

SHINING LIGHT AWARD

It is my sincere pleasure to announce that Sarah Maass has been awarded the Shining Light Award. Sarah has been a ride manager since 2006 when she started as a co manager for Run for the Ridge and has managed a ride every year for the past 17 years. She even managed two rides a few months apart for a few years, which is a daunting task! Sarah currently manages Huntersville 100 which she has run since 2020.

I have been fortunate to count Sarah as my mentor in my own journey both as a rider and as a ride manager for the past 14 years. Throughout those years I have been impressed by her ability to organize and manage all the details of a ride, handle horse and rider emergencies, and have endless patience to answer questions. One of the things that makes Sarah's rides successful is her ability to reach out to private landowners to add to existing park trails so that riders have as much space and variety as possible. She has put in countless hours of hard work maintaining trails and has tried to build connections with the local community to create goodwill for our sport.

In 2023 Sarah put on a huge effort to bring a national championship ride to this region for the first time in many years. She worked tirelessly with a variety of agencies such as AHA, multiple breed organizations, local state officials, private landowners, and the ATV/motorcycle clubs that use the Huntersville State Forest trails. In addition, she also organized volunteers to improve the trails to make the best ride conditions possible. The ride had a large turnout with competitors from many different states and received many positive comments over the course of the four day event.

Sarah's passion for distance riding shows in her years of introducing new riders to this sport, especially junior riders. One of my earliest memories is of Sarah bringing 4-5 juniors to ride camp and how hard they worked yet also had fun. Over the years, Sarah has not only helped pay for the juniors to attend rides, educated, mentored, helped them fundraise for costs, and supported them through their ups and downs. She developed many of them into excellent riders and athletes, taking two juniors to Tevis in 2016 and a former junior to Tevis in 2022.

Sarah is also an accomplished endurance rider with 5360 miles. She has completed nine 100 mile rides including three Tevis finishes in 2012, 2016 and 2022. She takes excellent care of her horses and has earned 12 best condition awards. Sarah has come back from at least one serious injury to keep riding. This spirit and grit shows true perseverance to endurance riding no matter what the obstacles.