



# SHEPARD MEADOWS EQUESTRIAN CENTER, INC. FALL / WINTER NEWSLETTER

Volume IV, Issue 7 – February 2022

## PROGRAM UPDATE

Thank you to all our wonderful participants and families! Shepard Meadows had a great year despite all the challenges that 2021 brought. Our eight-week fall session was extremely busy with over 450 program sessions and over 130 program sessions in our extended fall session. Our equine assisted psychotherapy program has more than doubled since spring/summer and we are getting new inquires weekly.

We were very excited to welcome the West Bristol Extended Day students to the farm this fall. Students joined us twice a week for five weeks. They participated in our equine assisted learning program where they learned to groom, tack, make grain and work on their leadership skills! We will be partnering with them again in the spring.

Over winter break, we had our first Holiday Horsemanship program. It was a packed three days of horses, crafts, friends, and learning. One of our participants, Natalia, wrote to us about her time during the holiday break "What I liked the most at Shepard Meadows Horsemanship was learning about the horses. For example, I got to learn how to brush them and take care of them. I also enjoyed making horse treats and watching the horses eat them." We look forward to next year!

Our partnership with the Bristol Parks, Recreation, Youth and Community Services for unmounted horsemanship is already scheduled through spring. We have multiple five-week sessions coming up and we look forward to seeing many new faces.

The next winter session begins February 14<sup>th</sup> and will run for five weeks. This is a great opportunity to be outside and learn something new. Come bundle up and enjoy the farm.

Please reach out to Emily with any questions at [program@shepardmeadows.org](mailto:program@shepardmeadows.org).



*A student from West Bristol working with Lola on Leading Skills, with SMEC volunteer Sophia.*





Mack & George

## EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT COMPLETED AT SMEC

Hello, my name is Mack Butkus and I am a boy scout with Troop 425 in Bristol. When I started looking for an Eagle Scout project, I knew I wanted the project to have an impact on someone or something's life. I had no idea that something would end up being George. In May of 2021, I first met with Sister Anne Frances Thompson, FSE, the Volunteer Coordinator at Shepard Meadows, to see how I could be of service to the farm. In July the fund-raising phase of my project began. My goal was to raise enough money to cover the cost of materials and to be able to make a donation the farm. With the size of the project, this was no small task! This project would not have been possible without the generous donations made by family and friends. The purchasing, availability of building materials along with supply chain issues made this a more difficult job than I originally realized. I have learned patience and perseverance through this process. By December everything was in order and ready to be built. The run-in shed took two days and seven people to assemble. I am very proud of this project and happy that George has a shelter of his own.

## 2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL FARMYARD PARTY

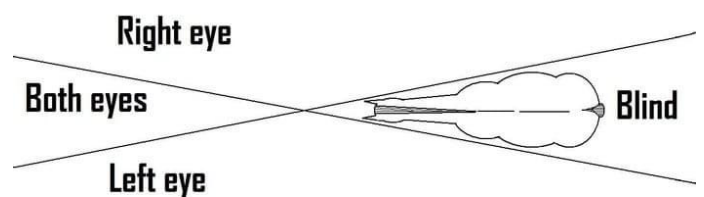
On September 18th, we held our 2nd Annual Farmyard Party at Shepard Meadows Farm. With over 200 people in attendance, guests enjoyed a silent auction, music, an amazing BBQ and each other! The Farmyard Party is our biggest fundraiser of the year, with funds supporting operations, our herd, programs, and the facility. This year was another record-setting year with old friends and new - we raised over \$40,000!

*Save the date for this year's event: Saturday, September 17th.  
You won't want to miss it!*



## FUN FACT

A horse's range of vision is 350 degrees with two small blind spots, one directly in front and one directly behind them.





## ELMER IS FAMOUS!

Elmer is one of five equines in the U.S. to be honored, and Shepard Meadows is recognized as an Equus Foundation Guardian:

### ELMER'S NOMINATION:

Elmer is a young rescue mule that came to the therapeutic riding center in May of 2019. We were told he was a five-year-old, but we later learned during a veterinary exam that he was actually two years old. When he arrived, he was very untrusting. It was a struggle to put on a halter and he was very skittish and shy. He arrived after a winter of neglect where his ears were frost-bitten, and he had little human contact since birth. He was very concerned about food, always "dancing" around when fed to be sure his food wasn't stolen. After he arrived, he suffered from an extreme skin condition where his hair was falling out in patches; while there was no underlying disease, we believe it was stress related and the result of neglect. He has since grown and shed his coat very nicely.

In the two years that Elmer has been at the center he has become a visitor, volunteer, participant, and staff favorite. He has a stall in our small barn with access to a pen around the barn so that he can move in and out freely. He has become a companion and best friend (over the fence line) to our very stable therapy horse, George. He keeps an eye on the entire herd, communicating news, such as dinner time and when horses are being brought to the barn for program. He is a good babysitter for those who might otherwise be alone in our barn for a short time between programming. His appaloosa spots couldn't be more special with his red coat.

His "whimper" is unpredictable, yet adorable and welcoming. All guests who he calls to feel special. We have begun partnering him with our Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy Program as well as with Youth Development and Equine-Assisted Learning. He is especially responsive to youth with ADHD and ASD. His movements and communications are very clear, and youth often relate to him.

Elmer has come a long way in his two years at the center. He is now easily haltered and leads well to and from the rings. The herd of ten therapy horses have grown to appreciate his uniqueness and enjoy watching him. We will continue working with him in our unmounted programs. We are planning on him being with us at the farm for several decades more. He is a special creature who deserves all the love and attention he gets. Go Elmer!

*The EQUUS Foundation is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2021 Platinum Performance Horse Welfare Awards. Five EQUUS Foundation Guardian charities received a \$500 cash award and a \$500 gift card for Platinum Performance products to be used by the charity for the care of one of their horses.*

*"We are truly honored to support the EQUUS Foundation and the incredible work that they do to keep America's horses safe with purposeful lives and loving homes. Congratulations to the recipients of the 2020 Platinum Performance Horse Welfare Awards. We celebrate all the deserving applicants for their complete transparency and wonderful effort in protecting horses and appreciating the impact they have on each of us," said Emily Smith, MS, Platinum Performance.*

*"We are so proud to be associated with Platinum Performance," said Lynn Coakley, EQUUS Foundation President. "The Platinum Performance Awards program is really special because it benefits specific horses. It's wonderful to be able to provide comfort to horses being rehabilitated by charities that are making them ready for their next homes and charities that are partnering with horses to improve the well-being of people."*

*Only those charities that undergo the EQUUS Foundation's comprehensive and unique verification process and receive the EQUUS Foundation Guardian designation are eligible to receive financial support from the EQUUS Foundation.*

## VOLUNTEER UPDATE

Fall of 2021 and Winter of 2022 have provided some wonderful opportunities for volunteers at Shepard Meadows! Our volunteer program has grown and expanded to include high school students through senior adults. They are awesome! We could never offer all the programs and services here at the farm if it were not for such a great group of willing and capable volunteers.

Volunteering goes two ways: we at Shepard Meadows (both staff and students) certainly benefit from all the talented individuals who donate their time and talent to all help us with our needs, but the volunteers themselves also benefit from giving. Please enjoy the following two testimonials which were written by current volunteers and who find their time here so personally satisfying!



*Sharon and new friend Paula hard at work with Evening Chores*

### FROM SHARON:

In March of 2020, I left my job at Wal-Mart after 19 years. I was afraid of the pandemic, and I did not want to bring those deadly germs home to my husband, my sons and their families. In June of 2021, I had enough of staying home and I wanted to work with animals. The City of Bristol gave me the final incentive to volunteer at Shepard Meadows, a property tax credit of \$300.00 for volunteering (last year it was 25 hours) usually it is 50 hours. The 10 horses, a mule and some goats quickly became my new 4-legged new friends. I also made a lot of human friends too. During the summer I became interested in the History of Shepard Meadows, who the previous owners were and the history of the farm when it was first built. Their stories made me appreciate the animals and the humans at Shepard Meadows even more.

### FROM MYA:

I applied to volunteer at Shepard Meadows after working on a goat farm with my 4H program. I love animals and want to expand this interest. When I first came to Shepard Meadows I was dealing with severe social anxiety and low confidence. I discovered that I was quite nervous around horses, so I enrolled in a couple of sessions of unmounted lessons. As I started to get comfortable around the horses I started to open-up and talk to some of the other volunteers I would work with. Fast forward to a year later and I've made some good connections with the people at the farm. Shepard Meadows has raised my confidence substantially and increased my interest in trying new things.

Now I help in programs by grooming and tacking up horses for lessons, then leading the horses in riding lessons with students who are just learning how to steer and control their mounts. I love this responsibility and feel so proud that the instructors at Shepard Meadows depend upon me and like how I handle the horses and assist the students. This has truly helped build my confidence in so many ways!



*Mya with Molly*

Join our team! If you or someone you know would be interested in volunteering at Shepard Meadows, please fill out an application, which can be found on our website. Questions and inquiries can be sent to Sister Ann, Volunteer Coordinator: [volunteer@shepardmeadows.org](mailto:volunteer@shepardmeadows.org). Orientations and trainings will resume in late winter/early spring, or as needed.

## WELCOME NEW STAFF

This winter we welcomed an additional Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) to the farm to support our growing equine-assisted psychotherapy program – Amy Kievit Barrett. Amy is the owner of Strides in Wellness, LLC., a LCSW and a PATH Certified Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning (ESMHL). She earned her Bachelor’s degree in Psychology from Hobart and William Smith Colleges and her Masters in Social Work from UConn School of Social Work. She has provided therapy in an extended day treatment program and schools, but found her calling with Equine Assisted Psychotherapy. Amy is trained in Natural Lifemanship and enjoys incorporating the therapeutic benefits of horses into her practice. Amy has been a volunteer at Shepard Meadows for many years and is thrilled to now be practicing at this location. In her spare time Amy enjoys traveling, exercising, and baking.



*Amy pictured with Moses*

## 3<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

The first Sunday of December is our Annual Holiday Open House. The farmhouse is decorated for the holidays, we serve hot chocolate and cookies, have crafts for the children, and farmyard tours to meet and visit with our therapy horses – all free of charge! Like our Farmyard Party, this year was a record-setter. We had over 200 individuals and families attend. It was marvelous, and we couldn't have done it without our dedicated volunteers who helped with parking, refreshments, crafts, cookies, and tours. The event is such a fun way to begin the holidays, get outside and meet new people. We look forward to next year when we celebrate our 4th year!



*Visitors at our Holiday Open House*

## COLLABORATIONS & GRANTS

We are pleased to announce that we have received a grant from Farmington Savings Bank to support a year-long equine-assisted services program working with the Prudence Crandall Center. The program will be supported by an in-house Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning alongside one of our Licensed Clinical Social Workers, and staff from the PCC. Prudence Crandall Center, Inc. is the oldest domestic violence program in Connecticut. PCC offers comprehensive services to women, men, and children who are victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Prudence Crandall Center Is Dedicated to helping individuals achieve lives free of domestic violence by providing care, advocacy, support and education.

### The Main Street Community Foundation – Women & Girls Fund.

To improve the quality of life for women & girls in our community at \$2,000.00.

### Wounded Warrior Project

Scholarship for up to ten visits of horsemanship or therapy for enrolled veterans.

## NEW FARM FRIENDS

Welcome Evelyn and Clara, two new goat friends, donated to us from Flamig Farm in West Simsbury. They are a mother and daughter team (Evelyn is 8 and a Pygmy goat, Clara was born in 2021 and is half Pygmy and half Swiss Alpine).



## CONGRATS DR. WEBER

Our veterinarian, Dr. Christopher Weber won the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, International, Region One Veterinarian of the YEAR for 2021! Dr. Weber works out of Salmon Brook Veterinary in Granby, CT.



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## PATH INTL. REGIONAL UPDATE

Did you know that our Executive Director, Shelly Whitlock-Pope, Ed.D. was the PATH, Intl Region One Representative for the states of Connecticut and Rhode Island for the past two years and now Emily Eschner, our Program Director is taking the reins? In December Emily organized the State of CT annual meeting for our membership, with a virtual professional development on incorporating music therapy with therapeutic riding. Our very own Sister Ann Frances Thompson, FSE, MT-BC, CTRI/ESMHL and her colleague Janis Parker, CTRI presented. Shepard Meadows is proudly connected to our professional association/accrediting body. In fact, in late April, we will be hosting the Regional Conference (NE U.S. and SE Canada) for over 100 professionals at the farm over the course of two days. That's some serious professional development, and we're just the team to make it happen!

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## CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Our capital campaign to build a new barn and learning center continues. With 14 stalls, we have 11 already sponsored at \$7,500.00 each. The wash stall and tack room are also sponsored at \$25,000.00 in total. We are well on our way and excited about the prospect of construction in 2022! We'll keep you updated, and you can help us by spreading the word. Donations of any amount help us meet our goal of \$800,000.00. Donations can be made on our website [www.shepardmeadows.org](http://www.shepardmeadows.org), or via USPS to 733 Hill Street, Bristol, CT 06010.

*Like us on Facebook and follow us on Instagram to stay up to date on the latest center news!*

*Facebook: /shepardmeadows Instagram: @shepard\_meadows*