

## Benefit Helps Injured Horsewoman

**After hearing she'd never walk, a community of support helps Olivia Sears defy the odds.**

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"This ride was not about the money, but about how a community of horse women and men came together to help an individual in need," said Olivia "Pinnie" Sears of Montague, Massachusetts, who fractured her back and sustained other serious injuries in an April 11 horseback riding accident.

Sears, a lifelong horsewoman and Massachusetts 4-H judge, was left unable to walk. To help, Stephanie Sanders-Ferris, publisher of the regional magazine *Massachusetts Horse*, organized and sponsored a benefit pleasure ride last June that drew 80 participants and raised more than \$3,200. Staff writers for the magazine and dedicated volunteers worked to make the ride a success, gathering sponsors for prizes.

"Community response was incredible," said Sanders-Ferris. "Our silent auction made a real difference and delighted everyone with bidding opportunities on hay, shavings, grain, rubber stall mats, trips, products and services."

While Sears' original diagnosis was paraplegia, she's now walking and working her way back into the saddle.