



SHEPARD MEADOWS THERAPEUTIC RIDING CENTER SPRING / SUMMER NEWSLETTER

August 2019

FIRST ANNUAL HORSE SHOW A SPECTACULAR SUCCESS

On the Friday of Memorial Day weekend, Shepard Meadows held its first annual horse show. The show was dedicated to outgoing Board President, Patti Fournier.

There was no fee for our riders to participate and this year we had nearly 20 riders.

Our volunteers offered their help and support to prepare the farm and horses, manage registration and our dinner offerings, and volunteer as horse leaders and sidewalkers.

Board Secretary, Daniel Zakin served as Master of Ceremonies, and Alison McCallum Trainer and Owner of Oakendale Farm, LLC served as our Judge.

This year we presented two awards, the first to Kathryn Middleton, volunteer, committee member, and rider for her involvement and support of the organization as Volunteer of the Year, and the second to our Horse of the Year, Moses.



VOLUNTEER NEWS

As you know volunteers are the backbone of our operation and we definitely couldn't do it without you!

We started 2019 off with about 30 active volunteers helping with the barn chores, but have grown since then. Out of the 30 volunteers, 20 were also trained to help with the therapeutic riding lessons which began on March 25th.

On March 22nd we had our spring general orientation with sidewalker training, and we gained 12 new volunteers that wanted to help with both barn chores and in lessons.



On May 31st we had our summer general orientation with sidewalker training, where we welcomed eight new volunteers that all had previous horse experience. That was the first time that had ever happened! As of the end of the end of May we have already accumulated 1,200 volunteer hours, 830 hours for barn chores and 425 helping in the therapeutic lessons.

SUMMER EQUINE EXPERIENCE

Our first offering resulted in a fun-filled at-capacity five-day-long summer "camp." Riders learned horsemanship skills, rode each day, completed arts and crafts, and generally enjoyed the friendship and comradery of each other, staff members, volunteers and our therapy horses.

Fall Program begins on Monday, September 9th. Happy Back to School and Happy Labor Day!



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: XENIA AUGUSTIN

Shepard Meadows was so very fortunate to get to know Xenia Augustin, and welcomed her expertise as a horsewoman. Xenia is a twenty-year-old electrical engineering student from Germany who was visiting the United States for six months as an intern at Trumpf Inc., in Farmington, CT.

When we received her inquiry, we had no idea how valuable she would become to us. She not only worked barn chores, but exercised our horses and volunteered during program as a leader and side walker.

Her character and work ethic on top of her gleaming personality and demeanor brought such joy to the farm. We miss her daily, but wish her well back home in Germany.

Xenia shared with us that besides her passion for mathematics, physics and technology she always loved spending time with animals, especially horses.

Eight years ago, she started volunteering at a therapeutic riding center in Germany where she was also part of the competition team for the Special Olympics.

MEET THE NEWEST MEMBERS OF THE HERD



Elmer

A youthful mule with Appaloosa markings, he’s a rescue from upstate New York. Elmer is in training as the Center’s welcoming committee liaison (Ambassadorable) as well as acting as a therapy mule to our therapy horses. Simply a spectacular all-around fellow, he loves when the herd is brought to the barn for grooming and tacking so that can visit with them. If you’re lucky he’ll even greet you with his signature “whimper.”



Tonka

A 7 year old Haflinger pony that came to us this spring from Okendale Farm/Ethel Walker School, he’s brought youth back to the herd with his silly ways.

He’s a smart young gelding who appreciates a good gallop around the paddock. An absolute charmer with looks to match, he’s learning the ropes as a therapy horse.



Kentucky

A 14 year old American Quarter Horse, standing 15.2 hands he competed in Western shows – let’s just say he can spin on a dime. He settled into therapy horse work like a fish to water, to become a rider favorite.

Like his bestie, Tonka – he’s gorgeous, a dun with dapples, bringing smiles to all the volunteers and riders.



WELCOME TO OUR NEW CARETAKER

By now most everyone has met our new farm caretaker, Edward (Eddie) Pinette. He lives on-site to assure our staff, horses, and volunteers stay safe while also managing the property.

Having Eddie live on the property has been a great relief not only for safety, but also because he has gotten to know the horses so well. He knows and understands their usual behaviors and habits, so he can report back important information to our Equine Specialists.

Hard working doesn’t even describe Eddie, especially during the summer months.

FACILITY UPDATE

This spring brought some much-needed improvements to the farm. Thanks to the Loeb Foundation for the funds to purchase our two new run-in sheds, so that the horses have shelter in two of our paddocks.

We were also able to purchase new fencing materials through grant monies, and with the help of United Way Day of Caring - the staff of ABB (formerly G.E.), we were able to completely rebuild the front paddock.

Next up to complete the fencing project is ESPN who painted our fencing white in July and Webster Bank's IT Audit Team for installation in August.

In September, Gilbane Building Company is set to build us a new 12x12 shed with Dutch-doors, windows and fencing that will be our medical paddock, or as needed.

The big news however, is that they will be installing new water lines and electrical work to four of our paddocks so that the horses will be assured clean and fresh water 24/7, 365 days a year by installing automatic waterers.



GRANT & FOUNDATION NEWS

This spring we received a \$1,200 grant from the Equine for Heroes Foundation for tack and equipment, \$4,000 from the Community Development Building Grant (Bristol) for financial aid assistance, \$2,500 from the Main Street Community Foundation (Paige Wartonic Laferriere Memorial Fund, the Bristol Brass General Grant Fund and the Becker Family Fund) to support a certified instructor for the summer therapeutic riding program, \$500 from the Bristol Rotary in support of summer programs, \$2,000 from the Sky Bright Foundation, \$1,240 from Tollman Spring, and \$2,500 from the Barnes Group, Inc.

"BIRDIES FOR CHARITY"

For the first time ever, Shepard Meadows took part in the Birdies for Charity program during the Travelers Golf Championship.

We raised an astonishing \$8,475.00 and with the 15% match of \$1,271.25, our total will be \$9,746.00 in support of operations.

These funds will become available as we approach the winter when our programs are reduced, so we couldn't be more pleased!



Fun Fact! Horses' height is measured in units known as "hands." One hand is equal to four inches. The tallest horse on record was a Shire named Sampson. He was 21.2 hands (7 feet, 2 inches) tall. He was born in 1846 in Toddington Mills, England.

COMMUNITY EVENTS & NEWS

- WFSB Channel 3 “Every Town” coverage
- Episcopal Church Podcast “Coffee Hour at the Commons”
- 3rd Annual Family Health and Wellness Expo
- Bristol Chamber of Commerce Duck Race
- iheart podcasts for Travelers Championship
- Featured in Bristol Observer and Bristol Press
- Chamber of Commerce Meeting at the Farm

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Wine and Whiskey Gala
October 4, 6:30 PM
Chippanee Country Club
- Veteran’s Open House
November 3
- 2nd Annual Holiday Open House
December 8

Watch for our new website going live in September! Thanks to friend Bryan Cassidy’s time and expertise to rebuild it for us!



BOARD OF DIRECTOR TRANSITIONS

We added five new board members to the organizational leadership team including, **Lawrence (Larry) Gonzalez** as Vice-President, an attorney, Bristol resident and valuable volunteer, **Liz Ferrari**, a well-versed fundraiser, and new Fundraising Committee Chair, **Jon Paul Rondeau**, owner of New Wave Industries, Inc., **Michael Suchopar**, President and CEO of the Bristol Boys and Girls Club, and **Brett Kroh** as Treasurer, an accountant at Adams Samartino, CPA .

Dave Desmarais, current vice-president, long time board member, friend and volunteer was elected the center’s next Board President, with long-time friend Patricia Fournier stepping down after nine years with the center. Other board members include, Daniel Zakin, Secretary, and Liz Lefrancois.

THIS EDITION’S RIDING TIP: WHY HEELS DOWN?

If you have ever ridden or watched a riding lesson you’ve heard the instructor say, “Heels down” at some point throughout the lesson.

Sometimes instructors say heels down, toes up, relax your ankle, stretch your leg long, and weight down into your heels and the list goes on. When you're standing on the outside of the ring, you may not fully understand why we repeat some of these sayings over and over.

Keeping your heels down and weight stretching down into your heels is very important when riding a horse.

These phrases will ensure correct balance and position up on the horse which ultimately keeps the rider as safe as possible. Lengthening the leg and calf on the horse’s side increases the contact on their side, which aids in better communication with the horse.

After all, we cannot verbally explain things to our horses, so we must communicate accurately with our bodies. When our heels are down it lowers our weight, which acts as an anchor. It creates balance for the rider up on top of the horse. Our lower legs and heels are our base of support.

FAMILY FUN DAY

On Saturday, August 17th we held our first “**Family Fun Day**” where riders invited a family member to ride with them. As some found out, riding is not as easy as it looks. All found a new appreciation for the talent and hard work of their children.

