Let’s go for a Ride

Carly Amundsen has loved horses since she was a young girl. She worked with horses during high school and with her passion growing, she enrolled in the Equine Studies program at Lake Erie College, graduating in 2010 with a double major in Teaching/Training and Facilities Management. After college Carly pursued various “horse-related jobs” including managing a large barn, running a Girl Scout camp’s horse program and refining her teaching skills by developing lessons and taking on students.

Carly was gaining experience in the industry but realized, “There were always things that I would have changed.” Carly began talking with her father, and now business partner, Jim Schaeffer, about possibly starting their own business. Jim, who works at Shippensburg University, suggested perhaps the SBDC may be helpful in a business start-up effort.

“We worked with the SBDC to get some idea of what we needed to begin pursuing the business,” Carly said, “and they got us started in the right direction by helping us set up realistic financial goals and getting our business plan sharp.”

Carly and Jim initially “hit a lot of blocks with the township board,” but they carefully navigated the tricky waters of municipal zoning and the challenging landscape of financing. Carly notes, “It became clear that many banks are hesitant to lend to first time businesses and agriculturally-centered businesses.” They largely bootstrapped the business start-up and launched Summerset Stables, LLC in 2016.

They “built a small barn to start, with a few small turnout areas and a grass area to ride.” By the summer of 2017 they had a larger barn, more “lesson horses” and a riding arena. Since moving operations to the larger space, Summerset Stables has continued to grow.

With more horses boarded on-site and more students, Carly says they are “still expanding the buildings and working hard to get the barn a little more finished.” She also observes, “We’ve had very loyal and supportive clients that have made most of it possible.”

Carly is working now to “get a solid program in place for homeschoolers interested in equine-related careers,” and she’d “also love to get an adult program started.” Passing on her knowledge and passion to students is, for Carly, “by far, the most rewarding” aspect of the business. She notes it may not be the most “lucrative business, but it’s one I enjoy getting up every morning to do. Not to mention it’s in my back yard.”

Carly and Jim are up in the saddle and, at a steady gait, riding into the future.