



Annual Report

December 2021



Isabel Carter Heyward Director Emeritus

Free Rein began in the spring of 2000, with conversations between Carter Heyward, her partner, Sue, and several neighbors wishing to start a therapeutic riding center in a small stable on See Off Mountain. Carter was in the process of retiring as a theology professor and as an Episcopal priest. She was and is a lover of animals, especially horses. Her interest was in how horses might help humans heal. For her, it seemed a logical extension of her spiritual, educational and therapeutic endeavors.

She found a therapeutic riding center, Mountin'Hope, in Madison County. Their personnel generously encouraged Carter and her friends to set up a new center in Brevard. The stable was bought – Stables of Las Praderas – a Board was developed, a suitable horse found, and a talented instructor hired. The first client was an eight-year-old girl on the autism spectrum. Carter served as the horse leader and remembers to this day the extraordinary experience.

During the first years and many years following, Carter worked with the Board on developing programming, registering Free Rein as a non-profit, finding horses, and instructors and volunteers to work in the program. She also immersed herself in mucking stalls, ordering hay and teaching lessons. Carter wrote grants and spoke everywhere she could about the wonderful opportunities for clients and volunteers at Free Rein Therapeutic Riding Center. She continued to serve on the Board for the next



two decades. Recently, Carter has asked to step away from the “day to day” Board involvement in order to be able to explore some new experiences.

Carter states, “Involvement in Free Rein was an experience I’ll always treasure as one of the most remarkable adventures of my life. Thank you, Free Rein.”

In response to Carter’s wishes, the Board of Free Rein has approved conferring the honor of Director Emeritus to Isabel Carter Heyward. Conferring this honor shall be considered a rare event in which the following attributes are to be considered: Was this person instrumental in Free Rein’s existence? Has this person created a lasting legacy and has made contributions that others should aspire to meet? Has this person served the Free Rein Board of Directors with distinction and held important leadership roles?

The answer to these and all of the qualifications for the position of Director Emeritus for Isabel Carter Heyward is a resounding YES! So, Carter, it is time for Free Rein to THANK YOU for your inspiration and tremendous effort through these past twenty years. We all know you aren’t far away and will always be involved with “your baby” in some form. We are grateful for that.

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.

A Look Into the Action!

Happy trails again, when Free Rein opened for classes on March 1, 2021. Due to COVID restrictions, Spring Session was limited to 31 participants all requiring minimal assistance. Free Rein also partnered with Skyterra to train 8 volunteers to participate in horse care and barn chore duties. We will continue to partner and expand this new equine assisted learning program.

The week of September 13, 2021, began our Fall Session consisting of one, six-week session, totaling 91 participants and an additional four-week session, totaling 25 participants, thus allowing for development of new programs and accommodating participants on the existing waiting list. Fall session one, welcomed back the exceptional children school groups, groomers, ground activities, and individual riders. A new program, Horse



Sense, began with four participants from Davidson River Alternative School. The program focuses on horse behavior and herd dynamics, proper horse interaction, equine care, and proper mounting and dismounting techniques. It also provides opportunities to participate in team building activities, through the interaction with horses.

Free Rein also partnered with Aspire Youth & Family, Inc., providing volunteer opportunities to meet the needs of community service requirements of the juvenile court systems.

Volunteer Spotlight Program

We are excited to tell you about a new program we're implementing this year! We have so many wonderful volunteers that our Volunteer Appreciation Committee has decided to choose a Volunteer of the Month! Someone that goes above and beyond to help Free Rein.



Our choice for **January** is the Dynamic Duo, **Greg and Judy McCathern!** After a full day working at their real jobs, they faithfully come to the barn to feed, groom, muck stalls, fill hay bags, turn the horses out to pasture and whatever else needs to be done, no matter the weather. Even when they have a day off from work during the week, they are always helping at the barn! They help unload hay bales every time we have a delivery. They help the instructors empty out the arena on several Friday evenings after lessons were over. Greg is also a Horse Leader. He also does maintenance on the Mule, the one with 4 tires not 4 legs, and he helps haul horses when they need to be moved. Judy helps in the office on Fridays. She hand cut every logo for the Heroes Program and ironed them on all of the saddle pads. She also helped Brittany make the new sponsor boards that hang on the arena wall. As you can see, Greg and Judy are well deserving of our first Volunteer of the Month Award! Thank you both for your dedication and for continuing to be an incredible example of giving your time and talents to Free Rein! We are so grateful for you both!

Many thanks to Gloria Clouse for her contribution of time and talent by providing photography to Free Rein.



FROM THE FREE REIN BOARD CHAIR

My Father was a quiet uncomplicated man who taught me the meaning of kindness, honesty and the merits of hard work. He had a favorite saying that I came to appreciate later in life when things got tough. He would say, "Now, don't worry Jerry, the sun will still come up tomorrow!" I have frequently recalled those early days, especially during the recent COVID-19 crisis. The late Helen Keller had a similar quote. It goes like this..... "Keep your face to the sunshine and you will not see the shadows." I like that one too!

I am pleased to report that Free Rein is beginning to see more sunshine instead of shadows. Thanks to the dogged determination of board members, staff, our treasured community volunteers and loyal donors, Free Rein is on the road to recovery. Additionally, after almost two years of the pandemic threatening our operations and sustainability, I am proud to report that there have been no signs of the coronavirus invading the Free Rein operation. Our staff, volunteers and participants followed the COVID protocol precisely and deserve much credit.

We began our full slate of services in the fall, serving a total of 147 participants for the year. Some of our long term volunteers were reluctant to return at that time so we had to recruit and train others. Without dedicated volunteers Free Rein has no meaningful program. We were able to recruit and train 21 new folks which brought our total volunteer count to a total of 76. Thankfully, some of those newly trained volunteers came from the ranks of

staff and board members. These dedicated people discovered they could work extra hours, be trained to groom horses and function as horse leaders and side walkers. I could not be more proud of this

entire group. There is real meaning in our motto of "Horses Helping Humans Heal." I witnessed a true level of love and caring between humans and horses that cannot be adequately explained, other than to say it was awesome!

A quote from Gever Tulley, an American writer, educator and entrepreneur says, "Persistence and resilience only come from having been given the chance to work through difficult problems." I think this clearly describes the Free Rein journey over the past two years. We still have our challenges such as significant price increases in feed and horse care supplies which we are trying to address through our "Feed the Herd" donation campaign. In spite of this, things are looking up significantly for 2022 and we are excited to begin new programs and expand some of our regular programing.

IT IS SO WONDERFUL TO SEE THE SUN!!
Jerry



2021 Board of Directors

Jerry Clouse, *Board Chair*
Andy Bullwinkel, *Vice-Chair*
Susan Kish, *Secretary*
Jim Garrett, *Treasurer*
Rev. Sharad Creasman
Linda Felderhoff
Debi Garrett
Donna Hunter
Porsha Smith
Denise Stretcher
Cindy Wilson

Carter Heyward, *Director Emeritus*

Free Rein Staff

Brittany McCathern, *Program Director*
Roberta Brownlee, *Office Manager*
Megan Johnson,
Horse Care Coordinator
Toni Garrett, *Volunteer Coordinator*

Instructors

Toni Garrett
Kara McCarson
Mary Stoehr



Volunteer Coordinator Position

In the fall of 2021, Free Rein welcomed a familiar face to handle responsibilities as our Volunteer Coordinator. **Toni Garrett** has assisted in various roles during her time at Free Rein. She began her journey as a volunteer in 2015 and from there her passion grew to becoming a certified instructor in February of 2020. Since Toni has been in the shoes of many of these volunteers and developed relationships with the individuals, we knew she would be the perfect person for the job.

As the Volunteer Coordinator, she is responsible for overseeing all volunteer activities such as recruitment, training, and placement of volunteers in different roles based on their qualifications. She arranges all the details of volunteering and keeps all parties informed. Toni also goes above and beyond to make sure that our volunteers feel appreciated! Please join us as we welcome Toni to this new position.

Horse Care Coordinators – Megan and Makenna

Megan Johnson has been working with and riding horses for about ten years. She earned an A.A.S degree in Equine Training from Martin Community College. Her first contact with the Free Rein program was through her employment with Rockbrook Camp during the summer of 2019 after her college graduation. Megan was excited this past summer of 2021, to return to work at Rockbrook Camp with the horses and the people who she had grown close with during her time as Riding instructor at the Camp. She is now a part of Free Rein's family; looks forward to getting to know the volunteers and helping to provide our participants with a therapeutic riding experience



Makenna Holden describes her time working at Free Rein as an adventure. Her involvement with not only a client but their family as well with dedicated volunteers and horses has had a great impact on her life. She feels her work at Free Rein was therapeutic for her as well as for the clients. Her employment with Free Rein gave her a chance to engage professionally with others as a leader. She understands also when it is important to learn from others. She appreciated watching how the volunteers would make sure the horses and riders felt safe, cared for and ensured that both were having a good time. Makenna is leaving Free Rein for the military and feels that her time with Free Rein has prepared her well for her future. She will certainly be missed by staff, volunteers, clients, and the horses.

Our **Volunteer of the Month for February** is **Chuck Coomer**. When we think of Chuck, we have to smile, because he is the most personable and friendly volunteer we have at Free Rein! He always shows up with a smile come rain or shine. Chuck started volunteering in August of 2019. He is faithfully out here 4 days a week. He begins at the upper barn mucking stalls and sweeping. When needed, he takes the 3 finicky horses on their potty walks. Then he makes his way down to the lower barn and cleans the stalls there. He also does daily water trough filling and weekly water trough dumping, scrubbing and filling. With his bubbly personality, he is great with the students and they just love him! We are so thankful for all that you do and especially for the wonderful stories that you share with us!





Mr. Pumpkin Retires

Congratulations, Mr. Pumpkin, on your retirement! Mr. Pumpkin, in his early life, began as an Amish work horse. In 2004, he was bought for Free Rein at an auction. We all were lucky that Sue Sasser and Carter Heyward were willing to look past his skin imperfections and take a chance on him.

To this day, his most enjoyable activity is pulling a cart. He has been used as a camp pony serving every level of rider. He is especially happy when involved in lessons. That enthusiasm and his personality made him a chief

therapy pony over the years he has served as a four legged instructor. With his sturdy build he has assisted a variety of participants. Mr. Pumpkin has journeyed throughout the different locations of the Free Rein program including Las Praderas, Barkley Road, the Pony Club in Etowah, and currently at Rockbrook Camp.

Some may ask what he will be doing now?? Naturally, since he is such a key part of this program, he will be found in the barn or out in the pasture. He will continue to teach participants how to groom and serve as Free Rein's ambassador.

Thank you, Mr. Pumpkin from all of the participants you have served and volunteers you have trained over the years.



Our choice for **March Volunteer of the Month** is another pair, **Rich and Wendy Warwick!** This is another couple that has gone above and beyond for Free Rein for the last several years. Their exceptional dedication to helping in any way we need shows through in their many hours spent in lessons, Rich as a Horse Leader and Wendy as a Side Walker, stacking hay, early morning and afternoon hand walking, building arenas, moving ramps, fixing whatever needs it, and every aspect of barn work. Rich always makes sure that we have proper drainage in the barns. They always make new volunteers feel welcome and take them under their wings, making sure they understand how everything is done. Thank you, Rich and Wendy for everything that you both do! We truly appreciate all of your hard work and your wonderful attitude while doing it!

A Look into The Rider's View – Deb Bridges

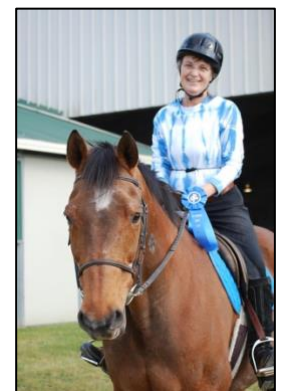
Riding is the one thing that makes me forget about the challenges of multiple sclerosis (MS). When I'm at the barn and engaged in my routine of grooming, tacking, and having my lesson with Brittany, I'm not a handicapped individual with MS; instead, I am an equestrian.

Twenty years ago, when I first began therapeutic riding, I had to use a walker to get around. My left leg and foot were numb, and my sense of balance was severely compromised. Therapeutic riding enabled me to shift my sense of balance to my core instead of my feet and legs. Within a couple of years, I wasn't using my walker anymore.

Also, the quality of my life and my self-confidence improved tremendously as I continued to ride independently; and even more so as I established deep, healing relationships with some truly amazing horses.

Brittany is an exceptional coach and instructor. I especially appreciate that she supports my equestrian and horsemanship goals yet understands my physical challenges and limitations. During this past year, I believe my riding skills and my physical strength have improved significantly; and that makes me feel more empowered against the progressive and unpredictable nature of MS.

I am deeply grateful for Free Rein, for Brittany, the staff and volunteers, for those who support the center financially, and especially for...my big buddy Moe. *(Photo: Me and Woody at my first competition at St. Andrews)*





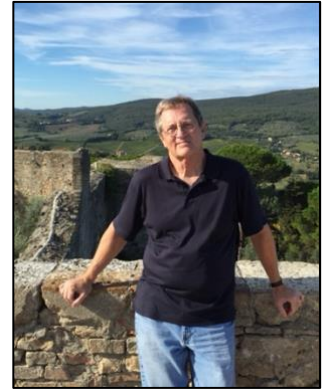
Our **Volunteers of the Month** for **April** and **May** are **Richard Evans** and **Eric Schwalber**. Richard and Eric are the “Dream Team” and two of the most dedicated volunteers who are always looking for ways to help us out. Their “can-do” personalities make them easy to work with and they are willing to do what needs to get done.

Richard may be more of a behind the scenes volunteer but we certainly couldn’t do what we do without with him.

Meanwhile, Eric is one of our off-season volunteers. While he’s not taking care of his daughter’s horse, he can be found in the barn doing chores but also occasionally

subbing in lessons as a horse leader.

Thank you, Richard and Eric, for all you do!



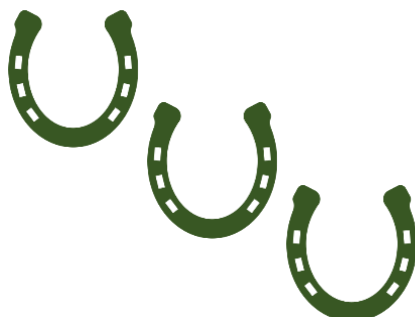
Our **Volunteer of the Month** for **June** is **Jerry Clouse**. Jerry has been a part of Free Rein for years. He started out doing barn chores and then stepped into the role of Board Chair. His sole mission is to see Free Rein thrive and grow. Even as acting Board Chair, he can still be found in the barn cleaning stalls, scrubbing feed and water buckets and filling hay bags. Jerry also likes to bond with the horses that aren’t in our program yet since they don’t get a lot of attention from other volunteers so they feel included and loved.



Our **Volunteers of the Month** for **July** are **Linda “Mac” McGuffin** and **Debi Garrett**. Mac and Debi have been a part of Free Rein since 2019. While they both side walk in lessons, Debi comes out during the day and helps us make sure stalls and individual paddocks stay clean. Debi has recently joined the Board of Free Rein.

Mac stepped up and was a huge help to us running our student check-ins since Covid started and helping with barn chores on Thursday mornings.

Thanks to you both for all you do!





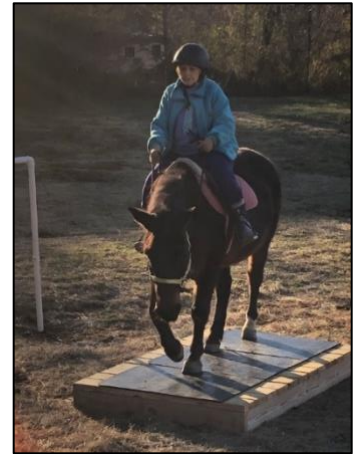
August Volunteer of the Month, Karen Shank, has been with us since 2012. Not only has she watched our program grow but she has been a huge part of that growth by horse leading and side walking in lessons. She continues to make sure that we always have enough help whether it be for lessons or barn chores. She is always willing to substitute in a lesson or come in if someone is unable to come. Karen loves working with our TVS students and has formed a special bond with so many of them. She also enjoys making sure our horses stay happy and healthy by grooming them and she is the first one to volunteer if any of them need a bath. We're not sure how we would function if we didn't have Karen to keep us in line.

Our **Volunteers of the Month** for **September** are **Linda Felderhoff** and **Janet Pierce**.



Linda has been with us since 2017. As a horse leader, Linda has gotten the chance to work with all of our horses and a huge majority of student population. Her favorite is our TVS program and, because lessons just weren't enough, she was selected to serve on Free Rein's Board of Directors a couple of years ago. She is very welcoming of new volunteers and always willing to show them around and help them learn the ropes during lessons. Linda also helps out a few mornings a week with barn chores which include bringing horses in, feeding, throwing hay (in the winter months), grooming, cleaning stalls and just overall making sure everyone looks ok. She wears many hats around here and we wouldn't be able to do what we do without her. Thank you, Linda!

Janet has been with us since 2013 and we have loved every minute of having her. She started in lessons as a horse leader, but when she heard we needed help with barn chores, she was all over it! Eventually, she had to drop out of lessons but is still a faithful barn volunteer and is always checking in with us to see how the horses are doing or if there is anything she can do to help. Janet has a bright, bubbly personality and is always willing to help new volunteers learn the flow of barn chores. She also enjoys helping us shut down for summer and get the horses and the barn cleaned up. We haven't seen her much because of COVID but we know she was always with us in spirit and we are looking forward to having her here in person again, though she might argue we aren't as excited as she is. Thanks for all you have done and continue to do Janet!



Our **Volunteer of the Month** for **October** is **Bob Euneman**.

Bob started volunteering at Free Rein in 2016 and has been a permanent fixture ever since. Not only does he volunteer in a magnitude of lessons each week, he signs up to sub in countless other lessons. He is always a smiling face around the barn and greets everyone with an enthusiastic hello. As a horse leader, Bob has gotten to work with just about all of the different programs we offer. He enjoys grooming the horses and spending time with them before the lessons begin and is always quick to help new volunteers out by showing them around, introducing them to the horses and helping them learn the flow of the lessons. Bob certainly makes our days brighter and we couldn't do what we do without him to help us along. Thanks for all you do, Bob!

Our **Volunteers of the Month** for **November** are **Leta McDonald and Lorraine Rourke**. Leta started volunteering at Free Rein in 2018 and jumped in with both feet. She enjoys working with all of our students, especially our school groups, and all of our horses, but Skip made his way to a special place in her heart. While she wasn't able to be here for most of our first fall session, when she was back in town she would be available and was always willing to sub whenever she could. Leta has permanently filled several of our lesson slots for our second fall session and we are so happy she is now here full time. Thank you, Leta!



Lorraine started volunteering with Free Rein in 2013. She is always finding something to do around the barn every time she comes in whether its grooming horses, cleaning tack, or picking through stalls. Lorraine enjoys working with all of our students but she particularly enjoys the private lessons and getting to form a bond with those students one on one. Although she had several permanent positions in our first fall session, Lorraine couldn't help herself and picked up several sub positions as well. Now it is about time for her to head back south and we are always so sad to see her go but look forward to seeing her return in the spring. Thank you for everything you do, Lorraine!



Our choice for **December Volunteer of the Month** is another pair, **Bunny and Jim Goar!** This is another couple that has gone above and beyond for Free Rein for the last several years. Their exceptional dedication to helping in any way we need shows through their willingness to fit Free Rein into their busy schedule not only volunteering once weekly on a regular basis, but being willing to sub whenever they are available. Bunny is a Horse Leader and Jim is a Side Walker. While volunteering with Free Rein since 2017, Bunny has worked with various horses. The horse she enjoys working with most is Skip! Bunny and Jim are very personable and tend to develop individualized relationships with each of the participants and always make sure that each get the best experience while at Free Rein. Thank you Bunny and Jim for everything that you both do! We truly appreciate all of your hard work and your wonderful attitude while doing it!



**THE
MANE
EVENT**



Save the Date!

Saturday, May 21, 2022

Free Rein will be celebrating
22 years of service at
The Mane Event in the spring of
2022. Hope you can join us!

HERO's Program 2021

Helping Equines Reconnect Our Spirits

1 Year HEROS

Debi and Scott Garrett are proud HEROS of Zip

KLF Wood Designs are proud HEROS of Monty

Gina Skelton is a proud HERO of Moe

Harvest and Isaac Brownlee are proud HEROS of Olaf

Mac McGuffin is a proud HERO of Mr. Pumpkin

Rahn McCrady is a proud HERO of Tonka

Susan Kish is a proud HERO of Dakota

3 Months HEROS

Adena is a proud HERO of Rosie

Elizabeth Colston is a proud HERO of Olaf

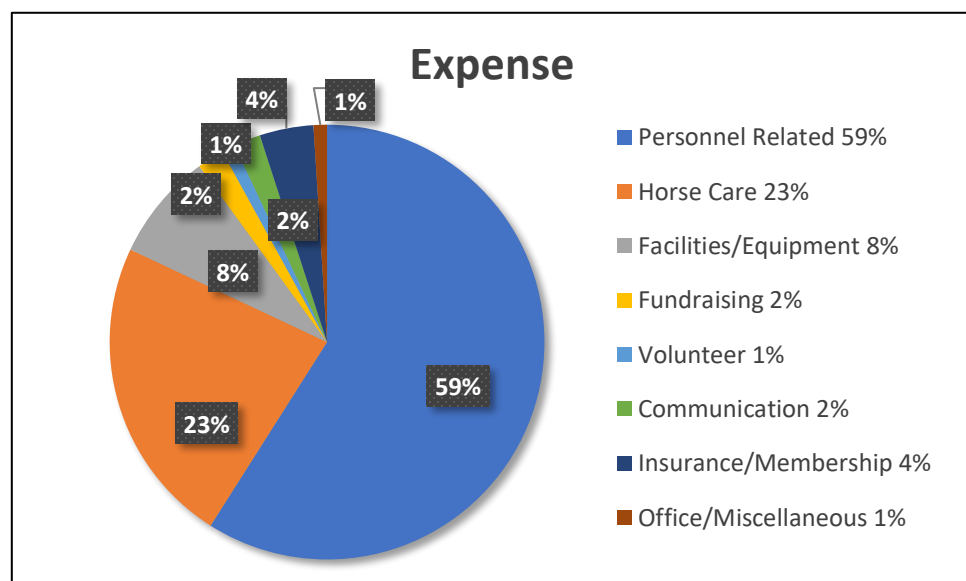
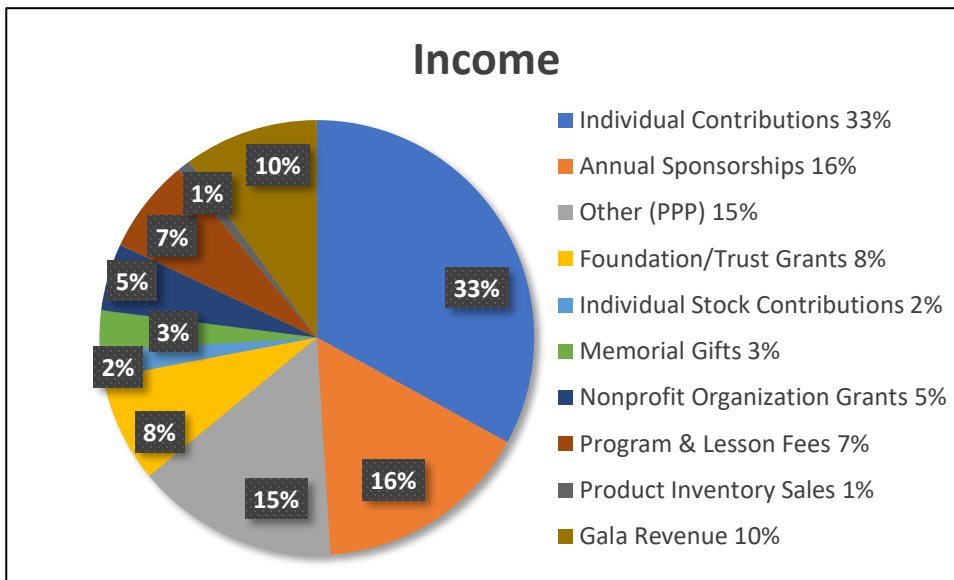
Molly Wolfe is a proud HERO of Skip



Financial Reports – 2021 ANNUAL BUDGET

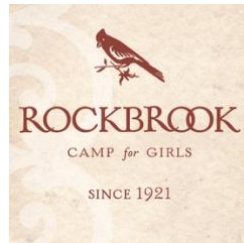
This year, 2021, has been a challenging but rewarding one. Even though we only had a limited number of students in our Spring Session and had to cancel our biggest fundraising event, The Mane Event Gala, we were able to meet all of our financial obligations. This was due to the hundreds of generous contributions from our community of sponsors, volunteers, donors and parents. We also received several small and medium grants from private foundations, community foundations, service clubs and family foundations. The continued support and partnership from Rockbrook Camp, providing space for our programs, is greatly appreciated.

The accompanying charts show our 2021 income and expense distribution.

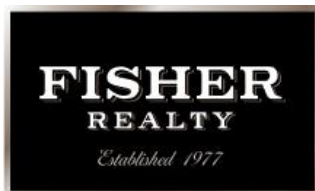


Thank you to all our sponsors and donors for supporting Free Rein.
Without you we could not do the work of changing lives, one hoof beat at a time.

Diamond Level



Platinum Level



Gold Level



Our Valuable Donors

Lisa Patty Abbey
 Sadira Ackermann
 Betsy Alexander
 Amazon Smile
 Elizabeth Annable
 Mary & Steven Arnaud
 Karla Atkinson
 Gerry Azzata
 Sharon Hill Bagley
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 Elinor Harris
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 Ladson & Jean Hart
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 Laura Hawkins
 Rolanda Hayden
 Henderson County Bar
 Association
 Jennifer & Ray Henley
 Carter Heyward
 Pamela & Jimmy Hill
 J.W. & Frances Hillhouse
 Frances Hines
 Hines Family
 Charitable Fund
 Andrew & Trisha Hogan
 Jeff Holland
 Janet Howser
 Dave & Donna Hunter
 Hunter Power Sports
 Elisabeth Ilg-Reyes
 Cheryl Inghram
 David Jellinek
 Clint Jergensen
 Phillip & Patrice Jergensen
 Richard Jones
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 Nonprofits
 Betty Kendrick
 Jane Kimball
 Larry & Lynn Klein
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 Lake Toxaway Charities
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 Brittany Lincoln

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 Austin McCall
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 Ysleta & Victor McDonald
 Paula McKeller
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 Metcalf Compounding
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 Judith Roberts
 Rogow Family Fund
 Colleen Rose
 Leah Rosenheck
 Judith Rossner
 Holly Rouse
 Jennifer Rouse
 Wendy Rudd
 Robert & Jeanne Rupp

Shawn Rupp
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 Sherwood Forest Woman's
 Workshop
 Jacqueline Shulman
 Richard Shulman
 Nathan Siniard
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 Priscilla & Kenneth Yeager

Path Int'l (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International) is a federally registered 501(c3) 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