



Annual Report

December 2023



From the Free Rein Board Chair

I have been asked often in the five years I have been on the Board of Free Rein Center what attracts me to the organization. I probably have given several different versions of why I am pleased to be part of Free Rein. As this year draws to a close, I have been reflecting on those answers.

I think the first reason is because of the 'magic' of Free Rein. I don't mean tricks and sleight of hand. Rather, Free Rein is someplace that has a special mysterious quality which makes it seem wonderful, exciting and which makes me feel happy. Walking on campus I see the connecting of horse, student, volunteer and instructor in a spectacular setting. The backdrop to Free Rein's venue is breathtaking no matter what the season. Then there is the energy. Horses are getting ready to work; grooming and tacking is being done and those horses know they are about to provide an unmatched experience to a special person. Volunteers are bustling about grooming, tacking, mucking stalls, learning who they will work with as side walkers or horse leader. They are excited about seeing the student they have been getting to know. Instructors are checking their case and progress notes and preparing for new evaluations during and after the lesson that is about to begin. Everything is ready in the arena. The wonderful magical feeling coalesces, almost like the beginning of the first note of an orchestra, as the student sits on their horse.

Of course, it is not magic. There is nothing supernatural or tricky about it. It has taken long hours of training, planning, managing, experimenting with new ideas and modalities and just plain hard work to create that moment.

Those horses have been chosen to be part of Free Rein after long physical and behavioral evaluations. Thanks to Brittany McCathern and our instructors, those horses are the best suited around to handle clients with special needs whether physical and/or emotional. Our volunteers are angels on earth, but to get to be Free Rein angels they all had to go through training. They have to be able to take direction and to have patience. Things don't always go 'magically well' and volunteers can help make the not-so-great times manageable and actually fun. Our instructors have had rigorous training to achieve and maintain their PATH certification. They are intricately involved in planning for students, in trying new things and in creating a sense of joy and achievement for our clients. All of this works to create a joyous magical place to be, to learn and to work.



(continued next page)

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.

What all of this creates in me is a feeling of restoration. This is the second reason I love to be associated with Free Rein. I can feel my heart lift when I am walking on campus. In a world of sometimes limitless madness, Free Rein is a place where souls and bodies are being restored.

Stand next to a horse on a cold morning and watch your breaths meet and intertwine before evaporating. Look into the horse's eye and watch him/her search for a connection. Our students find that connection with 'their' horse. It settles them. Volunteers have their favorites. When they touch the horse they work

with they feel movement and that can be an electric kind of connection which instantly makes you smile. Instructors get to watch the progress made by a child who couldn't hold onto reins two weeks ago or who can hold their body up on the horse with a bit more ease than before.

So, my answer to the question of what attracts me to Free Rein is: It is a magical place where my soul is restored and where I know others feel equally lucky to be involved there.

May your holiday season bring you magic and restore your personal peace.

Moe and Cassie

The rainbow bridge gained two of the best equine instructors this year, sweet Moe and Cassie.



Even though Moe was not a part of the Connemara herd, his passing marked the end of an era. Rockbrook's first horse purchase under the Carters, to many of us, he was an original herd member. Sweet Moe joined his Connemara friends on the

other side of the Rainbow Bridge. He taught many instructors how to teach and helped many through testing. I will forever be thankful for being blessed enough to be able to teach those lessons with all four of the Connemaras and Moe. Moe, you truly were one of the best school horses and having you as a co-instructor/partner was an honor. He knew and loved his job; watching him teach was priceless.

Sweet, sweet Cassie has been a part of our herd since 2013. Due to declining vision, Free Rein decided to retire Cassie in 2020. Her sweet laid back personality allowed her to be the right fit for any participant in our program. I am so thankful that Mary and I picked you and Monty to join our herd as

a lease from Camp Carolina. I am so glad you and Toby were reunited, seeing you two together was bittersweet.

We love you guys and you both are already so missed but knowing that you both have a herd waiting for you makes it feel a little bit easier. Rest easy old man and sweet little lady!

Thanks to everyone who supported us through the process. The Las Paderas family gave Cassie such a wonderful retirement. Kara and her family welcomed Moe into their herd over the summer. Even though his time was short, he lived out the happiest few months I have seen from him in a really long time. They both deserved every moment each of you gave them. The barns may feel a little more empty and our hearts are a little broken here but we know the Rainbow Bridge is full of a special herd running around, catching up with old friends.



Tomar

Breed: Lusitano

Age: 23

Color: Black

Height: 16.0 hands



Tomar was bred at Carpe Diem Farm, LLC in Fall City, Washington. He lived in California with his trainer, Linda Walton, until he was 14 years old. He then was purchased by Jaz Ranch in Levan, UT to become the next herd sire for this breeding ranch. A trainer saw Tomar standing alone in a bare paddock 4 years later. He convinced his owner to let him take Tomar to find a forever loving home.

Desiree Wehner, one of Free Rein's volunteers, bought him when he was almost 19 years old and had recently been gelded. Tomar was given a refresher course in dressage and was trained as Intermediate I. He has been a true gift, always being patient and willing to teach new riders no matter

their skill level. "He is truly a one in a million horse and I am the luckiest person to have had him to be my teacher in my beginning horse/dressage journey," states Desiree.

Desiree reached out to Brittany about the potential of using Tomar in the program. Brittany went out to look at him and of course loved him, as he has a calm demeanor. His gait will be perfect for our riders who seek more sensory output. His kind gentle personality makes him a wonderful fit to work with any horse leader. When he came to Free Rein, he had never been pastured with another horse. Being with the other Free Rein horses has allowed Tomar to bond and make lifelong friendships. It is our pleasure to have Tomar as part of our herd and are excited to see how he will grow within the program.



Tomar and his friend, Big Quiet

The Barn Cats



After the loss of two of the best barn cats, Free Rein felt there was something missing.

For those of you who feel things happen for a reason, here it is! Two weeks after Scarlett's passing Brittany was driving for a weekly visit of Kara's horses when she saw this little ball of fur in the middle of the road. Of course, being the animal lover she is, she immediately stopped and went out in the middle of the road to save this kitten. When she picked him up, she couldn't believe he was still alive. He had a serious upper respiratory infection, not to mention he





had dodged the four cars in front of her. During the summer months, Skid rode back and forth to work with his new mama who hoped he'd return to good health so he could be Sally's new sidekick. When Sally became ill and with her sudden passing, we were all devastated.

After the summer months passed, Roberta found a little orange kitten at our local shelter. We decided Skid needed a friend or two, so off Parker and Roberta went. When they came back they had two kittens, Sadie Mae and Simba. They stayed in the office until they were well and big enough to go outside, and Skid began to be a full time kitty now that he had friends.

Now you can find the three of them wandering around the barn, watching staff

from their favorite spot, the hay loft, helping with office tasks, teaching lessons, greeting people as they come in, or basically anywhere there is a human you will find one of the kittens. We are so glad to have them as they definitely make barn life way more entertaining. Welcome Skid, Sadie Mae, and Simba!



Happy Retirement, Tonka!

Everyone loved Tonka and Tonka loved everyone he met. If you just need to hug a horse, then Tonka was your Horse! He was named Tonka because he reminded his mom of a strong, tough Tonka truck. Inside that hefty frame was a generous heart of pure gold. Tonka genuinely enjoyed his job and was a skillful teacher with infinite patience. Tonka used to trail ride and came to Free Rein as a result of some problems with his feet that limited his ability to move comfortably on rocky trails. With some corrective shoeing, he became sound at walk and trot. Tonka loved to have a bath – BUT – no clippers please! You know that buzzy sound/feel they have... he was scared of them! His favorite treat was carrots and he will choose them over Pony Pizza every time. Sometimes he saved stuff for later in his always droopy lower lip!

After some serious thought we thought have decided that it would be in Tonka's best interest to retire. Congratulations, Tonka, on your retirement! He retired to

Sugarbrush Farm on See Off Mountain in December, where he reunited with his friend Toby. Tonka had been with Free Rein since 2014. We want to thank you for all the lessons you have participated in, all the lives you have touched, and continuing help by spending time with Toby after the loss of Cassie.



Free Rein Programming

In 2023, we served 274 participants, including our local school groups, TVS, and private individuals. We also for the first time welcomed students from the exceptional children program from Rosman Elementary School. Free Rein has achieved this with fourteen equine instructors, 114 volunteers and 5 staff members. As we look back on this past year, we continue to be proud that Free Rein's personnel continue to adapt and enhance programs where needed. Our program is client centered, continually adapting to meet the needs and goals of each participant. We also reach out to various organizations throughout our community to provide ground school programs. These programs build knowledge of caring and working with horses, learning horse behavior, understanding herd dynamics and communicating effectively with our equine partners. The session length to serve more clients is still a necessity, as our program continues to grow, and individuals seek our services. We continue to offer a six-week session, then a four-week session.

We have had great success with our Little Hooves Touching Hearts program. Phoebe, our mini-horse, and Zoey, our Welsh pony, continue to go into adult facilities to visit residents. The visits have been a huge success. We plan to continue with these visits during the winter months.

As our programs continue to grow, we look forward to supporting our community!



Free Rein Staff

Brittany McCathern, *Program Director*
Roberta Brownlee, *Office Manager*
Parker Moore,
Horse Care Coordinator

Instructors

Toni Garrett
Kara McCarson

2023 Board of Directors

Carter Heyward, *Director Emeritus*
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Linda Felderhoff
Leta McDonald

Saddle Up

“Saddle Up” was our annual fundraising event in October. This year’s barn event raised nearly \$30,000 to pay for operational expenses and student scholarships. More than 150 people attended the event on Oct. 21st at the barn located at Rockbrook Camp for Girls. It again featured a Fall theme of “A Day at The Barn.” This year, during the live auction, Phoebe the miniature horse came out to help raise money by doing a “Live Painting” at the barn. This one-of-a-kind artwork was auctioned off later on in the evening.

Save the date for next year: October 19th at Connestee Falls. Will Phoebe show up again?



Little Hooves Touching Hearts Update

Free Rein Center for Therapeutic Riding and Education continues to go out into the Henderson and Transylvania county retirement/assisted living facilities, as well as more recently a visit to a Buncombe County facility. Our two equine partners who make these visits happen are: Zoey, a Welsh Pony Cross Tri Colored Paint that is 15 years old, and Phoebe Buffay, our 3-year-old mini horse.

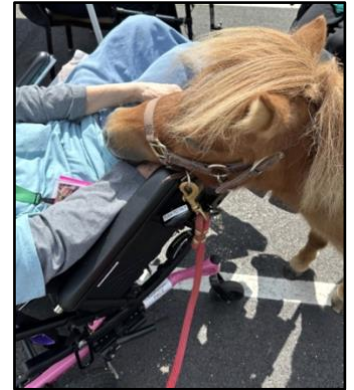
In addition to helping Free Rein create a higher level of community awareness of its mission, Phoebe will be used in the future for ground work and cart riding activities for those clients unable to ride full-size horses. Organizations and facilities interested in a speaker or horse visitation may contact officemanager@freereincenter.com or call (828) 883-3375 for further information.

We are looking to grow this program and already have several visits scheduled in Buncombe county in 2024. Ways you can help this program grow:



- Schedule a visit (indoors or outdoors)
- Schedule a speaker to come talk about the organization or have our Little Hooves come for a visit
- Become a sponsor for these events
- Help us purchase vehicle for easier transportation

Currently, we are using a two horse trailer which can be tricky getting in and out of the facilities we visit. Also, due to the large trailer's interior space it is not ideal for our mini and pony to ride in. We are looking into purchasing a suitable vehicle that we can retrofit for transport of our small herd members. Our goal is to raise approximately \$30,000. For donation of a \$2,500 or more we will place recognition on the vehicle.



Free Rein Participates in the Brevard Christmas Parade



PLANNED GIVING

Bequests

These make up the majority of planned gifts. Anyone can make a bequest to a nonprofit through their will or estate plan. You can allocate a specific amount of money to give after you pass, such as a lump sum or a percentage of your total wealth, or you can choose to give the remainder of your estate to a nonprofit after all of the other bequests are paid. Because your gift doesn't go to the organization until after your lifetime, you can change your mind at any time, thus providing maximum flexibility.

Charitable Gift Annuities

This is an agreement in which the donor gives a significant gift to a nonprofit, receives a tax deduction at the time of the gift and then receives payments from the nonprofit during their lifetime. The nonprofit may invest the money and after the donor's death, the nonprofit can use the remaining funds.

Donation of Stocks of Appreciated Assets

This is one of the most beneficial ways for giving, allowing you to receive favorable tax treatment. A donor who gives us a gift of common stock held longer than one year avoids capital gains taxation on the transfer, so the full value of the contribution goes to Free Rein.

Donate Through an IRA

If you are age 72 or older (70 ½ if you reached 70 ½ before January 1, 2020) you may be interested in lowering your IRA withdrawal's income and taxes. Through an IRA Charitable Rollover, you can transfer up to \$100,000 a year directly from an IRA to a qualified 501(c)(3) nonprofit such as Free Rein. The transfer amount will not be included in your taxable income, and the transferred amount can count toward the required minimum distribution (RMD).

Outright Gift of Cash or Check

A cash gift by check is one of the most common and easiest methods for making an outright charitable contribution. Besides a possible deduction on your tax return, a major benefit is seeing the immediate results of your generosity. When you make a cash gift, you are demonstrating a strong commitment to help support Free Rein's mission and vision and are contributing to its success. (Checks payable to Free Rein, Inc. may be mailed to P.O. Box 1325, Brevard, NC 28712)



HEROS

**Helping Equines
Reconnect Our Spirits**

**Our herd consists of
hard working
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 our
participants.**



Our annual cost for horse care is about \$42,000!

Costs Include:

**Hay ~ Grain ~ Supplements ~ Shavings ~ Tack & Supplies
Vet care & medications ~ Farrier Services ~ Other general care**

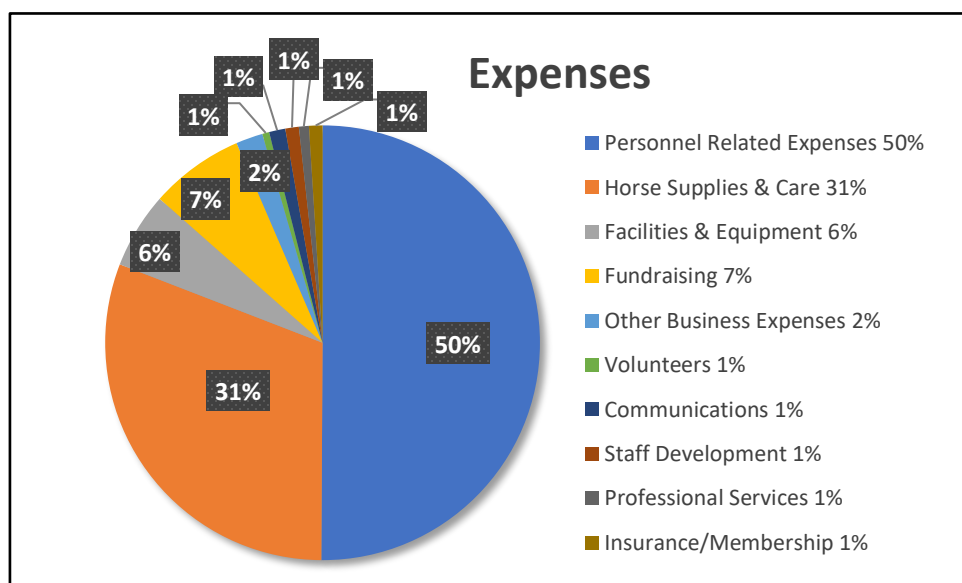
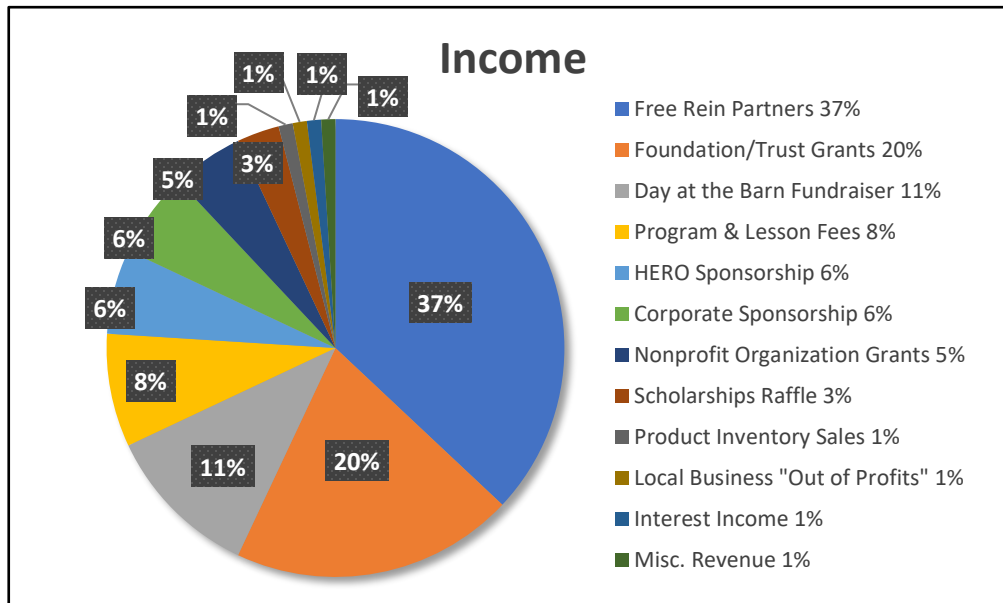
Become one of our HEROS!

Financial Reports – 2023 ANNUAL BUDGET

Because of all our generous donors, sponsors and grants we have again had a successful year financially. A combination of over 175 individual, business and foundation donations have contributed to our success.

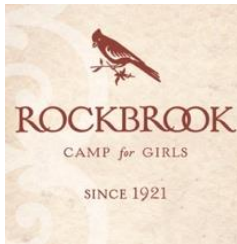
Our “Day at the Barn” was a huge success and we thank all those who attended and donated at that event. We continue to strive to keep our costs in line and thanks to all the volunteers we have been able to run our programs with no price increases to our students. We are excited for the new year and look forward to continuing to make the impossible – possible.

The accompanying charts show our 2023 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



Gold Level



Silver Level



in Memory of Avery

Copper Level



Our Valuable Donors

Anonymous	Robert Dulin	Sarah Hysong &	Louise Quarles
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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