

NEWSLETTER

SPRING / SUMMER

WELCOME TO THE HERD!

Welcome Doodle and Athena to our very special herd!

Doodle's registered name is "Waterford's Crescent Moon", and he has a star on his forehead. Doodle arrived in February and after a few weeks of training he was ready to begin working in our community riding program. The Malkowski family is his sponsor for 2024.

Athena arrived in March of this year and has been in training, recently working in unmounted and mounted programming. She is a black and white paint with a blaze and snip. Athena is sponsored by Pearl O'Rourke for 2024.

Both Doodle and Athena come to us with varied experiences that help to prepare them for their work at Shepard Meadows. The work we do is different than anything the horses have done before coming to partner with us. They commonly work in several different programs throughout the day, so we spend a great deal of time on training. Also remember that our horses are typically handled by several different people over the course of a day, and even more over the course of a week's time, so we are very specific about our training for staff and volunteers too.



Doodle (above) is a Connemara gelding born in 2009. He stands 15 hands high and his color is buckskin.

MENTOR PROGRAM



Shepard Meadows is proud to have been recognized as an Equus Foundation 2024 Mentor, which is awarded to Equus Foundation Guardian charities that have met the highest standards for business and equine welfare practices!



Athena (above) was born in 2007 and is a Spotted American Draft Horse who stands 16 hands high.



YEEHAW! GRAB YOUR TICKETS!

Join us at our biggest fundraiser of the year for a BBQ, live music, games, and silent and live auctions. Tour the farm and visit our therapy horses too! Did you know...our program fees only cover 33% of our actual operating expenses? Funds raised during the event enable us to provide for our horses and offer free programs to underserved members of the community and beyond. Your support is vital to our mission. We hope you'll join us!

Tickets start at \$75 per person. Visit our website www.shepardmeadows.org to purchase your tickets. Or better yet, bring some friends and grab a table of 12!

FIELD TRIPS

Horses are cool! Did you know they have been on Earth for over 55 million years? They have a lot to teach us!

Join us at Shepard Meadows for a fun and unique equine experience in a nature-filled environment. Working with our horses is educational and builds confidence, improves teamwork, and communication, and inspires social-emotional learning. Field trips are perfect for: school groups, human service agencies, home schoolers, and scout troops. Starting at \$20 per person. Contact us at program@shepardmeadows.org.

We had plenty of fun this summer with our school field trips – the Bristol Public Schools, Immanuel Lutheran, Institute of Living – The Webb School in the Valley, Oak Hill, Create Independence, and others. We hope to see you at the farm this fall!

Tonka (left) and Indy (right) help field trip participants learn horsemanship skills like grooming and leading.

GRATITUDE FOR OUR SUPPORTERS



On April 27th we celebrated our volunteers with our First Annual Volunteer Appreciation Picnic to coincide with National Volunteer Appreciation Week. Everyone had a fabulous time, and the food was marvelous!



We celebrated our 2nd Annual Giving Society Donor Club Get Together in June. Donors of \$1,000 or more spent the evening in our beautiful barn dining with the horses and being serenaded by Alek Rencurrel. The evening culminated in a double rainbow- securing our golden future for sure!



VETERANS PROGRAMMING

Shepard Meadows offers free unmounted programming to Veterans. Our Veterans program has had much growth in 2024. We have several Veterans that have found us on their own or through outreach efforts and we also have a referral from the Wounded Warrior Project. Veterans can participate individually, with a family member or friend, or as a group.

Robert (Bob) Blozzon M.Ed., a Peer Support member at the Healing & Recovery Program/PRRC at the VA Connecticut Healthcare System Newington Campus, has played a significant role this spring in organizing two groups to come to the farm. Bob is a USAF Veteran and has gone through equine programs himself, and he truly understands the needs of the Veterans attending. He has helped recruit and encourage Veterans to come to the farm and we have completed two four-week sessions, with another five-week session scheduled to begin at the end of August.



At Shepard Meadows, the Veterans engage in different equine experiences aimed at unwinding and connecting with nature, each other, and the special horses at the farm. Through these experiences they work on their communication skills, building connections, and finding peace and joy in the present moment. The interaction with horses provides a unique therapeutic experience, as horses live in the present moment and encourage authenticity and mindful interactions.

Since the spring, Shepard Meadows has had the privilege of serving over 20 Veterans through the program. If you are a Veteran or know a Veteran, please thank them for their service and encourage them to take a trip to the farm.



FAMILY FUN DAY

Each year we celebrate our riders by inviting their family members to ride with them. It's a way for our participants to demonstrate all they have learned and for family members to experience for themselves that riding is not as easy as it looks! Pictured above is Grayson with his mom, Brenda.

BY THE NUMBERS

So far this year, we have helped over 300 participants experience the magic of horses in over 2,000 sessions! We anticipate that number reaching 500 by the end of our fiscal year.

Total Participants			
322			
Youth (under 16)	Adolescents (16-21)	Adult (over 21)	Seniors (55+)
197	12	33	51

VOLUNTEER UPDATE



Volunteers Give Back to the Community!

We are fortunate to benefit from the generosity of others in the form of time and labor - our dedicated volunteers. We have a 26-acre farm with ten therapy horses and three goats, so there is always a lot to do. Thank you to the following organizations for helping us. If you or your organization are interested in volunteering, reach out to Laura Patrick, our Volunteer Coordinator at volunteer@shepardmeadows.org.

- United Way Day of Caring – Main Street Community Foundation, Double Tree, & First Bristol Credit Union
- Bristol Blues
- Lockton Companies



GRATEFUL FOR OUR GRANTORS IN 2024

- The Barnes Group
- Equus Foundation
- Horseware
- Infoshred
- Bristol Rotary Club
- Oliver Hoffman Foundation
- Community Development Block Grant
- Thomaston Savings Bank
- Acadia Insurance

SUMMER FUN FACT



Horses with pink skin are susceptible to sunburn. Horses with light-colored coats or white face markings – especially around the muzzle and eyes can be sunburned. Sun lotion can be applied to these areas for prevention.

BOARD RETREAT



This April, our Board of Directors held their first of three strategic planning meetings for 2024. Led by Michael Suchopar and Pearl O'Rourke, the meetings set our roadmap for the next three years. We've also updated our mission, vision and values.

Mission: To support the growth and overall well-being of all individuals, including those with special needs by providing equine-assisted services (EAS) in a safe, caring and professional environment.

Vision: To make a difference in the world, one person at a time, through creative, non-traditional, and experiential equine-assisted services (EAS) that are impactful and transformative for the self, family, and larger community. We envision connecting with, challenging, and empowering individuals through a holistic lens while bringing mindfulness and joy for all ages.

Values: Community, Compassion, Inclusivity, Innovation, Transformation

**We believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every individual. SMEC is committed to promoting diversity, ensuring equity, and fostering inclusion (DEI).*

ADAPTIVE RIDING: WHAT'S IN A NAME?



What is Adaptive Riding?

This fall we will begin the process of transitioning from the term **Therapeutic Riding** to **Adaptive Riding**. While the terms are somewhat interchangeable, we understand them as being different.

Adaptive riding is a type of Equine-Assisted Service (EAS) that provides recreational horseback riding lessons for people with and without special needs. For us, the term adaptive riding is better aligned with what we do every day here at the farm. Our lessons are tailored to each rider's individual needs and learning style, and can help improve their physical, cognitive, emotional, and social well-being. It's also a recreational activity that is challenging and fun!

This change is in line with our transition from Shepard Meadows Therapeutic Riding Center to Shepard Meadows Equestrian Center a few years ago. The industry terminology changed and began referring to our services as Equine-Assisted Services or EAS. EAS has three umbrellas: horsemanship, learning and therapy. Adaptive Riding falls under horsemanship while hippotherapy and psychotherapy fall under the therapy umbrella because they incorporate a licensed clinical professional.

DID YOU KNOW?

Horses have long been recognized for their remarkable long-term memory, which plays a significant role in their training and overall well-being. Understanding and respecting the equine mind can provide insights into how to effectively train and care for these amazing animals. They say that their strong memory can be attributed to their evolutionary history as open plains-grazing animals. A horse's ability to link experiences or specific circumstances, including physical surroundings, sounds, and smells, was crucial for survival.

Horses possess an almost photographic memory of negative experiences. For example, remembering the clothing, vehicle, or scent of the veterinarian or farrier after a traumatic experience. Positive and negative reinforcements impact equine behavior greatly. It is easier to prevent negative experiences than to erase them. This is why it's so important that every experience with our horses is thoughtful, meaningful, and positive. A simple change, such as the movement of a piece of equipment near the barn, or an empty shavings bag left in the barn aisle, can initiate a horse's defensive response. We need to think as if we are horses!

The potential for horses to retain and recall negative experiences years later stresses the importance of establishing positive and trusting relationships. Knowing these lasting impacts of positive and negative interactions, we can make informed decisions in their training, schooling, and overall handling and care.





NOW OFFERING: EQUINE FACILITATION & RETREATS



Shepard Meadows has the facility and certified staff available to support your organizational or business/corporate retreat, with full and half day options. We offer equine-assisted workshops on a variety of developmental topics. We can design a hands-on horsemanship program to meet your unique needs.

Reach out to us to organize your next meeting or retreat here at the farm – think outside of the box! Perfect for strategic planning retreats, business meetings, and team-building activities. Contact Program Director Emily Eschner at program@shepardmeadows.org for more information.

QUARTERLY LEARNING SERIES CONTINUES

Shepard Meadows hosts a **FREE Quarterly Speaker Series** in our Learning Center. Topics are varied, and have included Equine Health, Equine Assisted Gestalt Coaching, and Understanding Disabilities, to name a few! Our most recent talk on EMDR took place on Saturday, August 17th, led by SMEC's Nicole Welch, LCSW.

Sign-up for emails on our website or follow us on social media to find out more, and keep up with all of our events!

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-  [Facebook.com/ShepardMeadows](https://www.facebook.com/ShepardMeadows)
-  www.ShepardMeadows.org



SUMMER EQUINE EXPERIENCE

This week, eight young equine enthusiasts joined us for Summer Equine Experience. In addition to a daily riding lesson, they learned horsemanship skills such as grooming, leading, and feeding.

Each day included a horse-themed craft, and an in-depth, hands-on lesson on horse care topics such as first aid, horseshoeing, and stall cleaning. Our campers will leave knowing what it takes to care for a horse!