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Swapping stables in Woodside: Siebels make a \$6 million gift to Woodside equine therapy program, and trade stables

by Andrea Gemmet

Woodside residents Tom and Stacey Siebel are donating Dearborn Stables equestrian facility on Runnymede Road to the National Center for Equine Facilitated Therapy, along with \$2 million in cash.

NCEFT officials announced the donation on Monday, Nov. 27, along with plans to relocate their hippotherapy programs for the disabled to the Siebels' 11.6-acre Dearborn Stables site.

The organization currently operates at a 12-acre site it owns at 5001 Woodside Road adjacent to the Siebels' residential property, where it offers physical therapy sessions on horseback to special-needs adults and children.

As part of the deal, NCEFT will give its Woodside Road property to the Siebels, who will use it as a private equestrian facility, in exchange for Dearborn Stables, said Casey Terribilini, who chairs the organization's Board of Directors.

Mr. Terribilini said that accessibility is a problem at the NCEFT's hilly, unpaved Woodside property, particularly in winter, when about half the site is too muddy to be usable.

"Dearborn is all paved and flat ♦ it's like the Taj Mahal for us," Mr. Terribilini told the Almanac.

The new location will allow the organization to significantly expand its programs, he said. Currently, the NCEFT serves about 100 people a week. Besides improved parking and accessibility, the Dearborn site includes a 3,800-square-foot residence, an 8,400-square-foot barn, a 14,000-square-foot covered riding ring and a 27,000-square-foot outdoor riding ring, as well as barns and paddocks, Mr. Terribilini said.

The Siebels have made a number of improvements to the property, formerly the Charter Oaks public boarding stable, since they bought it in March 2002.

All told, the Siebels' donation is worth about \$6 million. The Dearborn Stables property has been appraised at more than \$16 million, Mr. Terribilini said. NCEFT's Woodside Road property has an appraised value of \$12 million, he said.

Because NCEFT officials were worried about the additional costs associated with running and maintaining the Dearborn Stables property, the Siebels sweetened the deal to include \$2 million for the organization to use as an endowment fund.

"The Siebels have been longtime financial supporters of our organization, and we are grateful for their unwavering commitment and generosity," Mr. Terribilini said.

The NCEFT still needs permission from the town of Woodside to operate at the Dearborn Stables; a request for a conditional use permit is on the agenda for the Planning Commission's Dec. 6 meeting.

Founded in 1971, NCEFT provides equine-assisted therapy, research and education. It employs therapeutic riding to children and adults affected by conditions such as cerebral palsy, premature birth, genetic abnormalities or traumatic brain injuries.