



YOUR NEIGH-BORHOOD HULLABALOO

## Riding Blind *The story of Wren Blae Zimmerman* by Heather Carder

When I was growing up I was an avid reader and of course my collection included the well-known names of Margaret Henry, C.W. Anderson and Walter Farley just to name a few. But one of the stories I remember most vividly was about a paralyzed girl who was determined to ride her horse in a jumping show, and it was titled "Throw your Heart Over". The story was written about a young girl who found the horse of her dreams and how she spent all year learning to ride and bonding with this horse, attending her first horse show and spending all of her free time at the barn. Later in the year when school started up again she was involved in a terrible car accident that left her paralyzed from the waist down. The story is about her journey of healing and how she willed herself to once again ride, communicate with her horse and accomplish what everyone told her was impossible. In the last chapter she finally rode her little mare again in a local competition, with legs flapping behind her and her hands twisted into her horse's mane she jumped a course by mentally throwing her heart over each fence and providing her horse with the confidence needed to carry her through, and amidst the conformists whispering behind her back and taking exception to her sloppy way of riding, she persevered and won her class.

That story imparted a lot of lessons for my young mind – such as believing in yourself and trusting in your horse and mentally being

in the game at all times— and a recent article brought these memories and lessons back to the forefront. The article was written about Wren Blae Zimmerman, a talented show jumper out of Lexington, Kentucky. For those who have not heard of Wren, she is a para-equestrian who is legally blind and has been actively show jumping for the past 3 years, who demonstrates the passion and vision that it takes to not only compete in the arena with able-bodied riders, but to win!

Growing up with an inert love for horses but in a horse-less home, it was not until Wren was a senior in high school that she got the diagnosis that would change her life forever. In the fall of 2006 doctors first started noticing that there was something wrong with Wren's eyes; although she had worn corrective lenses and glasses for a number of years, now doctors were not able to provide any combination of lenses to allow Wren to see 20/20. After many consults with specialists and a plethora of tests, in December of that year Wren learned that she had a form of juvenile macular degeneration – a rare condition that is found in one in 20,000 children and teenagers – called Stargart's Macular Dystrophy, a progressive degenerative eye disease that would eventually render Wren legally blind.

Over the next few years Wren's eyesight continued to degrade and she was unable to do many things that she once took for granted – like driving, reading and even recognizing faces. Committed to not let this disability define her, she earned her bachelor's degree with honors of distinction from Queen's University (Ontario, Canada)

and was set to pursue two master's degrees – in business and sports management. But as her vision continued to decline she found herself with more introspective thoughts on the importance of quality of life and happiness. With the hard realization that her life would never be the same and how unlikely it was that she would ever get her vision back, Wren decided to put everything on hold and pursue her life-long dream of learning to ride and particularly to jump horses. Over the next 5 years Wren's dogged determination saw her go from a true beginner rider to jumping and competing in rated shows against able-bodied riders in the 1-meter jumpers.

Her equestrian journey began when she started lessons at a therapeutic riding center in exchange for helping with the program. Over time she became comfortable with horses on the ground and in the saddle and was becoming an accomplished rider constantly in-tune with her horse; but she wanted more...she wanted to jump! Her instructor at the center simply told her that because of her vision there was no way she would ever be able to jump horses, and other trainers she reached out to offered comments such as "I don't want to work with you", "I'm not comfortable putting you on my horses" and "You will never be able to jump horses no matter how good of a rider you become". Of course, this only motivated Wren more to chase her dreams.

Then she found her first jumping trainer, Vicki Zacharias, who took Wren on as a student without hesitation.

*Continued on back page...*

Wildwood Farm  
CLIPS & CLOPS  
Oak Harbor

February 2020

# Equestrian Perms

Just when you think you've seen it all...

Kempton Park Racecourse teamed with celebrity stylist Sascha Breuer to add some glamour to two racehorses, Moral and Robyn as part of an advertising campaign for the racecourse's Ladies Day on September 5<sup>th</sup>.

Kempton Park Racecourse is a Horse Racing track and entertainment and conference venue in Sunbury-on-Thames, Surrey, England and was opened in July of 1898. It hosts National Hunt Racing, Flat Racing, and the most famous race: The King George VI Chase held every Boxing day. Sadly, it was announced in 2017 that the 280-acre facility will be closed following the local authority's "Call for Sites" to address unmet local housing needs.



Stylist Sascha Breuer, whose regular client list includes Naomi Campbell, Eva Herzigova and Elle McPherson, took 8 hours to beautify the race horses with 16 hair pieces. This was Sascha's first time working with horses and she was surprised at how into the process the horses became, especially Robyn. "I found her checking out my work and nodding her head with approval when a piece was added – she was quite fun to work with!". Perhaps not so much with Moral who started looking glum about half-way through the process, but did go on to win his race the following day (yes, Moral is a boy) so maybe they are on to something!



Our store is open 11:00am – 6:00pm Monday, Wednesday, Friday & Saturday



Shop online!  
[www.thenoblehorsevintage.com](http://www.thenoblehorsevintage.com)  
[www.theurbanequustrian.com](http://www.theurbanequustrian.com)

## New Items for Winter





'DO YOU SPEAK APPALOOSAN?'

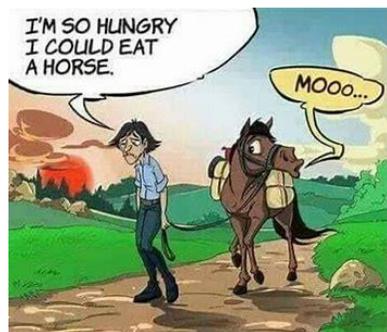


Who did the breeder call when his horse was possessed by an evil spirit?

An Exhorsist!

How do you get a rich horse?  
Find one named Rich!

Where do horses go when they're sick?  
The Horsepital



What's the hardest part about learning to ride a horse?

The Ground



A cowboy buys a horse from the town pastor. The pastor explains, "To make the horse go you gotta yell 'Thank God!' And to make it stop yell 'Hallelujah!'" The cowboy rides off. He rides all day and starts to nod off in the saddle when he notices he is about to ride straight over a cliff. Searching his memory he yells to the horse "Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" The horse grinds to a stop just at the edge of the cliff. The cowboy wipes the sweat off his forehead. "Phew", the cowboy sighs, "Thank God!"

## WILDWOOD FARM B&B



### This is your moment.

Today at Wildwood Farm B&B

**A school teacher**  
*Discovered where a horse likes to be scratched, learned that body language is important – and in the liquid silence of a moonless night learned to breathe...*

Immerse yourself in the equestrian world at Wildwood Farm B&B located on beautiful Whidbey Island.

Our ranch has a long history of igniting the spark between horses and humans, whether you want a small introduction or total immersion.

Come experience the power of possibility with these magnificent creatures and explore the abundance of silent repose.

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WILDWOOD FARM HAS IT ALL!

## PACIFIC NORTHWEST RIDING ACADEMY



### WILL YOU?

Will you be the one that brings me carrots and hugs? And let me carry you on my back as we explore the world?



### WILL YOU?

Will you whisper your secrets and dreams to me when we share silent moments together after a long day?



[WWW.PNWRiding.com](http://WWW.PNWRiding.com)

# Test your Valentine Smarts!

Please turn in your entries by 3/31/2020

1. Who was the legendary Benedictine Monk who invented Champagne? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What was Shakespeare's most romantic play? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What kind of flowers are traditionally given to symbolize love? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What other gift sometimes accompanies a bouquet of red roses? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What day was first created by Pope Gelasius in 500 AD, then deleted from the Roman calendar of saints by Pope Paul VI in 1969? \_\_\_\_\_
6. "Valentine" was the name given to what type of early Christian? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What day is Valentine's day held on? \_\_\_\_\_
8. As well as being the unofficial patron saint of love, what occupation is St Valentine also believed to be the patron of? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Today we associate love with the heart, but this wasn't always the case. In medieval times, which internal organ was believed to cause love? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Which Roman god was either depicted as a plump cherub with a bow and arrow, or as a handsome teenager? \_\_\_\_\_
11. In Japan, what do women give men on Valentine's Day? \_\_\_\_\_
12. If you're quick to show your feelings, where do you wear your heart? \_\_\_\_\_
13. What is the approximate date of the first valentine ever sent? \_\_\_\_\_

## Valentine Smarts Contest is open to all

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

The winner will be announced in our April Newsletter and will receive a Gift Certificate to Toppins in Oak Harbor. (Try to do this without GOOGLE!)

**Congratulations to Amber Barthelomew for her winning New Year's Smarts entry from the January**

## Nutrition Corner

### THE IMPORTANCE OF SALT IN THE HORSE'S DIET

Salt, a combination of sodium and chloride, is essential to equine health and needs to be provided at sufficient levels in the diet each day.

**Sodium** helps tissues and organs, like the large intestine, retain water which is essential for proper fermentation and movement of feedstuffs through the digestive tract. Sodium also works with the brain to trigger "thirst" when more hydration is needed, and it helps move glucose across the cell membranes where it is used as a fuel source. If sodium levels are insufficient a horse can show signs of fatigue, muscle weakness and impaired performance.

**Chloride** is essential to the digestive system and produces hydrochloric acid; it controls the excitability of nervous tissues and muscle; and – like sodium – also works with the body's acid base balance (PH level), which is important in keeping the fluids in the body at a neutral PH so the body functions normally.

The average salt requirement for a horse is 1-2 tablespoons per day. Triple Crown feeds provide guarantees of salt, as well as breakdowns of sodium and chloride per lb, and you also need to take your forage into consideration as this will contain sodium/chloride as well. Keep in mind that requirements will vary not only with different life stages, but with factors such as environment and work load. For example, a 1,100 lb horse in heavy work needs about 28 grams of sodium and 73 grams of chloride compared to that same horse at simple maintenance levels of 11/44 respectively. It is not recommended to force-feed your horse salt, rather offer free choice loose salt or a plain white salt block.

**Electrolytes.** Most horses will not need an additional electrolyte supplement if their salt requirements are met. However, horses working extensive periods of time in hot conditions or horses living in hot and humid conditions may need electrolytes, which are a combination of sodium, chloride, potassium, magnesium and calcium to help replenish nutrients lost sweating.

### WILDWOOD FARM AND TRIPLE CROWN FEEDS.

Our partnership with Triple Crown began in 2014 through a promotion with the USEF encouraging farm members to compare their current feeding programs with Triple Crown products. We have found the TC products to be superior over other products primarily because of the Equi-mix technology and the research support of a leading edge team including independent representatives of Equine Universities, Medical clinics and top level riders and trainers.

## In Memory of Dannica

2005-2020

### FOUR FEET

I have done mostly what most men do,  
And pushed it out of my mind.  
But I can't forget, if I wanted to,  
Four- feet trotting behind.

Day after day, the whole day through  
Wherever my road inclined  
Four-feet said "I'm coming with you!"  
And trotted along behind.

Now I must go by some other round,  
Which I shall never find  
Somewhere that does not carry the sound  
Of Four-Foot trotting behind.

-Rudyard Kipling



Dannica was adopted from a shelter in the spring of 2005 when she was just 6 weeks old; she was found wandering around the railroad tracks in Skagit Valley by herself. It was love at first sight – with her big upright ears and long snout she really looked like a young fox! When Danni was about 3 years old we attended the Scottsdale Arabian show for the first time and it was there that an admirer and canine judge told us he thought she was a Carolina Dog, or American Dingo and when we sent in for a DNA test through the registry it was confirmed that she was indeed – her DNA was slightly different than domestic dogs and closer to the wolf with more primitive traits. And her personality was true to a more-wild dog; it took her a few years to really bond with Gregg and I, and although she was polite she never was a lap dog or wanted much more than a pat on the head. She loved her toys but could never understand the idea of fetch. She was a great hunter of vermin and always killed immediately – she also dug little lairs all over the farm that she would rest in and occasionally drag her dead vermin to. Extremely intelligent, Danni caught on quickly to everything and was the most trainable dog I have ever met, and so quiet we didn't even know she could bark until she was 9 years old! A wonderful travel companion and friend with a young soul, Wildwood Farm was the only home she was lucky to know ... and her energy will surely be missed for a long time.

## THE INTERVIEW

*With Christi Vermiglio, client and owner of River*

**What is your idea of perfect Happiness?** I believe that “perfect” is one of the most detrimental words introduced into modern language. It does not exist, and we torment ourselves chasing it. I try to find happiness in small moments. It is a cat purring in my lap, spending the last of a day with my horses at the barn, sitting by the fireplace on a rainy day with my husband and dog, an unexpectedly beautiful sunrise or getting precious time with my mom and dad.

**What is your greatest Fear?** Losing my husband early in life.

**What historical figure do you most identify with?** Hmm... Teddy Roosevelt maybe, seeing God in all that is created and regarding it as sacred and worth protecting.

**What is your favorite journey?** The one I am taking right now.

**What living person do you most admire?** My mom, she is the right kind of crazy.

**On what occasion do you lie?** So, I just finished reading the book “Liespotting” and I learned a lot about this topic. The 2 categories I’d fall most often into would be to spare someone’s feelings and to avoid unnecessary conflict.

**What do you most dislike about your appearance?** I don’t really think too often about this, I don’t think anyone should spend much time contemplating it.

**Which living person do you most despise?** Despise is a strong word...the death of tolerance. I would say at this time, No one.

**What words or phrase do you most over-use?** This is probably a question best asked to those I speak with, I have no idea.

**What is your greatest regret?**

For a long time it was moving to Washington. Slowly that has shifted but I’m not sure yet what would replace it as regret.

**What or who is the greatest love of your life?** Father God, in everything he is faithful.

**When and where were you happiest?** If there is a scale for happiness, riding Ben around our farm in Michigan is well up there, as is off-roading in Colorado and Utah with my husband; but I believe my happiest days are ahead of me.

**Which talent would you most like to have?** The gift of mediation, the ability to speak to people in conflict and help resolve the conflict.

**What is your current state of mind?** Thoughtful – I’m answering questions.

**If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?** My time-management skills, I’m always running late.

**If you could change one thing about your family, what would it be?** The way in which they communicate when everyone is in one room.

**What is your most treasured possession?** my animals.

**What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?** Despair and depression.

**Where would you like to live?** Wow...so I loved living in Tustin Ranch, CA and Tipton, MI but I think now I’d like to live somewhere with a milder climate and sandier soil with a more Midwestern social culture; wherever that is.

**What is your most marked characteristic?** The only thing I can think of as a characteristic is that I have no poker face...anyone can tell what I think. Again, though, I feel like this is a

question best asked of those who know me rather than me, a characteristic can only be marked if others notice it. So how can I know?

**What is the quality you most like in a person?** Authenticity, genuineness.

**What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?** Deplore is a strong word, I can’t say I deplore anything in myself. I work constantly though to maintain a consistency in routine, I struggle with distraction constantly.

**What is the trait you most deplore in others?** Again, deplore is a strong word. I most actively avoid those who talk fast and are pushy in their approach when engaging.

**What do you consider the most over-rated virtue?** I Think it’s love, as defined by Disney. As a culture we compromise too much in hopes of finding it, and trade off virtues such as trust, loyalty and integrity.

**What is your greatest extravagance?** LOL..Well, obviously horses. They are my greatest extravagance and as vital as air to me.

**What do you consider your greatest achievement?** I hope I have not accomplished it yet. I am very proud of the women’s living history program I developed for the Edison Institute many years ago, though.

**What is your favorite occupation?** So if this is any occupation, Neuroscience is fascinating to me. What has been learned about the brain. If this is for me personally it would be hard to pick/ I loved my carriage driving days at Greenfield Village, the sidesaddle program there, working at pony camp and after college probably the telematics data acquisition and analysis work at Chrysler’s CPG for the OBD team.

**How would you like to die?** Quickly!

# Wildwood Farm CLIPS & CLOPS Oak Harbor

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Oak Harbor WA 98277

## **Riding Blind** continued from page 1

After 3 years of hard work training and competing, Wren decided to move from Portland, OR to Lexington KY so she could work on her goals more seriously and she found an amazing trainer-Nea Stevens at Finuel Farm- to help her realize her goal of making the USEF Show Jumping Ranking list and competing in the 2024 Olympics, possibly becoming the first blind show jumper to compete in the Olympic Games!

To understand how limited Wren's vision is, think about when you get out of the shower and the mirror is blurry and foggy – this is what Wren sees peripherally. Compound that by erasing the field of vision directly in front of you and replacing it with a sparkly blob. The “sparkle” is her brain using the colors from her peripheral vision and connecting it to what she sees in front of her. This results in her not being able to see small objects or a person walking towards her or people's faces, and colors blend together.

One of the most complicated elements in Wren's riding is her system for learning the jump course. For most riders it's a simple process of walking the course, counting the distance between jumps and taking note of where each jump is and seeing the pattern, but Wren has had to adapt to a different approach to learning the course, which is a structured and meticulous process with no margin for error. Here is how she navigates:

**STEP 1:** She walks the perimeter and divides the course into a four-quadrant grid, then she stands at each jump with her coach and is told how far away the jump is and its angle.

**STEP 2:** Next her trainer has a white board with magnets which turns into an exact replica of where each jump is on the course. Each magnet has the correct color that corresponds to a specific individual jump.

**STEP 3:** An aide draws the course in one color and the jump off round in a second color. Each jump will have a name, a color associated with it and a specific direction so it will look something like this: 1<sup>st</sup> brush jump is red, go right, 2<sup>nd</sup> flower jump is green, go left. Memorizing the course takes Wren a few hours, which means she needs to start early to be prepared for her class.

When asked how she knows how far away her horse is to a jump, she said, “He knows his job” and she leaves the jumping to him. She projects confidence in the saddle so that her horse stays calm and collected, saying, “He always gets me to the other side of the fence.”

Through all of her achievements, the harsh reality is that Wren has limitations. Not only is living without eyesight challenging, it is taxing in many ways. There are physical, psychological, temporal, social and financial costs of being legally blind that don't allow Wren the luxury of pursuing her dreams to the level she would like; that is something I think all of us can understand to a degree. But horses have given her a window of freedom from this disability, and riding has given her back her confidence and a sense of independence that she thought she would never have again. Riding horses has allowed her to look forward, to dream and to hope again. To learn more about Wren visit her website at <https://www.wrenblae.com>