



LIVING LANDMARK AWARD

2013

Westernaires

“Westernaires is a youth organization that encourages self-respect, responsibility and leadership through horsemanship and family participation.”

Westernaires was born as a creation of the Lakewood Youth Council when in 1949 they approached Elmer E. Wyland for help starting a program for young people and horses. Wyland was a member of the Lakewood Riding Club and a proponent of precision mounted drill. The organization began at the Mississippi Stables located at Wadsworth and Mississippi. The initial 26 members were recruited in the 1949 Horseman's Easter Parade. Members were required to be residents of Jefferson County between 9 and 14 years of age. In addition, each rider was required to furnish his or her own mount. Initially, the organization was known as the “Paul Gregg Pony Club”, named after the famous Denver Post Artist. The organization grew rapidly. After a few years, the members protested the name “pony club” because they “didn't ride ponies” and the name Westernaires was adopted.

By 1954, the organization had moved operations to the Jefferson County Fairgrounds vicinity. Westernaires volunteers, together with the Buffalo Bill Saddle Club and the Lakewood Riding Club, built the first horse arena at the Fairgrounds, adjacent to the “Livestock Building” which still stands. The Westernaires Annual Show was first presented in the tiny sale arena in the Livestock Building. In 1959, John Hayden donated to Westernaires a 2 ½ acre site located adjacent to the Fairgrounds. An additional 2 ½ acre site was later acquired. Since that time, the Westernaires home address has been Golden, Colorado.

Wyland passed away in 1983, having seen the organization grow to about 600 youngsters and long passed the time when every rider furnished a horse. A rental string was begun after the Fair Mountain stable no longer served the riders and after the time when Fletcher Wood's horses were driven over Green Mountain from the Rooney Ranch every Saturday for practice. Upon Mr. Wyland's death, Glen E. Keller, Jr. became Director of Westernaires, a position he still holds today.

The membership now totals more than 1000 riders, occupies 35 acres, has multiple arenas and other facilities, and maintains a horse herd totaling more than 200 head which are housed at the facility. About 25 percent of the membership rides their own horse and the remainder uses the rental horses owned by Westernaires. Throughout the years “Fort Westernaire” has been a place where the traditions of the West are preserved and displayed, both by its riders and by the collection of historical artifacts contained in the Museum of Western and Riding History located within the facility. Saturdays are a beehive of activity where riders develop the skills needed for future leadership roles.