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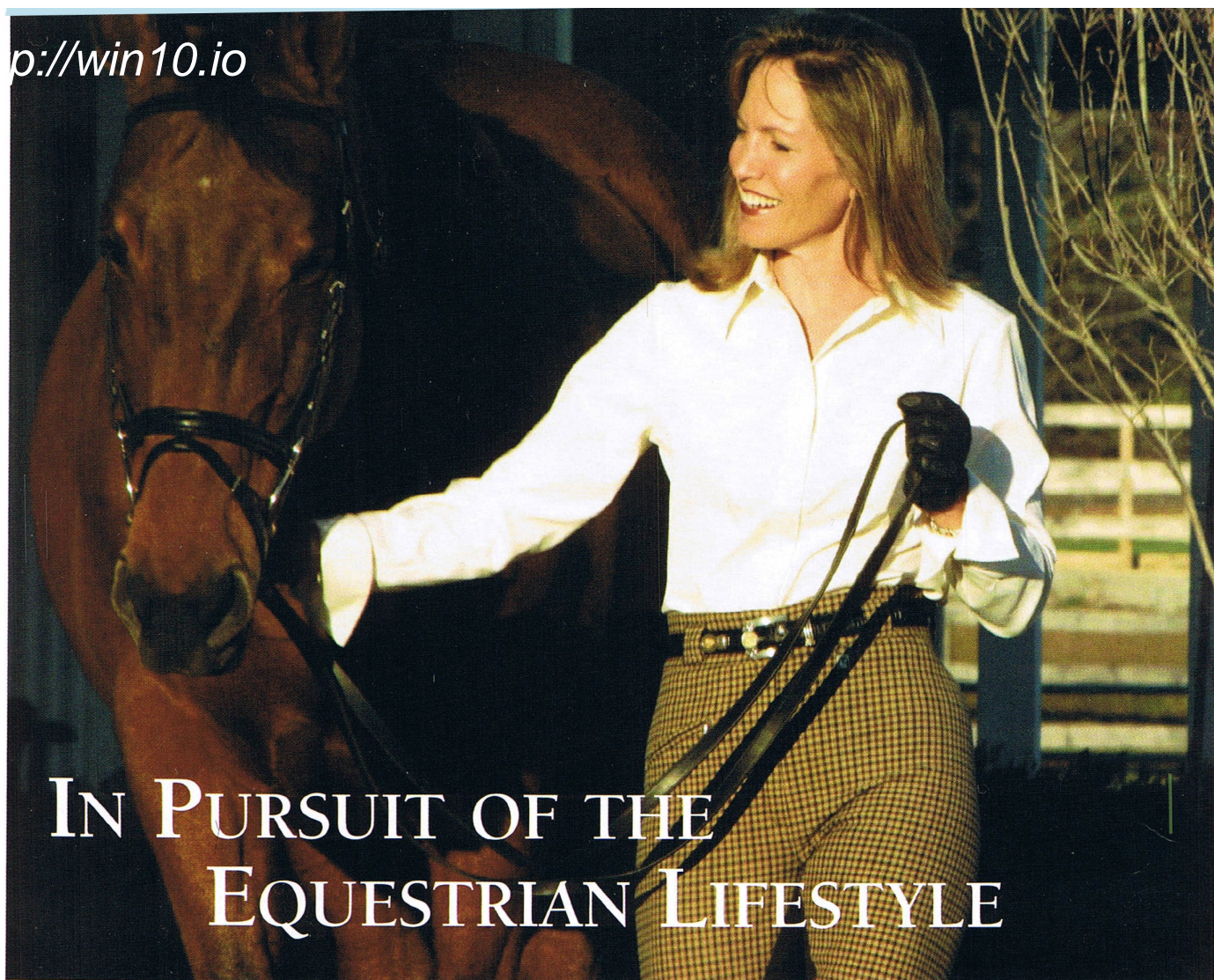
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IN PURSUIT OF THE EQUESTRIAN LIFESTYLE

Equestrian Community Living - a Dream Come True

If you love horses, chances are when you close your eyes and picture horses grazing in lush green pasture, you feel peaceful. You begin to relax and de-compress. It is undeniable; horses are good therapy.

Most of us board our horses at facilities with dreams of someday owning a place where we can bring our horses home. This is a wonderful dream, but in reality how many of us can afford to purchase a large track of land, build our home, build a private barn, indoor riding arena, outdoor riding arena and construct miles of trails? Then, pay the staff to tend and maintain it all while we are on vacation or sick in bed? Even if we have the means to attain all this, with whom will our children play? Where will they go trick-or-treating? There are no neighbors around for miles.

Equestrian community living is the latest in the sporty and chic trends of residential lifestyles. No longer is it a dream to see your horses grazing out your bedroom window, or to walk down to the barn for night check. You can wake to the smell of fresh timothy and orchard grass, hear autumn leaves rustling under your horse's hooves, in winter, enjoy an afternoon gallop over freshly fallen snow and have neighbors (but not too many) to socialize with and develop a sense of community. It can all be yours!

Today's country-loving dwellers are looking for countryside without the fuss, and equestrians are engaging in a trend away from public stables, wanting to bring their horses home. But owning a farm is a lot of work, not to mention the expense of tractors, spreaders,

seeding and the burden of being the one ultimately responsible for its operations and maintenance. The pace of today's busy life is tough, and finding the time to run a farm in addition to the rest of life's requirements can quickly become daunting.

Here enters the equestrian community. In an equestrian community, you get to have your cake and eat it, too. "We have the luxury of living on a farm and keeping a regular job," says one happy equestrian community resident. With a communal barn associated to — and sometimes enclosed by — a group of homes, the equestrian community offers horse- and country-lovers the chance to live in close proximity to horses and nature, but without the responsibility, time investment or financial commitment. No 6:00 A.M. feedings in



the cold rain, days on the tractor seeding before the biblical rains and no sub-zero blanketing runs.

The equestrian community offers a healthy, fascinating sport at your fingertips. Many who live here don't even ride or want to ride. They are drawn to the open space and tranquility of these types of communities. "With all the development going on around us, it's like an oasis in the middle of all this sprawl," says a homeowner, grateful that open land still exists. Land is being lost to development at such an alarming pace that some areas are beginning to look like one continuous suburb connecting one city to another, and another and another. If you appreciate open space and the thought of a true country feel in the middle of suburbia would make you want to move today, then living in an equestrian community speaks volumes to your beliefs.

Many equestrian communities are built on land in close proximity to cities, but unattractive to big developers because of zoning limitations that do not allow for high-density cookie-cutter homes. Further, many of these properties have county restrictions that require a portion of the land be used for agricultural, recreational or environmental purposes. If you live in one of these distinctive communities, you have that country feel with all the perks associated with living in suburbia.

A family environment and strong sense of community often is the attraction to these equestrian villages. "They can walk to the barn together and it gives them the freedom to spend time with the horses. I don't have to drive to a barn far away and that gives me freedom, too!" says one mother of two girls who began riding when they moved to their equestrian community. In fact, in her particular community, more people moved there to experience the country life and only after having arrived did they begin riding. For these families, their community has represented not only the possibility of a new sport and of fresh country air, but it has also provided them with a sense of security for their children. Says the happy mother, "It makes me more calm. And I'm not even a rider! Imagine if I were!"

Equestrian communities are also being built with a sense of style and belonging, a further enticement. Equestrian communities often include custom homes barns and landscapes that are harmonious, aesthetically pleasing, carefully planned and designed by teams of architects, builders, landscape architects and equestrian facility experts. "Our homesites are designed so they are clustered in a manner that preserves the large-lot feel, while conserving rural open space and pasture. The selected cluster plan is designed to fit the land, maintain the farm character and maximizes distant and

wooded views. Rustic four-board oak fencing, hedgerows, stone walls and pasture help maximize the site character," says Jennifer Donovan of Equestrian Services, a developer and designer of equestrian communities. "Not only will you get the country views and the wooded trails, but the feeling of owning your own manor at a fraction of the cost."

This concept has grown from a desire to live in one of these communities herself. Jennifer Donovan has been designing, building and project managing equestrian facilities for years. Currently, her horse is boarded at a facility 30 minutes away. "This concept has come from my desire to have all the amenities (barn, indoor arena and trails) and the want to see my horses from my window and walk to the barn, but without having to be responsible for all of their care. I want to have the freedom to be away from my horse and know he's being taken care of. I know first hand what is involved in the operations and maintenance of an equestrian facility. I like to travel with my family. I also have other interests in my life in addition to horses including traveling with my family. I have yet to find the ideal community for me in an area where I want to live, so I am in the process of designing and developing one I plan to call home."

Then, there is the peace and tranquility. Nobody sits back in their chair at the office and dreams of cluttered streets, honking horns and gridlocked traffic. Nor do we dream about looking out the window onto our next-door neighbor's brick wall or the alley with the rows of garbage cans. When we dream, we close our eyes and try to imagine utter peace. "When we go home, we feel like we go away for the weekend," says a resident who no longer has to dream to find peace. She doesn't have to close her eyes and dream of the sweet smell of fresh grass and the gentle breeze coming up from the pasture. All she has to do is walk out her front door; she is already there. ♦

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