



Annual Report

January 2025



From the Free Rein Board Chair

When I began to think of writing this summation of 2024 at the Free Rein Center, the quote “It was the worst of times; it was the best of times” (Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*) would not leave my mind. I think it truly is the most accurate way of summing up what not only the Free Rein Center but what each of us experienced this past year.

We at Free Rein Center endured some emotionally distressing losses this year. Our precious Phoebe left us way too soon. This was followed by Toby, Moe, Skip, and our oldest and dearest Mr. Pumpkin. It truly left us reeling.

Then came Helene. Free Rein was fortunate since we had less severe damage than could have been. Fences were down, as well as some trees; fields and barns were flooded. It felt for all of us that everyone we knew had some degree of disaster befall them with the aftermath of the storm. Our days became trying to get out of our own properties; shoring up roofs that were damaged; cleaning up messes, and most importantly, looking for friends and students to see if they needed help.

But then the wonderful magic of caring for others took place, bringing in the “best of times.”

We found Jolene, one of our new Minis. She is lovingly being trained by Porsha Smith and Brittany McCathern and is making great progress. She seems to be a natural at responding to the need to help others. Her sidekick, Ladybug, also newly found for

Free Rein and who loves adoration, are making a mighty team with their leader, Zoey. These three have been involved in two very special events: a fundraiser for the businesses that received severe damage from Helene in Cedar Mountain and visiting Broyhill, a series of group homes for children operated by the Baptist Children’s Homes of North Carolina, for their Christmas festivities. In each case, their sweetness and patience brought smiles, giggles and relief to the children and adults. (And to the Free Rein staff and volunteers helping with the visits).

We were also fortunate when looking for new equine partners to find two wonderful candidates. Duncan, a Draft/Haflinger cross and Rascal, a Grade Paint pony have joined Free Rein. Hopefully you will be as excited about their joining us as we are.

As indicated earlier, the Free Rein Center did escape catastrophic damage from Helene but lots of work was needed to bring things back to normal so that lessons could begin again. Our wonderful

(continued next page)



<p>Free Rein’s Mission is to serve the community by strengthening the spirits, minds and bodies of children and adults through interaction with horses.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
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volunteers called or just showed up along with several Board members and instructors to accomplish what needed to get done. Donations came in with notes of “hope this helps.”

When things were back in order, the Board and Brittany decided to waive any lesson payments for the rest of the session. So many of our families were affected by the storm and its aftermath we felt it was more important to provide our students with a touch of normalcy. Donations made by our friends, individual donors and sponsors helped Free Rein fund the remaining lessons. Many of the parents came to us during the return of programming expressing appreciation and

indicating this was the first time their child had smiled in a long time. Individually, I think all of us have seen small and large indications of how wonderful our community is in times of need. The outpouring of concern, resources, and just plain hard labor to restore homes and lives is overwhelming. We have endured tough tests of fortitude this year, BUT we have also experienced the true love and caring of our community.

May that feeling of compassion for others and a thankfulness for community lead us into the New Year with the joy and enthusiasm to continue the quest for the best of times.

In Memory of Mr. Pumpkin

The day none of us knew how to prepare for happened. Free Rein lost its last original member. To know Mr. Pumpkin was to love him. From the solid therapy pony to the mischievous escape artist.

He was rescued from auction in 2002 and he soon found himself a prominent member of Free Rein and has been a permanent fixture of the barn ever since. He didn't even have a name, only a number, but because of his color he quickly became Mr. Pumpkin. An ex-Amish horse, he had seen and done many things that prepared him for his new life, but his favorite thing was pulling a cart.

His sweet demeanor made him a barn favorite for students and volunteers alike. He was always

curious and wanted to be with humans. But he was also very smart and learned routines, making him get bored easily. It quickly became a game to keep Pumpkin as entertained and engaged in lessons as his students.

One Saturday morning he wasn't quite himself and he slowly began to decline. He became very uncomfortable, and pain medication was not helping, so the gut-wrenching decision was made to let him go. He had done so many wonderful things in his almost 40 years here on Earth, and the best thing we could do for him was to take away that pain and let him cross the Rainbow Bridge peacefully.

He was the true definition of “worth his weight in gold” and there will never be another like him. That mold was broken the day he was born. The barn will never be the same. We will miss you forever, old man. Rest easy until we meet again.



Losing a staple of our herd has left emptiness throughout the barn. Please join us in welcoming this new program:

The Hoof Print Fund was founded by Brittany McCathern in 2024 in memory of Mr. Pumpkin, who was the ambassador of Free Rein for many years. She created this fund to allow Pumpkin's Hoof Prints to impact people's lives and live his legacy throughout the program in many years to come. Donations to this fund will be used to aid in program funds. Program Funds will allow aid in horse care needs.

Free Rein Center



In Memory of Skip



Today I realized just how fast in the horse world things are fine until they're not. Today started out as a typical day then quickly turmoiled into the day I have been afraid of for a long time. Skip started today with classic colic signs. I was hopeful but afraid of the worst. Arriving at Tryon after a referral, I soon realized my time with him was growing slimmer. After bloodwork, ultrasound, and an abdominal tap it was clear that surgery was not a great option. Skip had a lipoma near his small intestine, his intestinal wall was enlarged/thickened, and he had loss of function to that portion of the intestine. The likelihood of having good tissue to reattach to or coming off the table was very slim. Losing two horses back to back, a little over a two week span, has shattered my heart into a million pieces. These two horses had very different but big pieces of my heart. I

still haven't come to the realization after Pumpkin, then losing my first horse, Skip, today doesn't seem real. He was fine yesterday, doing all of his normal Skip things like dismantling his hay feeder and all. Thankfully, I was able to ride him earlier this week, but little did I know it was gonna be my last. Skip was my escape when I was having a bad day, and it never failed he always made me smile.

Skip has a lot of pieces and memories I'm unable to share with any other horse. He was the horse who started it all and me becoming the crazy horse lady. He was our last vacation as a child. When I had the opportunity to get a horse or go on vacation, I of course chose owning my horse. He was the first horse who could eject me like it was nothing but also the horse who made me so proud each time we entered the arena at a show. The first one I walked down a main road from downtown after a parade, when he wouldn't load back in a trailer. I was also going to feed him to a bear because I was so mad at him, but I'm glad I didn't because he was such a special guy.

The Rainbow Bridge has some pretty wonderful horses on the other side. I cannot wait to see them on the other side one day and kiss each one of their noses.

I'm thankful to Skip for many reasons, he shared an arena teaching me how to be a horse owner, teaching upcoming equestrians; introduced me to many great people; and brought my family closer as we share these experiences/memories. We will always cherish with these amazing creatures through our forever vacation horse. Rest in peace and enjoy running with Pumpkin and all the other special creatures that were waiting for you on the other side.

Thank you to Shawn Williamson and Tryon Equine for doing their best to help me bring my best friend back home. Unfortunately, it wasn't in the grand plan for us, but with both of them, he got the best care and was in the best hands up until the end.

Brittany McCathern, October 25, 2024



Free Rein Programming

In 2024, we served 200 participants, including our local school groups, TVS, and private individuals. Free Rein has achieved this with 14 equine instructors, 114 volunteers and 6 staff members. As we look back on this past year, we continue to be proud of Free Rein's personnel on how they adapt and overcome life's hurdles. During Hurricane Helene, a few team members stayed on property with our equine instructors. Even though the flooding caused us to be stranded for three days, we were fortunate to have minimal property damage from the storm. Due to the impact the storm had on our community we altered a 10 week session by delaying lessons a few weeks in order to wrap up the first 6 week session. A big thank you to all the volunteers who helped clean up after the storm, as well as those who came several times until all volunteers could get back to normal schedule. As our program continues to grow and more individuals seek our services, the 10 week session length remains necessary. To serve more clients we will continue to offer a 6 week session, followed by a four-week session.

We have had great success with our Little Hooves Touching Hearts program. Sadly, we lost Phoebe, the mini-horse who initially opened doors to this program, but with the addition of Ladybug and Jolene, 2 new mini-horses, along with Zoey, our Welsh pony, we have been able to continue care center visits. These visits along with other community events have been a huge success. We plan to continue and expand this program by reaching out to our local and surrounding communities to provide opportunities to visit with our "Littles."

Little Hooves Touching Hearts Update

Our Little Hooves Touching Hearts program continues to reach out to the community. Along with Zoey, the Welsh pony, Jolene, a mini-horse, and Ladybug, also a mini-horse, have been visiting adult living facilities. Recently, they all attended a Christmas party at a children's group home. Jolene and Ladybug will be certified as therapy horses soon. Free Rein personnel are beginning the certification process for a program entitled Horse Powered Reading. This program helps children's reading skills while addressing social/emotional challenges through equine assisted learning. The minis will be used in this program.

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 2025.

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

Free Rein Staff

Brittany McCathern, *Program Director*
Kara McCarson,
*Program Administrator/
Volunteer Coordinator*
Roberta Brownlee, *Office Manager*
Maddy Clark,
Horse Care Coordinator

Instructors

Toni Garrett
Kara McCarson
Mary Stoehr

2024 Board of Directors

Carter Heyward, *Director Emeritus*
Susan Kish, *Board Chair*
Andy Bullwinkel, *Vice Chair*
Connie Edmands, *Secretary*
Jim Garrett, *Treasurer*
Porsha Smith, *Program Chair*

Leslie Cooperman
John Colflesh
Linda Felderhoff
Melodi Horni
Tamika Hunter



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)

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

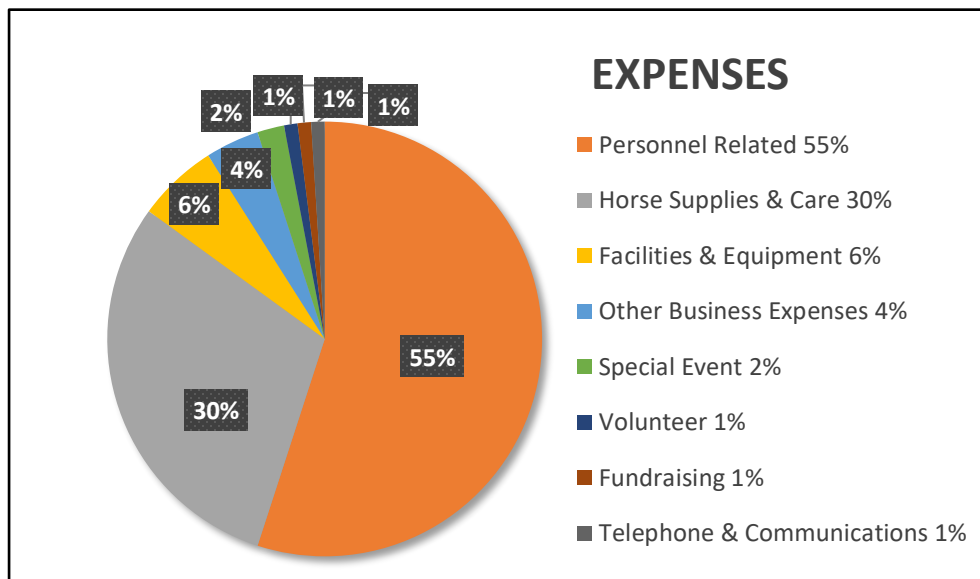
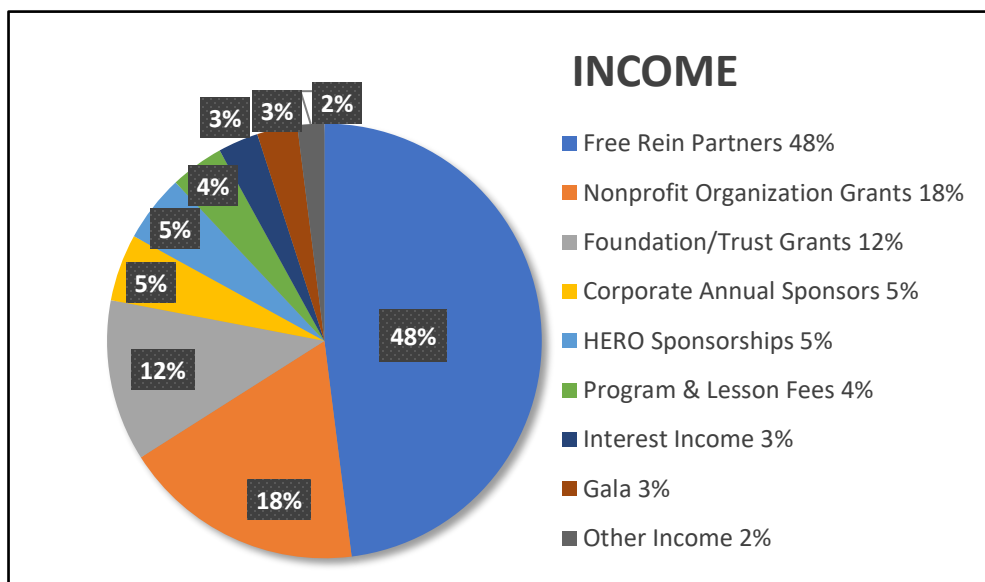
Financial Reports – 2024 ANNUAL BUDGET

Despite the possibility of financial setbacks due to Tropical Storm Helene, Free Rein’s expenses and income for 2024 are in good shape.

Because of all our generous donors, sponsors and grants, we have again had a successful year financially. Our “Mane Event,” though cancelled, resulted in many individuals donating the money paid for their tickets rather than getting a refund.

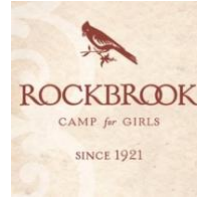
We continue to strive to keep our costs in line. Thanks to all our volunteers, we have been able to run our programs with no price increases to our students.

We are excited for the new year and look forward to continuing to make the impossible – possible. The accompanying charts show our 2024 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



Copper Level



Our Valuable Donors

Lisa Patty Abbey
Jim & Diana Allen
Susan Azar
Gerry Azzata
Kimberly Ball
Susan Banta
Nancy Beale
Karen & William Berg
Townsend & Henry Birdsong
Nancy Bogardts
Peggy Bogardus
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Marianne & Richard Bonidie
Dan & Loretta Bowen
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Brevard Health & Racquet Club
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Kathie & Don Briola
Broad Street Wines
Marjorie & Robert Brockway
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Fisher Realty
Caroline & Edward Fitzgerald
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Debi & Scott Garrett
James Garrett
Jim & Toni Garrett
Garrett Property Care &
Handyman Services, LLC
Leslie Gesner
Elaine & Jim Goar
Geri Goodall-Komar
Gillian & William Greenwood
Janet Grey
Bernard Groseclose
Kathleen Hale-Brewer
Laurie Abrams Hall
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Dave McClellan
Hampton Inn Brevard-
Pisgah Forest
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Ann Harris
Deborah Hausman
Brenda & Larry Haynes
Jim & Cris Hedgpeth
Marcia Henderson
Ty Hendrix Investment
Management
Jennifer & Ray Henley
Carter Heyward
Elizabeth Hill
Pamela & Jimmy Hill
Jane & John Hilliard
Lynn Hollifield
Kathleen & Jim Hopke
Michael Hornback
Melodi & Ed Horni
Martha Hoskyns
William & Donna Huffman
Kenneth & Beverly Hughey
Dave & Donna Hunter
Hunter Hometown Foundation
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Betty Kendrick
Steve & Carla Kimmel

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KLF Wood Designs
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Lake Toxaway Charities
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Lynne & Jon Montague-Clouse
Barbara Moore
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Andrea Muirhead
Nancy Nebenzahl
Nelson's Feed
Larry Nelson
Neumann Law Firm
Barbara Nielson
Barbara Odom
Diana O'hara
Oliver-Hoffman Foundation
Carole & Tom Oosting
Owens Horse Farm &
Farrier Service
Alicia Parker-Sweatt, MD
PayPal Giving Fund
Pepsi
Gayleanne & Norm Pigott
Pisgah Forest Rotary
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Whitworth
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Helen Polito
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Edmund & Karen Ramsaur
Leah Rosenheck

David & Claire Raudman
Helen Furr Reed
James & Kathryn Reichhart
Devan & Curtis Riess
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Lindsay Robertson
Albert & Susan Rodriguez
Jacquelyn & Bruce Rogow
Rogow Family Fund
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Daniel & Amanda Ross
Lorraine & John Rourke
Cheryl Rowley
Robert & Jeanne Rupp
Shawn Rupp
Rebecca Ryan
Sacred Heart Catholic Church
Susan Sasser
Sasser Family Foundation
Dorothy Semans
Melinda & Norm Sharrit
Sherwood Forest
Woman's Workshop
Sherwood Self Storage, Inc.
Nina Shippen
Debra Sigler
Gina & John Skelton
James & Sandra Sloan
Porsha & Nathan Smith
Terry Soifer
Martha Spencer
Mary & Jeff Stoehr
Gina Streed
Kelly Sweet
Randy Swing
O.P. Taylor's Toy Store
Jody Temple
The Church of the Good Shepherd
Jennifer Tierney
Sarah Tomaka
Joseph Traywick
Thomas Traywick
Arthur Uhlmann
Valley Agri Supply, Inc.
Christina Vest
Mary Carol & George Vickery
Nancy Waclawek
Harry W. and Jo-Ann D.
Wallace Charitable Foundation
Desiree Wehner
Kimberly & Thomas Whelan
Wild Bird Unlimited
Lynn Williams
Jolene & Bruce Winfield
Frank & Marian Wolf
Women of St. Philip