

# Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Monte Bona,  
MPNHA Executive Director  
801.699.5065  
Email: montebona@hotmail.com

## **Eccles grant ensures continued development of Mt. Pleasant equestrian center**

MT. PLEASANT, Utah — The Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area (MPNHA) is pleased to share news of a Happy New Year's gift the city of Mt. Pleasant has received from the George S. and Dolores Dore Eccles Foundation.

The Eccles Foundation is helping the city to a great start of 2012 with grants totaling \$305,000 which will go toward completion of the city's new equestrian center.

"Equestrian center" is very much more than just a fancy name for "rodeo grounds" — in addition to serving as a venue for events of various kinds, the equestrian center focuses on horse and horsemanship education, equine therapy and heritage interpretation.

The events center's indoor arena has been in use for a little over a year, but that is only the first phase in a three-phase project that will ultimately include indoor and outdoor arenas, a system of riding trails, training and cross-country tracks, and a heritage-focused "Cowboy and Pioneer Hall."

The generous Eccles gift will go far in helping the arena realize its full, ultimate potential.

"It will not only be a major facility for Sanpete County, but a way to interpret our rich history with horses," said Monte Bona, executive director of the MPNHA, which has been a full supporter of the effort to build the equestrian center.

The Eccles Foundation gave \$105,000 which will be used primarily for finishing touches, such as interior carpentry, exterior signage, and landscape planning and design.

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While serving practical functions, those improvements will also enhance the aesthetics of the facility.

“We greatly appreciate the grant, so that we can landscape and improve the arena. Those improvements will make the arena more attractive to donors, so that we can raise the funds for phases two and three,” Bona said.

The Eccles Foundation also gave \$200,000 as a last-dollar grant for the project’s phase two, which consists of the outdoor arena, 154 horse stalls, and a perimeter trail system. That grant, Bona said, will hopefully act as another incentive to potential contributors.

The arena will of course host horse-riding, horsemanship, and rodeo events. But it will be much more than that.

With the continual development of the arena, word will get out about the tremendous riding opportunities available there, as well as in the mountain ranges near the center.

“With riding land dwindling in Salt Lake and Utah Counties, we plan to show horse

owners in urban areas that we have a center ideally suited to provide a wide range of cross country riding experiences,” Bona said.

As earlier stated, the arena will also fulfill three other objectives: education, therapy, and heritage interpretation.

### **EDUCATION**

Mt. Pleasant City is home to Wasatch Academy, a private preparatory school with an excellent national and international reputation. The arena is home to the academy’s growing equestrian program. The center can also provide a venue for a rodeo program at nearby Snow College, a junior college with much of its student body coming from rural, agricultural south-central Utah area, some of the same area as that within the boundaries of the MPNHA.

The arena also hosts 4-H classes as well as private horse-riding and horsemanship instruction.



Renderings give ideas of how an equestrian center in Mt. Pleasant could look when completed, including indoor and outdoor arenas, RV and trailer park, and riding trail system, riding/training track, “Cowboy and Pioneer Hall, and auxiliary buildings and facilities.



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## **THERAPY**

Two equine therapy programs are established in Sanpete County. Such programs, providing experience and interaction with horses, have been shown to yield positive outcomes for people with physical, mental, emotional or behavioral problems or disabilities.

Oxbow Academy provides bonding with horses for young people who are experiencing emotional and behavioral problems.

Holistic Equine Adult Therapy (HEAT) works with adults who have substance-abuse issues.

## **HERITAGE INTERPRETATION**

The MPNHA's strong support of the arena falls primarily in the arena's interpretative role. One of the goals of the MPNHA is to interpret the rich heritage of the area. The role of horses and horsemanship are very important to that heritage, both in the Mormon colonization experience and in the settlement of the American West, he said.

"The development of the equestrian center is an effort to interpret our heritage and to participate in agri-tourism. Both those things are built into the management plan of the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area," Bona said.

Providing education and spectator and participation events will aid in that.

However, the arena's third phase includes a Cowboy and Pioneer Hall, which, among other things, will feature exhibits and displays that tell the heritage of horses.

Work on the finishing touches of the center's phase one will begin immediately.

Fundraising for phase two will take place throughout 2012, with construction of that phase beginning in early 2013.

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\*The Mormon Pioneer Heritage Area (MPNHA) is a federally designated area of central and southern Utah running along the beautiful and historic U.S. Highway 89—including the scenic by-ways of Utah state routes 12 and 24 which both intersect with U.S. 89 and, together, form the MPNHA's Boulder Loop. The area includes the counties of Sanpete, Sevier, Piute, Wayne, Garfield and Kane.

The Utah Heritage Highway 89 Alliance is the local coordinating entity of the MPNHA. Its purpose is to preserve, tell and interpret the stories, history and heritage of the area, and to promote its culture and value.

[www.mormonpioneerheritage.org](http://www.mormonpioneerheritage.org)