



Nickers & News

Spring 2020 Issue



Message from our Board Chair

I was very excited as I sat at my computer a few weeks ago, contemplating what I would write for this spring newsletter. I was overflowing with enthusiasm to share the good news about the 2020 edition of Free Rein Center for Therapeutic Riding and Education. Then the news of the coronavirus began to saturate network and cable news broadcasts and by March 13, school districts were considering the possibility of closing. The Free Rein Board began considering recommendations from the CDC, the Governor's office and many other Federal health agencies. We anticipated that the Transylvania County schools would close on March 16, following the Governor's order. The board agreed that we would cease therapeutic riding lessons for as long as the schools remained closed. No one knows how long this pandemic will last but Free Rein will restart operations when the school systems reopen.



Before this unprecedented event occurred, Free Rein had enjoyed a record breaking enrollment for our Spring session along with an increased pool of volunteers, side walkers, horse leaders and 5 instructors who are certified by the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) International.

I would like to mention a brand new program Free Rein experienced before ceasing operations. We welcomed 11 veterans from Project Odyssey to an introduction of our equine therapy program. Project Odyssey, a project of Wounded Warriors, is a 90-day mental health program that focuses on increasing the resilience and psychological well being of veterans. This first experience was well received by the "warriors" and their team leaders. They look forward to continuing this affiliation once we reopen.

In closing on a positive note, I would like to thank members of the Free Rein Family for the positive response to our urgent letter appealing for donations to continue feeding our herd of four legged therapy partners. The love and appreciation for Free Rein was overwhelming.

Please remember, this pandemic will run its course and Free Rein, with the help of its loyal supporters, will continue its good work of "serving the community by strengthening the spirits, minds and bodies of children and adults through interaction with horses."

Please stay safe!
Jerry Clouse

Winter Highlights



Switching to Daylight
Savings Time is kind of like
Christmas for horse people.



Upcoming Events

All Depending on Coronavirus Progression

Through May 15th	Free Rein Closed
Fri., May 8th	Summer Session Sign-up Deadline
Week of June 8th	First Week Summer Session A
Week of Jun. 29th	Last Week Summer Session A
Week of Jul. 6th	First Week Summer Session B
Week of Aug. 3rd	Ride On! Day Camp
Fri., Aug. 7th	Fall Sign-up Deadline

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Phone: (828) 883-3375

Email us at: info@freereincenter.com

Check out our website

www.freereincenter.org

P.O. Box 1325—Brevard, NC 28712



Pokey Joe, the Equicizer

Welcome the newest herd member, Pokey Joe, the Equicizer. This new addition was made possible by a grant from a private family foundation in Western North Carolina. Our participants and programs will benefit greatly from this new equipment. He arrived at the Free Rein barn Thursday, April 2, 2020.

Free Rein's students and programs can benefit from this new herd member in a number of ways such as

- * Mounting and dismounting techniques
- * Ability to build up core muscles and trunk control with the simulation of the horses' movement
- * Help individuals get within Free Rein's weight limit to ride
- * Overcome fears and anxieties
- * Help evaluating potential students
- * Volunteer Training
- * Emergency dismount practice
- * Practicing posture and alignment
- * Working on up and down transitions
- * Introducing new gaits
- * Work on using different seat techniques
- * Help to develop contact with horse through the reins
- * Improve rein use and different techniques
- * Develop a strong seat and lower legs
- * Help stretch and warm-up rider before riding

This grant also allowed Free Rein to get a new Kawasaki Mule from Dal-Kawa, a great sponsor in Hendersonville. The old Mule has served us well over the last 10 years and was well over-due for a replacement. Free Rein looks forward to having this new piece of equipment for many years to come!



Bond with Your Horse clinic for Horse Leaders

On January 17, 2020, Free Rein put on a clinic for all Horse Leaders. The clinic focused on "Taking the Lead" and how to create an effective and supportive bond with the horses in lessons. "Taking the Lead" is a gentle leading technique developed by Sandy Webster, master level PATH instructor who also holds several other certifications. She created this leading style to help people of all ability levels be able to lead their horse independently and to help horse leaders in a therapeutic riding (TR) setting be more in control and bonded with their horse. Free Rein's Program Director, Brittany, and Program Administrator, Rachel, saw the need to help facilitate the growth of the relationships between horse and leader.



Judy Patrick leading Ytzen

The clinic began with the "Taking the Lead" video from Sandy Webster to get a good understanding of the technique and why it works and how to make it effective. After the 10 minute video, about 20 horse leaders gathered in the arena with all 14 of Free Rein's horses. The arena was set up with many obstacles to lead their horse through and provide stimulation to their environment. First thing, getting use to the proper location and crop technique of the horse leader, taking a few laps to get use to that. Second, putting the gentle leading to the test with walking their horse through the obstacles without the horse reacting to their environment. Horse leaders switched horses, working with a few different equines to get a good feel of the different reactions of the horses.

Several other volunteers helped make the clinic such a success, throwing balls and waving pool noodles near the horses. After the clinic was over, the feedback from the volunteers was very positive and helpful. This clinic will be put on the Free Rein calendar at least twice a year to help promote bonding with your horse in a TR environment and horse leading in an effective way.

Look for the next Bond with Your Horse clinic in the fall.

Sensory Training for All Volunteers

In collaboration with Porsha Smith, retired SLP, Karen Smith, practicing OT, and Denise Stretcher, local physician, Free Rein started a Sensory Training for all volunteers in late February. This training was aimed at understanding the sensory needs and behaviors of our participants, the "what, how and why" behind the reactions we might encounter in a therapeutic riding (TR) setting. The training was offered on three nights to accommodate as many volunteers as possible. An informative, short video was shown in the first part of the training to help explain sensory needs, functions and systems. Six stations were set up, each focusing on different sensory systems and challenges, i.e.: visual processing, auditory, physical impairments, proprioception, verbal communications and fine & gross motor functions. Tossing a bean bag into a bucket with compromised vision and altered depth perception proved difficult for most volunteers. Another activity was putting together a puzzle and threading a bead onto a pipe cleaner while wearing oversized work gloves to simulate difficulties with fine motor skills and planning as well as dexterity. There was a station that had headphones with coffee shop background noise while someone read you a story and then asked you questions about said story, most volunteers had a hard time focusing on the story and could not answer the questions, the ambient noise of a coffee shop was adequate distraction and auditory overload. The station representing visual impairments consisted of blindfolding yourself and feeling a shape made out of hot glue on a card and then finding the matching shape made of foam paper; this was no easy task for most.

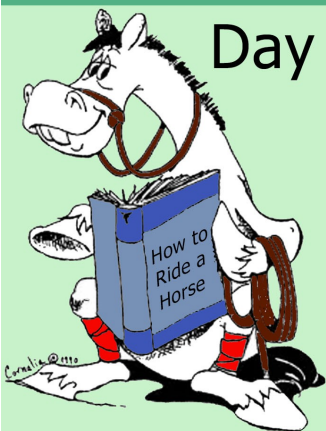
The idea behind the training was to give our volunteers an idea of what our students can experience when at the barn. Free Rein got great feedback and questions from this training and we will make it a requirement for all volunteers going forward. The Sensory Training will be held before each session and volunteers will be required to attend once a year.

Look for the next Sensory Training on the Free Rein calendar in the fall.



Ride On! Day Camp

Let the kids spend 1/2 days learning to ride and care for horses this summer!



Day Camp runs Monday to Friday, 9am - 12 pm
Ages 6-13 welcome \$400 each
10 Slots Available

August 3rd - 7th

- 🐾 Basic Riding Skills
- 🐾 Safe Horsemanship
- 🐾 Trail Rides
- 🐾 Games, Crafts and More!



Call Free Rein office to register (828) 883-3375

Be A Stable Supporter!

Free Rein Center is a qualified 501(c)(3) public charity. Gifts and donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by current tax law. Financial information about this organization and a copy of its license are available from the State Solicitation Licensing Branch at 919-814-5400.

We invite you to join our growing herd of Stable Supporters. Your monthly gift provides a sustainable foundation that directly supports our programs and those we serve.



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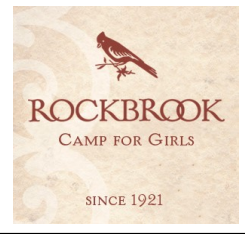
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