

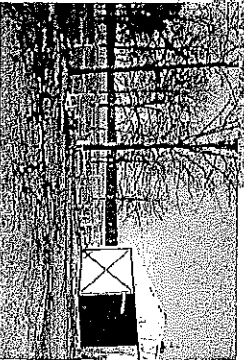


Aiken's reputation as great horse country." She contacted Courtney Conger of the Carolina Real Estate Company and that was that.

"This was the first property I saw," she confesses with amazement, as she looks out over the farm. "I couldn't have imagined anything more perfect, and I felt Jeanne's presence telling me to go for it! I named it Two Sisters Farm in her honor."

And so the farm was born, but what about the remarkable retreat concept? "One day, I read about WBC while flipping through a magazine in a doctor's office," Chris says. "They were looking for locations anywhere in the country for their Life Lodge retreats. I realized immediately that was what my farm was meant to be."

Chris joined the organization and offered the use of her farm. Two Sisters held its first retreat last June. Not long afterwards, Chris became the chair of the WBC board and today organizes retreats all over the country.



"We do horse retreats here," she explains. "There are also yoga retreats in Maine, snowshoeing retreats in Park City, Utah, kayaking and hiking retreats in Island Park, Idaho. Our goal is to set up retreats that are geared to whatever might be a woman's particular passion. Not everyone wants to ride horsback."

**W**hat do we do for the love of horses? Sometimes it's all about what the horses do for us.

Imagine you have cancer. Your life seems to belong to an insidious invader. Doctor visits, hospital visits, treatments and recuperation from treatments steal your days. The interminable hours spent simply making appointments sap even more time and energy.

Now imagine there's a place you can go for a long weekend retreat from those never-ending details. A place with a beautiful main house overlooking mountains and gardens, and a little second house with a view of a pond and its canoe. A place where volunteers cater to your every wish, from a glass of fresh lemonade, to breakfast in bed, to a fabulous barbecue. And best of all, a place with horses and hundreds of pastoral acres for that perfect trail ride. Oh, yes — one more thing. You pay nothing at all. Everything, including airfare and transportation to and from the retreat, is completely taken care of!

No need to keep imagining. This place really exists thanks to an organization called Women Beyond Cancer (WBC). The organization's board chairwoman is Aiken's own, Chris Powers. She and her husband Robert Caporale donate the use of their secluded 50-acre Two Sisters Farm in Windsor, adjacent to Edger Carol's Flat Branch Hounds equestrian preserve, for horse-oriented four-day retreats.

"My sister Jeanne and I had always dreamed of owning a horse farm together," Chris explains. But Jeanne developed breast and brain cancer before that dream could be realized. Throughout her 17-year battle with the disease, each time Jean left the hospital all she wanted was to get back on a horse. In the end, although it took four people to hold her on in a therapeutic riding situation, she still got to ride. When Jean died several years ago, Chris decided that she needed to live that dream.

"Chris had never been to South Carolina, but one day she headed north from Miami and found herself in Aiken. "I'm not sure why or how," she says with bemusement. "I suppose I'd heard somewhere about

But the women who visit Two Sisters Farm usually do. (They need a release from that doctor saying that they are fit enough to ride.) "I can accommodate four or five ladies at a time. Upon arrival, each finds a grooming box with her name on it on her bed. It's her own personal grooming box, donated by Southern Saddle!"

Then the ladies meet the farm's four horses. On trail rides, the women trade off riding Mojito and Prince, who are safe enough to be therapeutic horses. Chris and the farm's caretaker, Pat Hernandez, ride Simon and Shadow in front and behind. If additional mounts are needed, Gina Salatino of Red Barn Stables in Aiken provides those.

"Not all the ladies want to ride every day," continues Chris. "Sometimes they just want to groom the horses or watch them in the field."

What's a typical day at Two Sisters? It's whatever you want it to be. Chris stresses that the whole point of a retreat is that there's no schedule. "These women have had enough scheduling dealing with their cancer," Chris says emphatically. "I want them to experience a perfectly relaxing time, choosing whatever they want to do and doing it when they want to."

And the choices are beautifully thought out and seemingly endless. Of course there's riding and caring for the horses. Then there are miles of trails and acres of parklike surroundings for those who want to "ride Shark's mare" (walk). There's a pond with a canoe for those who like to paddle and fishing gear for those who like to fish. The screened-in casta (lute house) that overlooks the pond comes complete with sofas, a porch swing, a stocked refrigerator and lots of books for those who want to relax or read.

The main house has a huge front porch outfitted with comfortable rocking chairs, blankets, pillows, binoculars and a bird guidebook. There are bird feeders everywhere to ensure no shortage of watching-worthy specimens. Now that sounds relaxing!

"I'm strictly the hostess of what I like to think of as an adult Girl Scout camp," Chris says. "There's also a facilitator who stays at the retreat to make sure everything is running smoothly. They're usually

## For The Love of Horses

By LOIS BRITTEN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GARY KNOLL

*In great events of joy and sorrow, in crises and revolutions, the horse somehow finds his place standing next to man, the partner of his joys and his pain.*

—Mr. John Osgeod, *Yanona Farmer*, 1864  
(*The Horse in Quarters*, by Julie T. Seita, 1989)