

# Horses for hospice: Local equestrian prepares for 21-week ride to benefit agency

By J.R. Williams -- Daily Staff Writer

EDINBURG -- Horse trainer and registered nurse Tammy Shoremount has rarely ventured far from her home.

Her intention this year, though, is to get all that traveling done in one shot. And, in quite an extraordinary way.

For 21 weeks, Shoremount and friend Freda Jackson will venture north from the scorched U.S.-Mexico border clear to cool Canada, and they'll do all 1,800 miles in the saddle.

As part of cable network RFD-TV's "Best of America By Horseback" show, Shoremount and Jackson will join a large group of riders for the border-to-border ride. Cameramen will film the trip from the backs of their own horses, with episodes scheduled to air in the spring.

But Shoremount said she's not thinking about her 15 minutes of fame. When she heard about the trip, she decided she could combine her two passions -- horses and her work -- in a meaningful way.

Shoremount has more than 20 years' experience as a registered nurse. For the past several years, she has worked at Blue Ridge Hospice, a nonprofit organization that cares for the terminally ill. She's taking sponsorships and donations for her ride, all to benefit Blue Ridge. Money raised will go toward providing food, medication, and other expenses for people in need.

Often, hospice patients lack insurance and Blue Ridge relies on donations to provide care for those individuals, she said.

So far, she's had a few companies step up to the plate, and she's looking for more.

"I'm hoping we get a lot of support for hospice," she said. "I would love for someone to dare me to ride so far, because I would do it."

Jackson, who met Shoremount a few years back, also works with the elderly at the Lynn Care Center in Front Royal. The Clarke County native said the missions of Blue Ridge and Lynn Care go hand-in-hand. Tammy's cause is also her own, she said.

"We need hospice," she said. "The quality of their life is really made better."

Shoremount's husband, Paul, said his wife was motivated to do something that would benefit the lives of the people she works with every day.

"The elderly and horses are her passion, and it's nice to fulfill a dream that is your passion," he said.

The trip is the result of more than a year of planning by the "Best of America by Horseback" team. It begins April 20 in El Paso, Texas, and ends Sept. 2 at the North Dakota-Canada line. A group of 35 "core



**Tammy Shoremount, left, of Edinburg, and her horse, Rocky, and Freda Jackson, of White Post, and her horse, Ace, ride outside Shoremount's Happy Days Farm west of Edinburg recently. The women will participate in a five-month trail ride across America, coordinated and filmed by cable network RFD-TV's "Best of America by Horseback." Shoremount is taking sponsorships and donations for the ride to benefit Blue Ridge Hospice. Rich Cooley/Daily**

riders" will ride at a walking pace through mostly open country or trails, said Abbie Hanchey, a representative of the company.

About 50 "adventure riders" so far have signed up for different stages of the trip, she said. Advance men have to get permission from each private property owner along the way.

This adventure promises to boast a caravan of massive proportions. Everyone is responsible for his or her own accommodations, and tent camping isn't permitted: Think 40 motor homes and horse trailers in a line on a country road.

Each morning, the caravan will move to the next campsite to set up. Riders will be taken back to their horses, and the day's ride will begin. Making it to Canada by way of Mexico on horseback requires about an 18-mile ride each day. Once every few weeks, the group plans to rest for a few days.

Shoremount and Jackson each have trailers with modern creature comforts they plan to take on the trip.

Along the way, sponsors will provide necessary supplies. Special events like rodeos, parades and cookouts also are planned along the route.

Both ladies have been busy training for the trip at Shoremount's Happy Days farm in Edinburg. Even though Shoremount had a half-dozen horses already, she had to cross state lines to find the right companion for the trip. Out of 200 horses on a farm in Stanton, Ky., she found Rocky, a 4-year-old Rocky Mountain Horse.

"He was green. He was a stallion," she said, but after some trail riding and learning commands, he came around.

"I've got the smoothest horse in the world," Shoremount said.

Jackson will be riding a 6-year old Tennessee walking horse named Ace, who she's had since 2005.

Under Shoremount's instruction, Ace is going through obstacle training and learning other skills.

"When I got this horse, he wouldn't stand still. She's helping me teach him the things he needs to know," said Jackson, who also said she's preparing mentally and physically for the trip after suffering a serious injury two years ago.

Both riders said they're watching closely what their horses eat and taking them out frequently. Rocky and Ace are healthy and ready to ride, they said.

"When we ride with our friends, we ride hard," Shoremount said. "For us to ride 15 or 20 miles in one trip is no big deal."

For more information on how to sponsor the trip, download a donation sheet at [nvdaily.com](http://nvdaily.com) or visit [www.blueridgehospice.org](http://www.blueridgehospice.org).

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**Shoremount stands with Rocky in a field behind her Edinburg home. Rich Cooley/Daily**



**Shoremount and Jackson frequently take their horses out walking in preparation for their five-month ride across America. Rich Cooley/Daily**