horse owner and a competitive rider. Now, instead of saddling up for a leisurely ride through the field, the Carmel native farrier -- still based in Carmel -- spends most of her waking hours looking at the bottom of these large animal's feet as a modern day horse podiatrist.

"Corrective shoeing is the term I use. That's when you have a horse that has a foot that's an issue or has some kind of injury that's taken place from being imbalance for so long," said Toothaker.

As a member of the Equine Lameness Prevention Organization or E.L.P.O., Toothaker works hard to bring balance, comfort and healing to horses throughout the state using a tech-

nique known as hoof mapping.

"We use hoof mapping to balance the horse's foot around the center of articulation or the joint in the hoof capsule. When the hoof wall grows, it causes imbalance around the center of the foot and since our horses don't have to travel for food and water like wild horses do, they're unable to wear their feet down [naturally]," explained Toothaker, a Hermon High School graduate.

To reduce improper balancing, lameness or injury, Toothaker recommends that all horses be balanced correctly every five to six weeks, especially if they are athletes. She says horse owners can stretch it out a bit to every eight weeks during the winter but should never let it go beyond that before a horse is checked by a farrier.

"If you wear a shoe

that doesn't fit properly, your entire body will feel it. It's no different for a horse," Toothaker said. "If their foot is imbalance, it causes them to be out of alignment. So we try to balance them as their feet grow."

Toothaker said there are a host of reasons why a horse would be out of balance, from genetic reasons to simply being poorly shod.

"Some of these horses are bred with very poor feet. Improper balancing of shoeing or trimming can also cause issues and poor genetics plays a role," she explained.

Maine's ever-changing weather conditions are not always conducive for happy, comfortable horses, either.

"The wet and muddy conditions can cause issues with fungus and also create very soft feet," Toothaker said. "Many people would like

to keep their horses barefoot, but they really should be protected with a shoe or boot. I find many horses [in our state] need corrective shoeing due to injuries such as ringbone, Navicular syndrome, soft tissue injuries or torn ligaments."

And how long it takes a horse to heal, according to Toothaker, all depends on the horse's injury.

"I had a case where a man was getting ready to put his horse down as soon as the ground thawed. The horse had very bad x-rays of deterioration in the bone. It was so bad off that she'd walk for bit and then lay down because she was in agony," said Toothaker. "We came in, looked at her feet and saw the shoe was placed improperly causing severe imbalance. With hoof mapping and corrective shoeing we were able to turn her



PHOTO BY JODI HERSEY
Carmel farrier Erica Toothaker, pictured here with one of her "clients," re-shoes horses.

around and give the horse a comfortable life for another six years."

Toothaker would like to see each and every

horse have the best quality of life possible. She's doing what she can to make sure that happens, one hoof at a time.

Bangor Public Library to remain closed for one extra week

Things don't always go as planned. Because of construction problems, the re-opening of the Bangor Public Library has been set back a week. The library will open on Monday, January 11, 2016.

"This project has proven to be an interesting experience, for both the staff who continue to work among the noise, dust, and chaos, as well as the construction crews who have overcome a number of delays," says Barbara McDade, Library Director. "Because of the numerous issues encountered, we have decided to delay opening to the public by one week."

The Library staff continues retagging and barcoding the more than 500,000 volume collection. Through a grant by the Next Generation Foundation, the Library is investing in RFID (radio frequency identifica-

tion) technology. Everything in the collection will be retagged with an RFID tag linked to the library's catalog. This will allow faster checkouts and the addition of self-check units throughout the building. RFID will increase the library's efficiency and security. Patrons will be able to check out a stack of books at one time or for those who prefer, use the self check-out stations.

The Library's online branch is still available 24/7 through the library's website, bangorpubliclibrary.org. Patrons can read over 70 magazines via Flipster, download audio books or eBooks, or browse the Bangor Community Digital Commons. The Digital Commons aims to preserve and provide access to historic content such as World War I and II posters, regimental histories, Bangor's Book of Honor, Bangor police and fire department histories, high school yearbooks, and so much more. Patrons also have access to

the online databases and use of Heritage Quest, an online genealogy database.

Inter-library loan cannot resume until the Library reopens. Patrons may continue to request books from other libraries through the URSUS catalog to be picked up at the Fogler Library (University of Maine campus) or at the Nottage Library (University of Maine at Augusta-Bangor campus).

Thanks to our neighboring libraries, Bangor Public Library cardholders will be able to check out books using their BPL card at the Fogler Library, the Edith Dyer Community Library (Hampden), the Maine State Library (Augusta), Nottage Library (University of Maine Augusta - Bangor Campus), the Old Town Public Library, and the Orono Public Library.

For more information on the Library's renovation, programming, and services, visit bangorpubliclibrary.org.

City of Bangor adopts new minimum wage ordinance

At its Dec. 14 meeting, the Bangor City Council adopted a minimum wage ordinance which will take effect January 1, 2017. The ordinance applies to all employees who work within the municipal city limits of Bangor regardless of the employee's age or whether he or she is a tipped worker. Specifically, the wages will be applied to any person who performs work for an Employer for monetary compensation on a full-time, part-time, seasonal or temporary basis within the City limits. Additionally, a tip credit provision of the ordinance varies from State law by giving the employer a credit of 50% of the Bangor minimum wage instead of 50% of the State minimum wage. The effective date of the ordinance is Jan. 1, 2017.

"The Bangor City Council prefers that the minimum wage be addressed at the state or federal level. Those who agree have a year to vigorously advocate for a federal or state minimum wage increase," said City Council chair Sean Faircloth. "However, if other levels of government won't lead, Bangor will lead with a moderate increase in the minimum wage. By January 2017 the minimum wage will have remained frozen for seven years. That is unacceptable. Bangor will defer to a state increase, but the increase will occur in Bangor regardless come January 2017."

Should the voters fail to enact a state-wide measure in November 2016 than the City's minimum wage ordinance will be implemented as follows:

- On January 1, 2017, the minimum wage for all Employees shall be established as \$8.25 per hour;
- On January 1, 2018, the

regular minimum wage for all Employees shall be raised to \$9.00 per hour;

• On January 1, 2019, the regular minimum wage for all Employees shall be raised to \$9.75 per hour;

• Effective January 1, 2020, and every first day of each January thereafter, the minimum wage for all Employees, shall increase at the percentage set by the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) of the previous most up-to-date twelve (12) months as reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

A copy of the ordinance can be obtained at www.bangormaine.gov/minwage or by calling 992-4204.

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