

Sisters share horsepacking knowledge with others



Hannah (left), Brady (middle) and Kimber Boll have been putting their horse packing skills to good use, teaching others as part of 4H and Northwest Montana Back Country Horsemen projects. (Jeremy Weber/Daily Inter Lake)



Hannah and Kimber Boll joined Northwest Montana Back Country Horsemen's Rick Mathies in Ellensburg, Washington March 17 to teach the 4H members their about their horse packing program. (photo provided)



Brady Boll leads a pack string near Columbia Falls, showing off her horse packing skills. (Jeremy Weber/Daily Inter Lake)



Kimber (center) and Brady Boll lead their pack string near Columbia Falls, showing off their horse packing skills. (Jeremy Weber/Daily Inter Lake)



Kimber (left) and Hannah Boll demonstrate their horse packing skills while Rick Mathies and Brady Boll look on. (Jeremy Weber/Daily Inter Lake)



Kimber (left) and Hannah Boll demonstrate their horse packing skills while Rick Mathies and Brady Boll look on. (Jeremy Weber/Daily Inter Lake)



Whitefish's Hannah Boll has learned a lot since attending her first 4H horse packing meeting four years ago. (Jeremy Weber/Daily Inter Lake)

By
JEREMY WEBER

Daily Inter Lake
|
May 29, 2022 12:00 AM

Whitefish's Hannah Boll never disliked horses but she certainly wasn't interested in them.

When her parents dragged a 13-year-old Boll to a meeting of the Flathead Valley 4-H Trail and Packing program sponsored and taught by The Northwest Montana Back Country Horsemen Association, she had no idea how much the experience would change her life.

Four years later, Boll and her sisters are passing along the information they have learned as members of the organization.

"I probably wasn't your typical 13-year-old girl. Horses are really big and I just really didn't see the appeal of them. I love horses now," Boll said. "When we went on our first pack trip and I learned how to put everything together, it was actually a whole lot of fun. I found out that I really enjoyed it."

Boll said she had no intention of participating at that first meeting but since she was there and had nothing else to do, she figured she might as well watch the video about introduction to packing.

Soon she was hooked.

Each winter since, Boll has participated in the 4-H program at the Bad Rock Arena in Columbia Falls, eventually graduating from the program by planning and leading a horse packing trip with her other level-four graduates.

These days, Boll and her sisters, Brady, 16, and Kimber, 13, join their parents and friends on four to five packing trips each year, putting to use the skills they have learned.

"You have to be aware of what is going on with both the horses ahead of you and behind you. You have to know when other packers are coming down a narrow trail so that you don't run into each other," Kimber Boll said. "It's a very important skill."

When the Bolls are not going on packing trips for themselves, they are helping the National Forest Service complete projects, such as clearing and maintaining trails and even digging a pit for an outhouse.

WHEN THE

Washington State Back Country Horsemen contacted NWMTBCH Youth Project Coordinator Rick Mathies wanting to learn more about the Flathead Valley 4-H program, he figured there was nobody better than the Boll sisters to show them what they had learned.

Hannah and Kimber Boll, traveled to Ellensburg, Washington, along with Mathies, in March to talk about their experiences as participants in the 4-H packing program.

“The girls did a great job,” Mathies said. “These 4-H students enjoy the experience of packing horses and will become the next generation of stewards for the backcountry. They will maintain the history of horse packing in Montana by participating and spreading the word throughout the northwest.”

“When you are teaching kids how to pack, many times you are also teaching their parents how to pack at the same time,” Hannah Boll added. “Youth packing groups can really go a long way to keeping the tradition of backcountry horse packing alive.”

While Hannah and her sisters will continue to help the next generation of packers, they will also continue to enjoy the backcountry themselves.

“We just live in the perfect place for packing. We have the Mission Mountains, the Great Bear Wilderness and the Bob Marshall. This is just a great valley to live in. A lot of people travel here to enjoy what we have around us every day,” she said. “There is nothing like the beauty and solitude of being in the wilderness of Montana with just your family or friends and horses. I love it.”

Reporter Jeremy Weber may be reached at 406-758-4446 or jweber@dailyinterlake.com.



Whitefish's Hannah Boll has learned a lot since attending her first 4H horse packing meeting four years ago. (Jeremy Weber/Daily Inter Lake)



Kimber (left) and Hannah Boll demonstrate their horse packing skills while Rick Mathies and Brady Boll look on. (Jeremy Weber/Daily Inter Lake)



Kimber (left) and Hannah Boll demonstrate their horse packing skills while Rick Mathies and Brady Boll look on. (Jeremy Weber/Daily Inter Lake)



Kimber (center) and Brady Boll lead their pack string near Columbia Falls, showing off their horse packing skills. (Jeremy Weber/Daily Inter Lake)



Brady Boll leads a pack string near Columbia Falls, showing off her horse packing skills. (Jeremy Weber/Daily Inter Lake)



Hannah and Kimber Boll joined Northwest Montana Back Country Horsemen's Rick Mathies in Ellensburg, Washington March 17 to teach the 4H members their about their horse packing program. (photo provided)