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Augusta County Virginia's premier equestrian-based therapeutic horsemanship program

Our **MISSION** is to serve those in Greater Augusta County with physical, emotional and developmental special needs through a wide range of therapeutic equine activities

*Fall/Winter 2023 Newsletter*

Ride With Pride  
P.O. Box 1203  
Staunton, Virginia 24402



# PRESIDENT'S *Report*



Laura Martlock, Board President

What an exciting and busy year it's been here at Ride With Pride, it's hard to know where to start! I believe the best place to start is by thanking all of our wonderful volunteers and supporters that have been so generous with their time and financial support. We could not do this without you!

Our Program Director, Carolyn Meyer, has been a wonderful addition and we are blessed to have found her. She has been with us for a year now, and our program has benefited greatly. We've had ongoing activities such as the 5K fundraiser, clinics with equine specialists, a fall trail ride fundraiser and our Gala Fundraiser, and Carolyn has been instrumental in all of them. Our sessions have been full and our horses have been amazing. Carolyn has certainly stepped in and continued RWP's commitment to happy clients and healthy horses. Running a program with so many moving parts and unique classes is hard work, and Carolyn has proven she is up to the challenge! RWP appreciates all she has accomplished in her first year, including taking a horse and rider to the state Therapeutic Riding Association of Virginia horse show in October, something RWP has not been able to attend in many years.

Our Gala was a huge success as a "Great Gatsby" theme. "The Great Gala" was hilarious fun with the majority of people dressing up and taking pictures in the photo booth area, dancing to the 20s music (with some modern thrown in!) and supporting the program during the auctions. Our appreciation to the Hotel 24 South for all their help and commitment to our program. We could not have grown and been so successful without their support.

We are proud to announce we will be offering a Winter Session this winter! We will also be adding our display to the Celebration of Lights Festival at the Gypsy Hill Park in Staunton for the second year. Please come visit the Celebration of Lights and look for our display as all of us at Ride With Pride wish everyone a wonderful and blessed Holiday Season!

## HOW TO SUPPORT RIDE WITH PRIDE

### VOLUNTEER - DONATE - EVENT PARTICIPANT BARN WORKER - INSTRUCTOR

Ride With Pride is a volunteer-based, 501(c) (3) non-profit organization. Rider fees only cover a small percentage of our costs and we turn no one away due to an inability to pay. Therefore, we rely on the generosity of individuals, businesses, and foundations to help us provide our very special services. Donations are fully tax deductible. Here are some ways you can help:

- Participate in our scholarship program. Consider being a partner for one of our students and their families by providing a scholarship for an individual session or an entire year. Your tax deductible gift of \$210 will support a child or adult for one session.
- Participate in our events!
- Become a stall sponsor, program sponsor, or event sponsor at [ridewithprideva.org/donate](http://ridewithprideva.org/donate)
- Make a tax deductible donation at [ridewithprideva.org/donate](http://ridewithprideva.org/donate) or send a check to Ride With Pride, PO Box 1203, Staunton VA 24402
- Become a volunteer! No experience is necessary, and you will have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of our students.



# *A note from the* DIRECTOR

Happy Holidays! I love it when the barn is bustling with activity; however, during these quieter winter months, I can reflect on the past year. We had three incredible sessions of lessons, where we learned and mastered new skills and set and accomplished goals. We held our annual 5k in April, and this year we celebrated one of our very own students whose personal goal was to walk the entirety of the course, and she did! During the summer we held our first Healthy Horse Enrichment class, designed to provide students with horse health knowledge and what it would be like to own a horse. We ended the year with an amazing student horseshow! It was a beautiful fall day filled with smiles, laughter, ribbons, and friendship bracelets! What a great way for our students to show off their skills and all their hard work for their friends and families. Lastly, we look forward to our first Winter Program, an eight week session of riding, ground work, barn chores and so much more! We will be back with our typical programming starting in March, so for now, enjoy your holiday season, and Giddyup!



*Carolyn Meyer, Program Director*

## NICKER NEWS - HORSE REPORT



*Scotty, Jaelynn, and Carolyn at the TRAV horse show in Lexington*

We have some exciting news to share! Scotty had the opportunity to represent Ride With Pride at the TRAV (Therapeutic Riding Association of Virginia) horseshow this year at the Horse Center in Lexington, Virginia. Scotty and his rider, Jaelynn, did an amazing job showing off their skills, bringing home many blue ribbons and a trophy! We are so proud of this horse and rider combination and could not have chosen a better team to represent us!

We retired our beloved Dewey this year. Part of our responsibility to our horses is to listen when they are trying to tell us something, and he was telling us it was time to slow down. We thank Dewey for all his hard work over the years, and he will be missed by so many!

We welcomed Libby and Bandolier late in the season. Libby joined the herd in late summer. We were looking for a larger horse to carry some of our adult riders, and Libby has been the perfect horse for the job! As a retired foxhunter, she is truly 'Been there, Done that' which has given her riders so much confidence in their own abilities. Bandolier is a familiar face to some, as he has been with our herd before. We are so happy he is back and ready to help his riders!

And lastly, we say goodbye to Mac, who won't be joining us next year. Mac's family moved to North Carolina, and he now gets to officially retire at a beautiful, cozy farm! We were so fortunate to have Mac with us this year as he truly enjoyed his job and especially liked carrying our tiniest riders!

## SAVE THE DATE!

OUR ANNUAL FUNDRAISER DINNER AND AUCTION WILL BE  
HELD ON *SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2024*  
AT THE BEST WESTERN CONFERENCE CENTER WAYNESBORO!

# A LETTER TO OUR VETERANS *from a Veteran*

My name is Juli Potter. I am a veterinarian, a mother, a student, and an Army veteran. My family has been part of the Ride With Pride community for over seven years, and I would like to invite you, as a member of our local community, and as a veteran, to join us at Ride with Pride. I would like to tell you about my experience as a member of the Ride With Pride community, and the Ride With Pride Veterans Program.



*Juli's equine partner, Scotty*

The connections we have made at Ride With Pride, and with the horses, have had a significant impact on our lives. I have always dreamed of working with horses, and RWP has given me that opportunity. As a student at RWP, I have gained confidence, body awareness, and the ability to respond to the needs of my equine partner, as a rider and as a caregiver. My goal as a student is to be able to understand my equine partner, to listen to him, and to be able to communicate effectively in the most gentle way; I believe that horses have a right to autonomy. To do this, I must focus on the body language of my equine partner, on the ground and when riding. I must remain calm, quiet my body, and try to connect with my partner. This has required me to overcome many of my fears, to learn to relax, to understand how my own tension and body position affects my horse, and to respond to what my horse is telling me.

My equine partner is Scotty. He is the most beautiful Palomino quarter horse; he is a retired fox hunter, and he is well trained. Scotty is an amazing teacher. I have learned that if I tense up, Scotty will start to trot, and if I lean forward or my legs move back, Scotty will start to trot. If I rely too much on the reins, Scotty will resist, and if he gets frustrated, he will either trot, which is a choppy gait when he is frustrated, or he might just stop and refuse to move! I have also noticed that if I relax, take a deep breath and calm my body,

and relax my grip on the reins, Scotty will slow down, and he seems to relax as well. Scotty responds best to, and prefers, the slightest touch, so to ask him to turn, I have to let go of the tension I am feeling and apply only slight pressure on the rein, and when I want to stop, I have to prepare myself by taking a deep breath, sitting in my saddle, and avoid putting too much pressure on the reins. When I am riding, my focus is on Scotty, and away from everything else that is going on in my life; and during that time, there is no other place I would rather be.

The Ride With Pride community includes the director, Carolyn, the instructors, and the volunteers. Carolyn is amazing, she is a wonderful listener, she truly cares about the students and the volunteers, and she always wants what is best for the horses. Carolyn is innovative, compassionate, knowledgeable, and works hard to make dreams come true. The instructors at Ride With Pride focus on the needs of the students as well as the needs of our equine partners. Kelsey, who has been my instructor, as well as my son's, is beyond compare; her devotion to myself and my son, and to all the students, speaks volumes to her character. Kelsey has challenged me to step out of my comfort zone, and to always try harder; she is the first to tell me to do it better the next time, and the first to celebrate my successes! This program thrives on the most amazing volunteers. They devote so much of their time to the students and the horses; it has been a pleasure spending time with such caring, devoted individuals.

Working with Scotty and spending time at RWP has been one of the best experiences of my life, and I want to extend an invitation to you to join me in learning how much you can benefit from this program. You will find so much joy in being part of the Ride With Pride community and in having the opportunity to spend time with and learn from these amazing equine partners.

I do hope you will contact us; we would love for you to meet the horses, and we look forward to the opportunity to tell you more about the programs we offer at Ride With Pride!

The Ride With Pride Veterans Program is free to all veterans. This program provides a supportive environment for veterans and their families to connect with an equine partner, to build caring, trusting relationships with the horse and with the Ride With Pride community. Through your work with Ride With Pride, you can gain communication skills, strength, self-awareness, self-regulation, and awareness for the needs of others, including your equine partner.



*Juli's son with Maggie*

*Juli Potter is a board member, veteran, student, and program mom. We thank Juli for her service.*

# “MY BLIND KNABSTRUPPER” - FREJ’S STORY

*Sophia Bryant is a Ride With Pride board member and owner of the incredible blind Knabstrupper, Frej, who has joined the RWP herd this year, to the delight of our students, staff, and supporters. Frej and Sophia have had an incredible journey together, one that resonates with every horse owner, and one that speaks of the amazing bond between horses and humans. We are so grateful to have Sophia and Frej as part of our program. The story Sophia tells is a beautiful one that may bring tears to your eyes. This story is quite long and detailed and because of the love that is conveyed in its telling, we did not want to edit it down to fit on these pages. Therefore, we have included a short excerpt here:*

Many times I have been asked to write about Frej and our story. While it sounds like a good idea, I have always been fearful I will fall short in conveying how truly incredible and amazing this horse is. So here is my best shot at putting everything down on paper.

I unfortunately cannot remember the exact day I met Frej (pronounced “Fray”), but I know it was in 2013. At the time I was working as a stable hand at Cedar Creek Stables, owned by Dr. Melyni Worth, which is both a private boarding facility but also Dr. Worth’s personal breeding farm for a rare breed of horse, known as a Knabstrupper. The Knabstrupper breed is valued for their exceptional temperament and trainability, their friendly nature on top of their beautiful and colorful coat patterns. In the early 2000’s Dr. Worth imported several Knabstruppers from Denmark and Germany, to start up her breeding program here in the US. Frej happened to be one of the first that came over from Denmark. Frej was a gangly 3-year-old when he crossed the pond. I don’t know a lot about his early years, but he eventually went on to be sold as a Jumper. I was told he even dabbled in the Level 3 and 4’s! One thing Frej loved to do (even up to the time he went blind) was jump.



*Sophia with Frej, the gentle giant*

Fast forward a few years. As I said Frej was sold into the Jumper world when he was younger, and one might wonder just how he ended up back at Cedar Creek years later. Unfortunately, the story I have been told as to how he made it back home was not a happy one. Supposedly, Frej ended up in the hands of someone who in my opinion did not deserve him. This horse is by far one of the goofiest and kindest horses I’ve ever met. He loves people and is incredibly kind and gentle. He is literally The Gentle Giant in horse form. So, when Dr. Worth got a call from his current owner saying Frej was going to be put down unless Melyni agreed to take him back, came as a shock. Allegedly the reason being was that Frej was “dangerous and nasty”. A little side note about Melyni. When she sells any of her horses, especially her Knabbies she always makes it known that the horses can come back to her if they need to retire. She doesn’t want to see them end up in kill pens and for this reason she adds this to her sales agreements. Thus, this is how and why Frej ended up back home at Cedar Creek...

*...read the rest of Sophia and Fei’s story on the Ride With Pride website: <https://ridewithprideva.org/our-stories/>*



## NEW! WINTER PROGRAM

We are so proud to announce our first ever Winter Session! To add programing year round has been our biggest goal for many many years, and allows us to accomplish so many things: we can help more people; provide consistency in our students’ progress; and keep our amazing staff year round. This year, we have hired our incredible new Program Director, Carolyn Meyer, and added a year round barn manager position, as well as some amazing barn staff. Continuing the program year round allows us to keep the barn manager and staff over the winter.

The winter program will consist of eight weeks of lessons and will include horsemanship, ground work, and stable management in addition to riding. We have added in extra make-up days in case of inclement weather, and will have some indoor activities for the really cold days. We can’t wait to hear what our students think! Thank you to all of our sponsors, donors, staff, and supporters in the community who have made reaching this goal a reality!

# RIDE WITH PRIDE DONATION FORM

Return in enclosed envelope to Ride With Pride, P.O. Box 1203, Staunton VA 24402



Please accept my gift of:

- \$500
- \$250
- \$100
- \$50
- OTHER

FIRST NAME MIDDLE LAST NAME

EMAIL

ADDRESS CITY STATE ZIP

PHONE

- I/We wish to remain anonymous
- Check enclosed, payable to Ride With Pride
- Please charge to my  VISA  MC  AMEX  DISC

ACCT #

EXP DATE SECURITY CODE (3 DIGIT)

SIGNATURE

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