

4STEPS MIRROR 2023

4STEPS Therapeutic Riding Program

5367 Sixty Foot Rd, Parsonsburg MD 21849

410-835-8814 giddyup4steps@aol.com www.4stepstrp.org

4STEPS Therapeutic Riding Program is a 501c3 charitable organization

January 2023

The Power of Herd Diversity

Listing the contributions of the 4STEPS' horses is lengthy and this *Newsletter* focuses on the highlights that the diversity of our herd offers. Diversity is a critical element in building a community and providing equine assisted services (EAS) for individual differences. Having a diverse herd allows for the center to offer a large variety of services to our diverse group of participants. Individual horses may differ not only by breed but by color, height, age, build, temperament, gender and many other characteristics. What they share in common is their equine heritage. While there is an astonishing variety of breeds worldwide, 4STEPS horses represent a few. Below is a list of our horses and the breeds they represent.

Breeds of 4STEPS horses

Standardbred - The Standardbred is often described as "honest". He is robust, plain, rugged, capable of performing any job, and is one of the equine world's most well-rounded breeds. Not only is he the fastest racing breed in harness, he also excels off the racetrack. **Shep and Zander**, Diamond, Zorro



Connemara Pony – The Connemara Pony is native to Wild Atlantic Coast of Ireland. They are kind, caring, willing and trusting. They have a gentle disposition, love human affection, are inquisitive and very easy to handle. The Connemara pony is a safe and sensible breed, which makes them a fantastic mount for both children and adults alike. They are extremely intelligent and very trainable. **Whimsey and James**

Draft Cross - Draft crosses come in many sizes, colors, and configurations. A cross is generally the progeny of any draft breed such as a Belgian or Percheron, bred with a light breed such as a Thoroughbred or Quarter Horse. The crosses are generally lighter boned and more spirited than the pure draft, and are often used for riding, jumping, dressage, and harness work. **Nikki and Bob**



Norwegian Fjord – Native to Norway, The Fjord horse has a distinct appearance. The breed's conformation differs from many other breeds in that it is a blend of draft horse muscling and bone, with smaller size and greater agility. It has a strong, arched neck, sturdy legs and good feet, and a compact, muscular body. **Tilly and Annabelle**

Haflinger – Native to Germany/Italy, Haflinger horses are extremely social, relatively small, are always chestnut with flaxen mane and tail, have distinctive gaits described as energetic but smooth, and are well-muscled yet elegant. **Kitty and Caleigh**



Chincoteague Pony – Unique to Assateague Island, Chincoteague Ponies are known for their friendly and outgoing personalities. They have a gentle disposition and are small in stature, making them suitable for children. Chincoteague ponies are known to have strong hooves (they usually do not require shoes), a sturdy build, and resemble the mustang in many ways. They can come in many colors such as bay, chestnut, black, palomino, buckskin, and can be solid or pinto **Taffy and Adriana**



Arabian cross – sometimes in life you can put two things together that are great on their own and get a match made in heaven, like peanut butter and chocolate. The Half-Arabian is a cross that builds on the strengths of the purebred Arabian—athleticism, stamina, intelligence—and adds qualities from another breed to create horses suited for many disciplines - ***Belle Starr and Mocha*** waiting for Michael and Larry to return from checking snake shelters (see story below).

Unique Characteristics of Herd Diversity



Each type of equine has general qualities related to that breed which often makes them uniquely qualified for a particular service or for a particular client. Size and shape, for example, play an important role as evidenced by the fact that it is generally easier for a small child to ride a small pony than for the child to ride a large Draft. An individual with spastic muscles, from such conditions as multiple sclerosis and cerebral palsy, would be more suited for riding a narrow horse with a flowing gait like a Standardbred, rather than a chunky Haflinger Pony with quick steps and jerky movements. A child with autism who likes the stimulation he gets from a quick stepping horse would be more attentive and more relaxed than if he was riding a slower paced easy going mount. Clients with anxiety prefer

a more reliable quiet sure footed, agile horse rather than an alert dominant horse.

Having a diverse herd strengthens our center. **Kitty and Mallie**

We can learn from every horse and their temperament. Take a moment to look at each horse and figure out what characteristics they have. Do those match up with your own? Or do they balance out your personality by having opposite traits?

Horses Temperament

Horse temperament is described as, "*the general behavior of horses determined by the type of breed, age, and environment.*" Determining a horse's temperament is important to understand their personality so you can meet their individual needs and find a job that is suited to them. This must be taken into consideration when pairing a horse and rider, especially important when it comes to choosing a horse for a therapeutic program. **Diamond and Marianna**



Certain breeds of horses are known to have general qualities. Arabians, considered 'hot blooded', tend to be higher energy and responsive. They are agile and built for speed and are great for distance running and racing. Horses like Fjords, Haflingers and Drafts are known as 'cold blooded' tending to be gentle and calm. They are heavy bodied, strong boned and built for jobs like pulling carts.

Although these general characteristics are applied to breeds each horse is different. Environment, such as a horse's history, upbringing and training, plays a part in temperament. It also means that horses learn and adapt when introduced to new location, people and methods of teaching.

The way to gauge a horse's temperament is through observation and experience. Temperament can range from dominant, stubborn, high energy, reactive, inquisitive, to relaxed, willing, serene, or lazy. Some horses can embody things throughout the spectrum. Once the horse's temperament is determined the next step in a good coupling is to figure out the rider's personality.

It would seem that a spirited rider would be a good fit for a similar horse. We have a tendency to share our energy with the horse we are riding. A horse can feel our excitement or nerves, they can sense tension through our bodies and it may make them more nervous. A serene horse may be the best option for a rider that is more excitable. Just as they feel our energy we can feel theirs. Gentle horses have an uncanny way of calming even the most anxious riders.



*Marianna loves her horse **Diamond**, who can be standoffish and aloof. Marianna has unique qualities that bring out the soft, gentle energy of Diamond making them awesome partners.*

A rider who is shy and withdrawn may be drawn out of her shell by a higher energy horse. Although it would seem matching a horse's personality to a rider's would be intuitive, sometimes opposites attract and can bring out the best in the rider and horse.

Honoring Individual Differences in our Participants

Michala's Journey

Michala has been riding at 4STEPS for 5 years. She came to 4STEPS to continue healing from implant surgeries using equine therapies and therapeutic riding to help correct her scoliosis. Over the last few months she has undergone several unrelated surgeries. Within a few weeks after her last surgery Michala came to visit the farm and although she was not cleared for riding she was able to spend some quality time with her big, beautiful, furry black horse **Zorro**. **Zorro** is keen on recognizing Michala's pain and discomfort and helped by snuggling with her. Michala gave Zorro a big hug and a treat and sang a song from her favorite movie 'FIREWORKS'! When Michala hugged Zorro, Zorro hugged back!

Michala can't wait until March which is when her doctors expect she will be fully recovered and ready to get back in the saddle! The movement of the horse will help Michala's anxiety, tighten and strengthen her muscles and soft tissue. We all are looking forward to Spring!

Early Spring Riding Session begins the week of March 7th. Go to www.4stepstrp.org for volunteer and participant's application and registration.



4STEPS Annual Fall Fundraisers

A HUGE Thanks to all who participated in our Fall Fundraisers. Combining the *Halloween Ride/Walk-a-thon*, *The Holiday Online Giving Basket Auction* and *Giving Tuesday* we will be able to increase the number of scholarships for those families who cannot afford to pay for service fees. Thanks to our dedicated volunteers, our generous **SPONSORS**, and those who generously donated their time, money and spirit to make these annual events a success!!!



Programs to Serve a Variety of Needs

Riding, Rhythm and 'Rithmetic

With **Debbie's** and **Shep's** help **Aiden's** challenge was to throw rings on cones and in a barrel to demonstrate his visual connection to distance. Sounds easy but getting all the rings on cones and in the barrel takes practice and patience. Aiden excelled in this challenge!

Working with a volunteer math specialist we developed 8 math lessons adapted for 3rd through 7th grade special needs students. The lessons were designed to introduce and teach basic math skills using the horse, arena, trained volunteers, and instructors. Ten students enrolled in 2022 Spring. Many students were still working at home on remote learning and many were struggling with math. Improvement in math skills were evaluated through a pre- and post-assessment tool. Basic skills were evaluated. The skills assessed were basic counting, visuals, number sense, computation, communication, organization and pattern recognition, effort and self-reflection. Overall, students were engaged, were aware that they were learning math skills and parents were happy to have their math skills supplemented using horses and horsemanship as a motivator for learning.

In addition to math skills, the goals include improvement in posture, balance, muscular coordination, motor skills, sensory awareness and processing, body integration, communication, social skills, and horsemanship skills.



Thank you to our community business sponsors for their \$upport in funding our 2023 Newsletter and Riding Scholarships for 2023.

Becker Morgan Group, Salisbury

Kite Loft, Ocean City

Bank of Delmarva, Salisbury

Ocean Lanes, Ocean City

Winterplace Animal Hospital, Salisbury

Pocomoke Animal Hospital, Pocomoke City

Baywater Trading Co., Hebron

Megan Short, Mary Kay Distributor, Hebron

OC Import Service, Ocean City

Shore Wood Craft, Salisbury

A Personal Look Salon, Salisbury

A Shear Look Salon, Salisbury

Penelope's Lemonade Stand Salisbury



4STEPS Reptile Riders (reptileriders)

Each day the students groomed and saddled their horses and rode to the shelter sites. Students dismounted and tied their horses to trees at a designated staging site near the shelters. (see pic above of **Belle Starr** and **Mocha**). Each shelter was inspected for activity. Some of the students (shown **Michael** and **Larry**) lifted the shelters and others took pictures to document findings and collect data.

Students discussed the significance of smaller prey organisms which attract snakes to the shelters. Data was collected by students and one student compiled the data into a spreadsheet. Overall the project was a big success. The students learned about scientific research and snake habitat in the Wicomico Forest.



This project was funded by the Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore and was a continuation of a previous 2021 project funded by the Chesapeake Bay Trust. To find out more about the reptiles identified in this project go to www.marylandbiodiversity.com

The Benefits of Trail Riding



Our trail riding program includes grooming and saddling and helps participants improve their concentration, focus, follow through and ability to delay gratification.

The psychological, emotional and somatic benefits of trail riding are numerous. Guiding a horse through forested trails requires one to be present in nature's bounty. The magical clip-clop motion along with the thorough engagement of the senses causes relaxation, awareness and presence. Crossing a bridge, the rider becomes aware of the difference in surface. The mind becomes aware yet still and the body quiets down. The delicate relationship between the rider's physical being and the horse's momentum creates balance and focus on the physical sensations. This often translates to rapid growth in awareness and improvements in concentration.

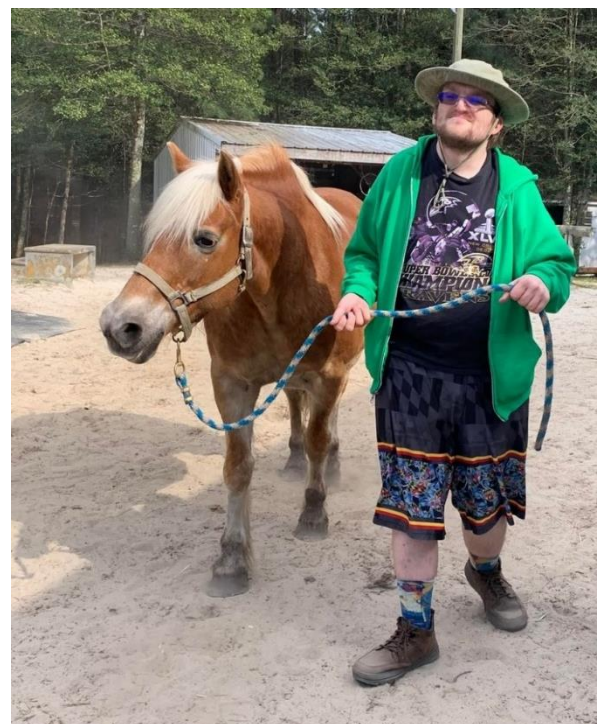
I've learned to ride, learned to take my time, and learned about being social with other people. I've come a long way and have had lots of fun with all the friends I've made. -Avery

Equine Learning, Exercise and Stamina Building

In 4STEPS Equine Learning, Exercise and Stamina Building program, **Toby** began his weekly lessons by grooming his horse and bonding with her. After working with a few different horses Toby and the staff decided that **Kitty** was the perfect horse to meet his needs. She is kind, understanding, willing to walk at any pace, slow or fast. Toby liked his ability to walk without being pulled and felt like Kitty walked with him. Each week, after grooming Kitty, Toby would take her for a walk on an adaptive themed trail.

Week 1 he struggled to walk 1 lap (approx 200 feet) with his horse. Each week he increased his mileage in increments. He was also encouraged to keep moving during the week in between lessons.

On week 6 Toby and Kitty easily walked a 1/2 mile!



FINANCIAL CHALLENGES – MEETING THE NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY

Dick Warren, Treasurer, Board of Directors

Challenges...life is full of them! From the viewpoint of a treasurer, it is hard to think about challenges without considering the challenge of making ends meet. Achieving financial balance is particularly challenging in a non-profit organization where the focus is on serving and helping others rather than on the financial 'bottom line'. **Nikki and Dick**

Having a safe environment means having instructors and volunteers who keep safety foremost in their minds. It means having physical facilities that are adequate to our undertakings and are maintained in sound condition and having horses that are healthy, reliable and of suitable disposition. Ensuring that the experience is enjoyable, educational and successful is paramount. It also involves having proper and comfortable saddles and tack, having equipment that enables a variety of activities and having a variety of horses to provide comfortable rides to individuals of different sizes and confidence levels. Meeting clients' goals involves having instructors and volunteers who have the training and experience to identify goals and the means of achieving them. It takes equipment and supplies that are used in riding activities: riding aids, adaptive saddles and the various 'props' that are used in individual lessons tailored to achieve goals and steps along the way.

So, speaking of the 'bottom line', to rise to the challenges of maintaining high quality programming, it takes a lot of financial help and that's where the caring people who donate money to our program come into the picture.



Please fill out this form and send your donation to

4STEPS Therapeutic Riding Program 5367 Sixty Foot Rd., Parsonsburg, Maryland 21849

NAME _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ email address _____

I would like to support 4STEPS. Enclosed is a check for \$ _____.

To pay by paypal or credit card go to www.4stepstrp.org

THANK YOU for your tax-deductible gift!

4STEPS Therapeutic Riding Program

5367 Sixty Foot Road, Parsonsburg, MD 21849

Enhancing Lives Through Equine Activities

4STEPS is a 501c3 non-profit organization

Who are 4STEPS donors?

Some are people of wealth, many are not. However, they all share common attributes – they care about other people and they want to help those less fortunate than themselves. They are generous people and they believe in our program and the good work we do. We appreciate all of our donors, from the client who chips in ten dollars to the large civic organization that gives thousands. Without our donors we could not do the good work we do!

*Thank you **Ocean City Lions Club** for your recent visit to 4STEPS and your generous donation! A big THANK YOU to all of our supporters!*

