



Nickers & News

Summer 2023 Issue



Message from the Chair

Susan Kish, Board Chair, Free Rein Center

Happy Summer! For me, it is hard to believe I have been Chair of the Free Rein Center Board for one year. Time really does fly when you are having fun! This year has been fun and a lot of hard work but I would not trade it for the world. In fact, I liked it so much I have agreed to stay on as Chair another year.

As with all organizations and perhaps life in general, the only thing that remains constant is change. We have seen many changes in the last six months since our year end publication of Nickers. Some have been sad changes; some have been happy and most have been challenging. What I am most gratified by is how the people of Free Rein stepped up to the challenge and found opportunity in it.

A personnel change in the barn when Megan Johnson decided to explore her career dream was handled beautifully by Parker Moore, Isaiah Glance, and many barn volunteers who pitched in extra time and effort to get us "over the hump". Under Brittany McCathern's watchful supervision, the horses and stalls continued to be well cared for.

Speaking of volunteers, Free Rein has always been fortunate to have the very best volunteers. Those familiar faces are a joy to see when I walk across campus. But we do get new folks interested in serving Free Rein and it is a sign of our organization's health that these new people are welcomed and helped to learn the procedures, equipment, and the personalities of our equine partners by our "regulars".

The introduction of new treatment methods and new equipment can drastically change the operation of an organization for better or worse. In reviewing our equipment, Brittany and the Board felt much of it was outdated and Free Rein lacked equipment that would be helpful to many of our physically challenged

clients. A grant was written and funded for approximately \$10,000 of new equipment. Some was replacement but much was brand new to staff and volunteers. It took some training and cooperation to achieve competency. There is a section in this Nickers describing some of this new equipment and its purpose. Again, a change turning into an opportunity.

On a more personal level for those of us here at Free Rein, we have had some sad losses. Our two precious cats, Scarlett and Sally, are now hopefully playing together over the Rainbow Bridge. It is hard not seeing them greet everyone on the porch. Oz left earlier this Spring to return to his owner to begin a new chapter in his life and Dakota left this May to return to his previous owner from years ago. He will be living the good life in Eastern NC eating grass in a pasture.

But we have also had some wonderful new changes. Phoebe Buffay, our PATH trained mini-horse, has turned out to be a spectacular addition. She has started visiting senior facilities with Zoey and both are a hit. Two other new horses, Raven, and Big Quiet, have just arrived and both look like they will fit into the herd beautifully and provide gentle temperaments while being excellent walk, trot, and canter horses.

These changes, all challenging, have shown Free Rein Center to be a healthy, growing organization. It is certainly an environment where success is celebrated frequently. One thing that has not and will not change is our mission: To serve the community by strengthening the spirits, minds, and bodies of children and adults through interaction with horses.



Spring 2023

The week of February 20, 2023, kicked off our Spring Session consisting of one six-week session, totaling 100 participants and an additional four-week session, with 37 participants. These sessions allowed for the development of new programming and the accommodation of participants on the existing waiting list.

Free Rein introduced Phoebe Buffay in December, allowing us to expand our current ground school programs and branch out into the community with our Little Hooves Touching Hearts Program.

In addition to our existing Ground School Programs, we had our first time Big Brothers and Big Sisters partnership, which proved to be success and we plan to continue in the future. This program addresses high risk participants in our Community. Our Horse Sense Program from Davidson River Alternative School has continued to grow. We have had returning students who continue to progress throughout their horsemanship skill levels. The first Spring session welcomed back the exceptional children school groups, groomers, ground activities, and individual riders. Free Rein was excited to welcome Project Odyssey for our Veterans.

Free Rein Staff

Brittany McCathern, Program Director

Roberta Brownlee, Office Manager

Kara McCarson, PATH Instructor

Toni Garrett, PATH Instructor

Mary Stoehr, PATH Instructor

Parker Moore,

Horse Care Coordinator



Scarlett

The official greeter. The overseer. The know it all. The boss.

Scarlett was a staple around Rockbrook and Free Rein since the late 2000's and her watchful eyes have kept "her" barn running smoothly and efficiently ever since. She was the first to meet people at the gate, and, once she got comfortable with you and knew you, at the car door in the parking lot. In true Torti fashion, she always had to have the last word and made sure to let people know when something wasn't done to her standards.

There was a true regalness to her and her beautiful color combinations and gorgeous green eyes were matched with an even more beautiful soul that crossed the Rainbow Bridge.

Scarlett, that barn will forever be yours and we can only hope to keep up to your standards. Rest easy, beautiful girl. You are already missed beyond measure. It has been an honor and a privilege to know, love and work beside you all these years.

Sally

It's amazing how fast things can change and life as we know it can change.

We said goodbye to Scarlett and seven weeks later we had to say goodbye to Sally. For the last decade, she's been a constant at Free Rein as Scarlett's faithful sidekick and a champion mouser. Or birder. Her "gifts" were never in short supply around the barn.

In typical cat fashion, she made her likes and dislikes known from the very beginning. Pet her on her terms, don't even think of giving her soft cat treats, and don't you dare try to make her stay inside. She didn't like just anyone and if you were lucky enough to make it into her inner circle, well, you were lucky enough. She's wasn't the people cat that Scarlett was so if she willingly let you pick her up, hold her, or pet her on more than one occasion, you knew you were special.

Sallygirl, the last decade of knowing and loving you has been a pleasure. We will all miss your presence around the barn. Rest easy, sweetheart.



Meet the Herd



Phoebe Buffay was born and raised in Green Bay, WI. Then she went to a family nearby to be a horse for the family.

After being a pasture pet, Phoebe Buffay was purchased by Jacleen Hess in July of 2022. Phoebe began the journey to specifically train to partner with people to provide equine assisted services. She continued to train at Hess Horsemanship who prepared her to become a part of a PATH program. In December of 2022, Phoebe Buffay made the journey across the country to become a part of our Free Rein herd.

We are really looking forward to getting out in the community with Phoebe, allowing her to impact many people's lives.

Raven, a quarter horse gelding, was owned by Ms. Disney for 15 years of his life in Wyoming. He is a bona fide cow horse. He is, what some would say, a real cowboy or cowgirl's horse! He was used on the farm to help work cattle. Some of the tasks may have included but was not limited to: roping, cutting cattle, helping the farmers brand, work, and vaccinate their cattle. One might say he does it all! He is a true black unicorn. "I have ridden across thousands of acres looking through those ears", states Ms. Disney.

In May of 2023, Raven joined our Free Rein herd. His previous owner reached out and thought with his great size and temperament he would be a wonderful addition as one of our equine instructors. We are so excited for him to be a part of our program in the Fall of 2023.



Big Quiet, a thoroughbred gelding, joined the Rockbrook herd in May of 2023. He is an ex-eventing horse. He lived the last 7 years of his life at Clearview Farm, where he showed at local level up competitions to 2'9" children hunters.

Clearview decided Quiet was ready for this next chapter of his life. We look forward to Quiet joining our herd, teaching our more independent riders how to ride. With his calm laid back personality, he has the perfect attitude to teach upcoming equestrians how to improve their riding techniques.

Happy Trails!

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.

Little Hooves Touching Hearts

Free Rein Center for Therapeutic Riding and Education recently took two of their smallest equine partners for visits to three community facilities: The Bridge at Lake Pointe Landing and Fletcher Park Inn Retirement Center (both in Hendersonville) and College Walk Retirement Community in Brevard.

Zoey, a Welsh Pony Cross that is 15 years old and a Tri Colored Paint, joined the Free Rein herd in 2019.

Since then she has been involved in helping participants gain skills in the therapeutic program. She has also made many community visits and loves the attention.

Recently Zoey has been joined by Free Rein's newest and smallest addition, Phoebe Buffay. Phoebe comes from Wisconsin where she was trained in PATH (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship) skills. Phoebe is a Miniature Horse that is 3 years old.

She is a Red Roan and 33 inches high. Phoebe's acquisition, funded entirely by volunteer donations, has proven to be a very popular representative of Free Rein during her visits to the elder care communities.



Phoebe Buffay and Program Director, Brittany McCathern visiting College Walk Retirement Center.



Zoey visiting Fletcher Park

In addition to helping Free Rein create a higher level of community awareness of its mission, Phoebe will be used in ground work and cart riding activities for those clients unable to ride full-size horses.

Chris Fisher, activity director for the Bridge at Lake Pointe Landing, summed their resident's visit with Zoey and Phoebe by stating:

"Our residents and associates absolutely loved the visit from Phoebe and Zoey. It was heartwarming to watch the residents' pet and brush the horses. Your staff was wonderful and were very well informed to answer any questions that our residents and associates had about the horses. The visit from the horses made for a very fun-filled afternoon for everyone here at The Bridge at Lake Pointe Landing and we are looking forward to many more visits to come."

After Free Rein's visit to College Walk Retirement Center, Recreation Director Valerie Tilson sent this message: "This is one of the best programs I have ever seen. Our residents, family members and staff enjoyed being able to interact with Phoebe and Zoey. The smiles, laughter and pure joy on everyone's faces absolutely touched my heart. The name really says it all: *Horses Helping Humans Heal*. Many of our staff were touched watching the residents and wanted to cry especially when they were

kissing the horses as well as petting them. It was the pure joy on their faces (and staff) that broke my heart in a good way. One resident who just turned 101 was really having a good time. What you all are doing is something very special and amazing. "

Founded in 2000, Free Rein is celebrating its 23rd anniversary this year. Free Rein is a charitable 501©(3) organization.

The center is the only accredited therapeutic riding center in Transylvania, Buncombe and Henderson counties.

Free Rein's programs use the human-horse connection as the therapeutic agent while working with diverse groups ranging in age from childhood to senior citizen status.

Organizations and facilities interested in a speaker or horse visitation may contact officemanager@freereincenter.com or call (828) 883-3375 for further information.

Volunteer Appreciation Picnic

On the evening of March 30, volunteers from Free Rein Center gathered at Creekside Market for an appreciation picnic sponsored by the board of directors. The board's chair, Susan Kish, and Brittany McCathern, Free Rein program director, made sure all the volunteers knew they were deeply appreciated by the board, staff and horses at Free Rein Center for their continuing loyalty. Kish said that without the volunteers Free Rein wouldn't exist and the over 200 participants who yearly come to Free Rein wouldn't have services. A raffle of names was drawn throughout the evening and "winners" received their choice of Free Rein T-shirts, hoodies and neck warmers. Names were also drawn for gift cards. All participants seemed to enjoy the crisp evening and the comradery of being together.

As always Free Rein Center adheres to its mission to serve the community by strengthening the spirits, minds, and bodies of children and adults through interaction with horses.

Free Rein's volunteers certainly help make the "impossible, possible" for those attending the program.



Left to right, Board Treasurer Jim Garrett, Mayor Maureen Copelof, and Board Chair Susan Kish at the raffle drawing.

Winning Ticket Revealed for Free Rein Raffle

Congratulations to Julia Santiago who won \$1000 in Free Rein's spring raffle fundraiser. The funds raised will be used to further the mission of Free Rein and support their programs. Susan Kish, Board Chair, explained that 95% of all students receive some form of scholarship aid for tuition. Thanks to all our volunteers, sponsors, family friends and students we raised over \$10,000. A thank you to Mayor Maureen Copelof for doing the honor of drawing the winning ticket.



Save The Date

Saddle Up

A Day At the Barn!



Annual Fundraiser

Buffet
Dinner



Tickets
available
soon!

October 2023						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Silent & Live
Auction
Items



North Carolina Horse Council Grant

In October of 2022, we received a grant from the North Carolina Horse Council to purchase equipment to be used in our programs or by our horses. Some of the equipment we purchased were microphones for our instructors, bareback pad with fleece, hand hold strap webs, vaulting surcingles with handles and vaulting pads, and the following items:



English Therapeutic Riding Saddle

The English therapeutic riding saddle allowed a wheelchair dependent participant to ride a horse for the first time. The saddle assisted the rider to have an upright position, with the use of some other modalities to allow her to ride the horse for her last lesson. She sat upright as she passed her mom and smiled because she was so proud she was on Mr. Pumpkin, being able to ride a real horse.



Theraplate k-12 2x6

The theraplate is used on a twice a week basis. Our horses absolutely love it. Each of them will stand on the theraplate for hours if we would let them. We have noted several differences in mobility throughout the herd by using the different modalities throughout their care regime.



Electro Groom Horse Vacuum

The electro groom is a barn favorite and has been utilized once weekly throughout daily horse care routine. It has helped our horses keep a better overall coat throughout the winter, without the buildup of dirt, eliminating skin funguses we normally get during the Winter months. The electro groom is also a great way to dry horses off after a bath to allow for a faster drying process.

We are so thankful to have gotten this grant to make an impactful difference throughout our herd.

Free Rein Welcomes New Barn Manager

Parker Moore has been working with and riding horses for 10 years. She earned her Bachelor of Art in Business and Organizational Leadership from Brevard College. She played lacrosse throughout her college career. While doing her weekly community service, Parker came out to Free Rein, then fell in love with the organization and its commitment to the care for the horses.

We welcome Parker as our barn care manager and as a part of the herd and look forward to her becoming a PATH CTRI in the near future.



Financial Reports - 2023 Mid-Year Report

This year due to effective decisions, Free Rein has maintained expenses to the prior year level. However, we have seen and anticipate further increases in the cost of horse care (hay, grain, shavings and supplements).

Our personnel expenses have increased because Free Rein's program attendance has expanded. This, in turn, increases the need for instructor hours.

At this time, Free Rein is operating at capacity. Costs also reflect that the majority of our clients are attending through scholarships. Free Rein will not turn down a client for economic reasons and will work with the client through a sliding scale mechanism.

Free Rein will continue to monitor costs, make effective economic decisions, and gratefully accept donations from our loyal donors and sponsors.

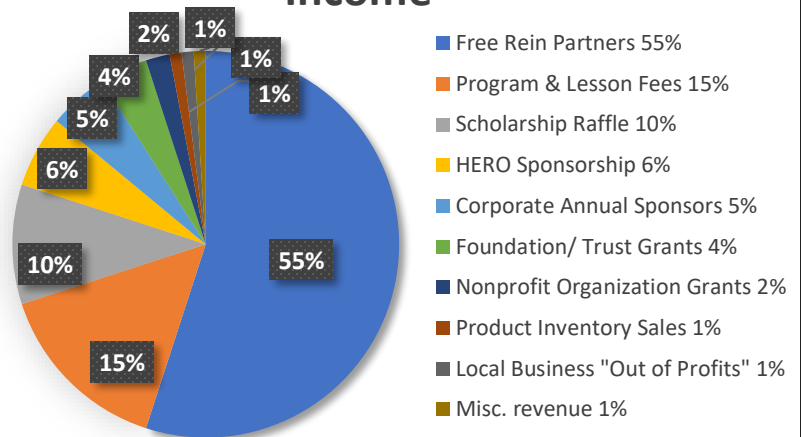
How You Can Help Free Rein

Free Rein counts on the generosity of our business sponsors and individual donors to fund our organization. The money goes to keeping our horses healthy and our riding programs affordable for families. Help us continue to serve the community by becoming a donor. You can sponsor a horse through our HEROS program or make a one-time or continuing contribution. Visit our website, www.freereincenter.org, to learn more, or call our office at 828-883-3375. Free Rein Center is an IRS-approved not-for-profit organization. Our tax ID number is 31-1740563. Thank you for your consideration.

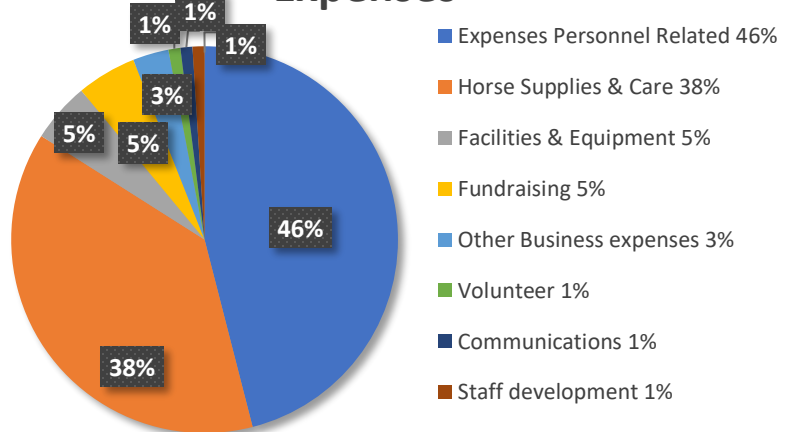
2023 Board of Directors

Susan Kish, Board Chair
Andy Bullwinkel, Vice Chair
Connie Edmands, Secretary
Jim Garrett, Treasurer
Leslie Cooperman
Sharad Creasman
Linda Felderhoff
Leta McDonald
Porsha Smith
Cindy Wilson
Carter Heyward, Director Emeritus

Income



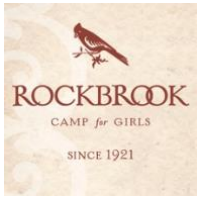
Expenses



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.

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



NORTH CAROLINA



Copper Level

