For Immediate Release

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Spark Equestrian Academy's Comprehensive Curriculum and Unique Approach Teach Students Horseback Riding and Life Skills

School's Multiple Locations, Convenient Online Portal, and Clear Levels System Make the Path from Beginner Rider through Advanced More Accessible

STILLWATER, Minn. (June 7, 2022) – **Spark Equestrian Academy**, with campuses in Stillwater, Monticello, and Hugo, Minnesota, offers students a unique, step-by-step system to learn the basics of horsemanship and riding, while also teaching valuable life and leadership skills. The core riding curriculum consists of six consecutive levels, each with a clear set of outcomes and a week-by-week agenda to ensure all students receive the same complete education. Sessions run from eight to twelve weeks in duration. In addition to year-round riding lessons, the academy offers individual day camps.

Spark Equestrian Academy was founded in September 2020 by **Julie Brady** and **Melissa Lund**, lifelong members of the equestrian community who led their own teaching programs for many years before joining forces. Julie and Melissa were inspired to create the academy when they noticed the lack of a coherent, step-by-step system for reliably teaching students everything they need to know about the basics of horsemanship and riding. Additionally, the Spark founders wanted to create this system in a way that fosters growth and supports students as they grow, develop positive life skills, and form friendships. "My best friends and biggest support system to date are the girls I grew up riding with," said Melissa Lund, co-founder of Spark Equestrian Academy. "I love being able to provide a space for my students to share their mutual passion for horses, and to see them develop their own close friendships. And it's very rewarding to watch our young students grow confident and capable, both in and out of the saddle."

The academy offers classes for children and adults. **Spark's stepwise program** is for kids ages 7-18 and follows the comprehensive, six-level system. Outside of this core curriculum, Spark offers additional classes for both adult students and very young students. The **Tiny Tots class** is for students 3-5 years old, and there's a **Wine and Ride class series** for students aged 21 and older. Classes are held year-round in indoor facilities where each student has access to a horse and all necessary equipment. "We're excited to extend the opportunity to so many people to get to know horses because we love horses and want to share that passion with the world," said Julie Brady, co-founder, Spark Equestrian Academy. "We have methodically developed horseback riding lessons that provide a clear path from beginner to advanced, offering an experience that students can't get anywhere else."

The academy's levels system is unique amongst other equestrian schools, and the student portal makes it easy to note absences, sign up for classes and camps, and check student progress. Lessons in the first three levels – Introductory, Rookie, and Novice – provide students with a general education in English-style riding and each consist of a 45-minute riding session combined with pre- and post-class horsemanship education. The horsemanship portion of each class teaches students everything they need to know about safely and independently handling, grooming, tacking, and caring for the lesson horses.

By the time students reach the upper-level classes, they will have the horsemanship skills necessary to tack the horses up by themselves. Lessons at the upper levels include 60 minutes of ride time and are geared toward preparing students for various equestrian sports. Currently, the Spark program offers development into two riding disciplines: hunters/jumpers and dressage.

Students who graduate through the Spark program and desire to show horses competitively are then well-prepared to lease or own a horse as a part of a trainer's private training practice.

Spark Equestrian Academy currently has locations in Stillwater, Hugo, and Monticello to serve students from across the greater Twin Cities Metro. The Academy is franchising their program and aims to open 100 locations nationwide.

About the Founders:

Julie Brady: Julie is one of Spark Equestrian Academy's primary instructors, specializing in the equestrian sports of hunters and jumpers. She has owned a teaching and training business in Stillwater, Minnesota for over 20 years. In 2018, she expanded her business and purchased the beautiful Serenity Farm, where she is currently based. Julie and her students have enjoyed many successes showing in the hunters and the jumpers on both schooling and rated circuits. In founding Spark Equestrian Academy, she has dedicated her vase knowledge toward the goal of providing students with a clear and concise path to success in their equestrian endeavors.

Melissa Lund: Melissa is one of Spark Equestrian Academy's primary instructors, specializing in the equestrian sport of dressage. She is recognized by the **United States Dressage Federation** as a bronze, silver, and gold medalist in dressage competition. Melissa is passionate about bringing young riders up through the levels of her sport and has taught hundreds of kids how to ride through the summer camps and lesson programs she has developed. In addition to training horses and riders in the private sector, Melissa has also taught in the **University of Minnesota's** intro-to-riding class. She currently teaches and trains out of Serenity Farm in Stillwater, Minnesota and leads dressage clinics around the Midwest.

For more information visit https://www.sparkequestrian.com.

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