



# Nickers & News

2021 Midyear Issue



## MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

**Whew!!** Having successfully navigated the COVID pandemic of 2020 and having an outstanding, although scaled back Spring session, **whew** is all I can say! Beginning in January of this year, we continued to follow CDC and N.C. Department of Health and Human Services guidelines for controlling the spread of COVID-19. We wore masks, wiped down all hard services with disinfectant and practiced social distancing among staff and participants. I am pleased to report that not only did Free Rein not have a single COVID infection in 2020 but there have been none so far in 2021. Our students, staff and volunteers have remained safe from the virus.

I am so appreciative that our loyal donors and sponsors continued their generous support of the Free Rein mission and vision throughout this first half of 2021. Without this financial assistance, none of our successes would have been possible. Free Rein was also able to procure a second PPP grant from the Small Business Administration of the Federal

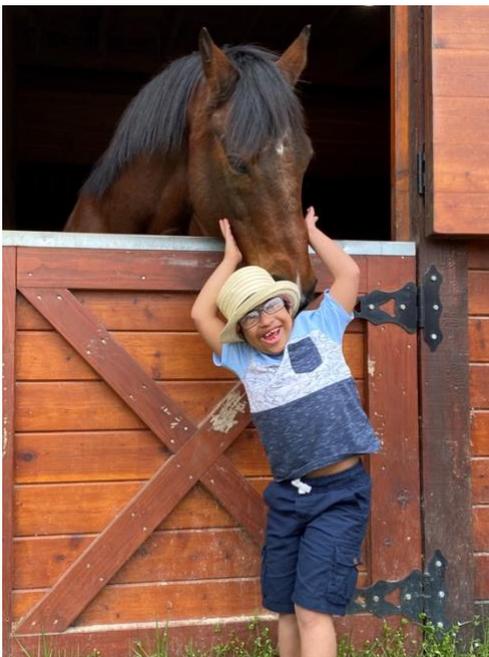
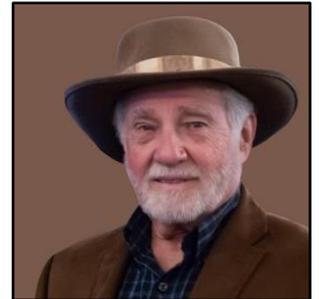
Government to help with our payroll obligations. We were able to maintain our usual level of staffing.

You will discover more in this newsletter about our new special projects and programs. Also, we will be restarting programs put on hold due to the pandemic.

Many of you may be asking if Free Rein is going to hold its annual gala, The Mane Event, this year at the Connestee Falls Clubhouse. We are tentatively scheduling it for October 16, 2021. We plan to hold the gala as long as we can meet CDC and State guidelines for safety. So, save the date and stay tuned!

Free Rein continues to be a viable asset in the community, working together with children, adults, sponsors and volunteers. We all promote our motto of "Horses Helping Humans Heal."

Peace to all and stay safe!  
Jerry Clouse



## Spring 2021

In spite of COVID 19 and the following of CDC guidelines we had a successful session. Thirty-one participants returned to the barn with anticipation and enthusiasm of having a full eight-week session. Each participant received a ribbon for attendance and progress throughout the session. In addition to our regular session, we began a collaboration with Skyterra where participants volunteered for barn chores. We are hoping to continue and grow this program in the Fall. A group of seven girl scouts completed equine education to include: horse safety, behavior, care, and the baseline riding skills on horseback. Each scout earned her horseback riding badge.

## A Change in the Free Rein Office

After serving Free Rein for over 12 years, **Jennifer Rouse** decided to retire, effective the first week in January. During those many years, “Jenn” held many positions, including Executive Director, Program Director and most recently, Office Manager. We will miss her friendly smile and engaging personality. We wish her the best in this new phase of her life.

A big thank-you also goes to **Jonathan Blum**, of Blum Consultants, for filling in as Office Manager during the period of recruitment for the position. Jonathan was “johnny on the spot” and helped us out during a busy time of year.

The new Free Rein Office Manager is **Roberta Brownlee** who comes to us from Indiana. Roberta holds a B.A. degree in Business Management from Indiana University and has extensive experience in banking relationships, inventory accounting and control, budgeting, non-profit management and project management. Roberta, her husband Gary and favorite canine, Mufasa love being retired and living in Transylvania County. She enthusiastically subscribes to the Free Rein Mission and Vision and we feel quite fortunate to have Roberta “managing the books.” Roberta can be reached by phone at 828-883-3375 or by email at [officemanager@freereincenter.com](mailto:officemanager@freereincenter.com).

Do you have professional experience in Sales, PR/marketing, Development, Grant Writing, or Journalism and would like to volunteer? Please contact us at [boardchair@freereincenter.com](mailto:boardchair@freereincenter.com).

## Saddle Up Project

Saddle Up

After various grant attempts, we successfully received funding from several loyal supporters to purchase three new saddles and restore billets for our equine instructor’s equipment. Dana Spark, from Saddles with Spark came to evaluate our current saddle inventory and check current

saddle fit to each horse, much like fitting a shoe to a human. As anticipated, since most of our saddles were 25 years old, they either needed major work or full replacement. Dana worked for two solid days restoring many saddles, replacing worn billets, and adjusting their fit to each horse by adding flocking to better fit the horses’ backs. We want to thank everyone who made this project possible. Now we know our horses will be able to perform comfortably at their best with the right equipment.



**Free Rein’s Mission** is to serve the community by strengthening the spirits, minds and bodies of children and adults through interaction with horses.

**Free Rein’s Vision** is to provide interactive horse-human experiences to an inclusive community which enrich life skills, promote personal well-being and build lasting relationships.

**Free Rein’s Values**  
We offer a positive experiential, collaborative environment that heals and cares for our community, participants and horses through mutual respect, positive atmosphere and personal growth.

## Volunteer of the Month

We are excited to tell you about a new program we have implemented this year! We have so many wonderful volunteers. Our Volunteer Appreciation Committee has decided to choose a Volunteer of the Month who is someone who goes above and beyond to help Free Rein. The volunteers are featured on social media, Free Rein's website, and the volunteer of the month bulletin board.



*Eric Schwabler*



*Greg & Judy McCathern*



*Richard Evans*



*Chuck Coomer with Monty*



*Rich & Wendy Warwick*

## Fall 2021

We are hoping for a full session, including school groups, ground school programs and grooming activities. In order to serve our participants on our waiting list and to incorporate new programs our 8-week traditional therapeutic riding program will be a 6-week session. At the end of the 6-week session, we will offer a secondary fall session of 4 weeks to individuals on our waiting list. These new programs will serve other community groups such as Skyterra, Silver Saddles and Wounded Warriors.

### Free Rein Staff

Brittany McCathern, Program Director  
Roberta Brownlee, Office Manager  
Kara McCarson, PATH Instructor  
Mary Stoehr, PATH Instructor  
Toni Garrett, PATH Instructor  
Makenna Holden, Horse Care Coordinator  
Katie Franks, Assistant Horse Care Coordinator

### 2021 Board of Directors

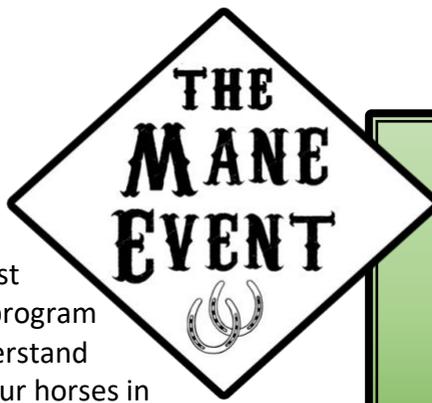
Jerry Clouse, Board Chair  
Susan Kish, Secretary  
Andy Bullwinkel  
Sharad Creasman  
Linda Felderhoff  
Debi Garrett  
Jim Garrett  
Carter Heyward  
Donna Hunter  
Porsha Smith  
Denise Stretcher  
Cindy Wilson

## HEROS Program

Helping Equines Reconnect Our Spirits

### Horse Adoption Program:

Since developing the HEROS Program in 2020, we have had various individuals contribute to this wonderful program. Most of our HEROS are already invested in the program and our four legged instructors. They understand how much love and care it takes to keep our horses in optimal working conditions and have decided to donate to the program specifically by offsetting our annual horse care cost, which is about \$38,000. Since the start of the program, approximately 15 individuals or couples have adopted one or more of our horses. These individuals or couples have either used this program as a gift for a family member or fell in love with one of our horses. What better way to "adopt" a horse and help offset the cost for a great cause, while letting someone else do the hard work of the upkeep!!



## Save the Date!

Saturday, October 16, 2021

Free Rein will be celebrating  
20 years of service at  
The Mane Event in the fall of 2021.  
Hope you can join us!

## College Walk

(Excerpts from *The Transylvania Times*)

Many of us are tired of being cooped up with weather and with COVID-19 restrictions.

This includes two of Free Rein's horses, Zoey and Toby. They love to make folks smile so they asked if they could go somewhere outside and meet people.

Free Rein listened and contacted Valerie Tilson at College Walk to see if Zoey and Toby could visit.

On Tuesday, April 6, both ponies were made to look their best and get close and personal with College Walk residents.

Since 2000, Free Rein has offered its services to over 500 children and adults, with the assistance of over 1,000 volunteers, using over 60 horses.

Those services, horse care and equipment, and space all come at a cost.

A reasonable estimate of the total cost of a lesson with services, care, equipment, staff and space (provided at Rockbrook Camp since 2011), is over \$150 per hour lesson.

Fees are charged to clients but most are on scholarship (assessed on a sliding scale). Most of Free Rein's fundraising goes toward program costs, and no one is turned away because of the inability to pay. The "life blood" at Free Rein is volunteers.

Most of the work is done by more than 80 volunteers. Many serve as side walkers, barn helpers, board members, horse leaders, event planners and through two newer volunteer programs: HEROS and sponsorship.

The herd consists of hardworking equines that change lives one hoof beat at a time. They require a considerable amount of love and care to keep them in optimal working condition to best serve participants.

For further information about programming or volunteering, call (828) 883-3375; visit the website, <http://www.freereincenter.org> or look for us on Facebook.



Thank you to Gloria Clouse for providing photos for this article.

# Spring Happenings

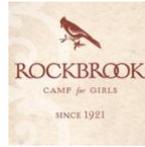


Path Int'l (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International) is a federally registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit, formed in 1969 to promote safety and optimal outcomes in equine-assisted activities and therapies for individuals with special needs. Free Rein has been a PATH Certified Center since 2001.

Free Rein Center for Therapeutic Riding and Education – P.O. Box 1325 – Brevard, NC 28712 – (828)883-3375 – [FreeReinCenter.org](http://FreeReinCenter.org)

Thank you to all our sponsors and donors for supporting Free Rein.  
Without you we could not do the work of changing lives, one hoof beat at a time.

Diamond Level



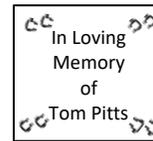
Platinum Level



Gold Level



Silver Level



Copper Level

