

# Bosnian woman advances therapy skills as volunteer

## VOLUNTEERS

By **PHYLLIS ROWAN**  
Staff Writer

Senada Pekaric feels a special connection with the children she works with as a volunteer for Quest Therapeutic Services, a therapeutic horseback riding program for children and young adults with disabilities, based in West Bradford.

A native of Bosnia, she experienced the hardships of living in a war-ravaged country. "During the war, it was very hard for all of us," said the 26-year-old. "We were introduced to being helpless. We had no food, no water, we were dying and there was nothing we could do about it.

"It gave me another dimension of life."

War came to Pekaric's home country in 1992 and continued for almost four years. During that time, according to a BBC story, about 100,000 were killed and the country was left in ruin.

"I want to use my bad experiences in a good way, take the best from that."

She believes that from her suffering and helplessness, she is able to challenge those children who cannot help themselves. And she is doing that through therapeutic riding.

"After the war, I kind of exploded," said Pekaric. "I wanted to do everything -- education, travel, meet people."

One of her biggest dreams was horseback riding. She was able to get a job at a Bosnian riding camp for special-needs children and those without parents run by a French foundation. While the camp had new stables, dormitories, an indoor ring, volunteers and about 30 horses, it had no trained instructors to work with the about 100 children it served.

Realizing that to gain more experience, she needed to come to the United States. That was almost two years ago and next month she will be returning to Bosnia with that training. "I have seen how much improvement the children can get from the care and all the work here," Pekaric said. "In Bosnia, their condition goes downhill instead of up."

Through Quest, she was able to attend an instructor certification course with the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association and also received a certification as a Special Olympics coach.

Pekaric hopes to organize a Special Olympics riding program back in Bosnia.

"I want the world to know us in a good way. We are a wonderful country."

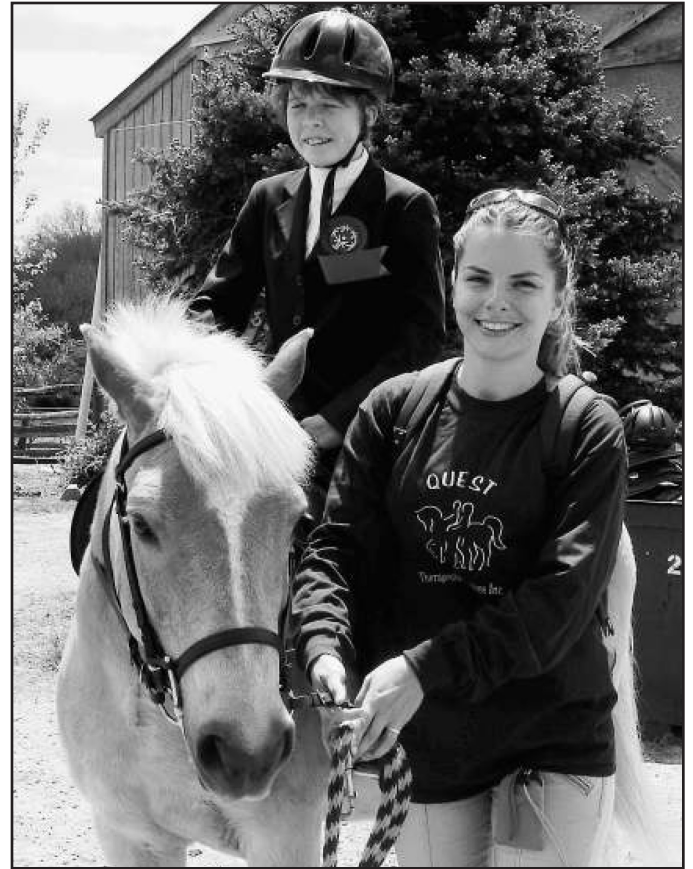


Photo courtesy Quest  
Senada Pekaric works with one of the Special Olympics riders at Quest Therapeutic Services in West Bradford. Pekaric has been volunteering at Quest for almost two years to learn about therapeutic horseback riding and will be returning to her home in Bosnia next month to use her skills there.

"Volunteers are an integral part of Quest," said Sandra McCloskey, president and director of the organization. There are about 40 volunteers at Quest, with a core group of about 20. Duties range from helping to guide the clients on one of the seven therapy horses to helping to tack the horses, horse related care and exercising the horses.

For information on Quest Therapeutic Services call 610-692-6362 or visit the Web site at [www.questtherapeutic.com](http://www.questtherapeutic.com).

If you know someone who should be highlighted in our volunteer column, contact Phyllis Rowan at 610-430-1148 or at [prowan@dailylocal.com](mailto:prowan@dailylocal.com). For information on volunteering contact the various agencies or United Way of Chester County at 610-429-9400 or [www.unitedwaychestercounty.org](http://www.unitedwaychestercounty.org).