



Naples Therapeutic  
  
 Riding Center

# Scene + Herd



FEBRUARY 2020 NEWSLETTER

## Executive Director Letter

BY MISSY LAMONT



We wrapped up 2019 with new events, program expansions and educational opportunities that will invest in our healing programs thanks to our supporters.

This Fall, Operation Strides for veterans and military families expanded and more veterans are now enjoying time with our herd. Through your gifts, we are able to offer this appreciation for their service to our country and help them heal from the invisible wounds of war.

Our therapy horses helped further the field of equine therapy across the state when The Clark Family Foundation Equine-Assisted Therapy Center was host to a state-wide PATH instructor workshop and certification program. Several staff attended and will bring new skills to NTRC.

With our newly elected board president Lee Pinto, we held our first-ever Holiday Luncheon & Boutique and raised \$1,500 with the help of more than 50 friends.

With all that's happening so far in 2020, it's turning out to be a great year for NTRC. Lea Haven wrangled a record-breaking \$25,000 for the retirement of our horses at the 12th Annual Hoof and Hike. More than 135 attended, but only Jennifer Williams had the winning hand!

Showing off our campus and horses is always fun, so we hosted the 3rd Annual Corn Hole Tournament and food truck cook-out in February. Board member Brian McNamara and the Young Professional Strides bagged another successful event with 90 friends joining us for a little Super Bowl tailgating. Congrats to Andrew Florence and Chris Fuquaor for taking home the prize.

Inside, we are spotlighting the Community Foundation of Collier County for their expanded efforts to bring innovation to our programs. Their 2020 grant will invest in our soon-to-be certified Hippotherapy program. And we are thrilled about Give Where You Live Collier – their 24-hour online giving challenge – where every gift will be multiplied through matching funds. The more money our donors help us raise, the larger percentage of the match we receive. You've got 24-hours to "Give Where You Live" on February 19 - 20 from noon to noon – so rally friends and family for NTRC and help meet our goal of raising \$7,500. Learn more in this issue!

Tally Ho!



# Donor Dollars at Work



*“Our goal with Operation Strides is to destigmatize veterans participating in therapeutic services and encourage more Veterans to connect to an array of needed mental health options in an environment that is welcoming, social and therapeutic.”*

– David McKenzie,  
NTRC Program  
Director, Army  
Veteran

## **MORE VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES ARE FEELING THE HORSE LOVE**

NTRC recently expanded Operation Strides, a tailored equine-facilitated program that includes time with our herd for Veterans, military service men and women and their families. The program includes Veteran-only sessions as well as family sessions that conclude with time for food, refreshments and camaraderie among fellow Veterans and military families.



Operation Strides is a special program devoted solely to the unique needs of Veterans and military families by promoting reintegration and skills development. The horsemanship workshops aim to empower Veterans and encourage them to fully leverage the talents developed during their service as they transition back to civilian life and the workforce.

During the sessions, participants work directly with horses while engaging in a group process to overcome obstacles. Operation Strides’ ground-based exercises are interactive and challenging. Veterans and their family members work with NTRC’s certified equine specialists and therapy horses to improve mood, communication and wellbeing by being guided through a series of specially designed activities. The exercises provide opportunities to strengthen the bond among unified families, improve self-confidence, develop skills and provide an opportunity to build a social network among fellow Veterans. Equine-facilitated learning programs are offered at no cost to children as a result of donations and grant funding.

## The Scene at NTRC





# Donor Spotlight

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION EXPANDS SUPPORT FOR NTRC



From specialized grants to a 24-hour online giving campaign, The Community Foundation of Collier County (CFCC)

invests in the community's current needs by connecting local charities and philanthropists. CFCC pools charitable donations into a coordinated investment and distributes funds dedicated to making positive change in the areas of art, education, health, human services, women and girls and the environment.

Having invested more than \$168 million in grants to nonprofits and community programs since its inception, CFCC is critical to meeting the needs of the disadvantaged, underserved and most vulnerable residents in Collier County. NTRC has received grants since 2015. Previous grants have helped expand our therapeutic riding lesson time from 30 to 45 minutes, add PATH Certified Instructors and Volunteer Coordinators and provide lesson scholarships for special needs and at-risk women and girls.

NTRC's most recent grant will invest in our therapeutic riding services to operate a fully accredited Hippotherapy program. This will allow NTRC to serve children with a wider range of intensive special needs, and with this accreditation, NTRC will offer the facility, training and therapy horses to licensed professionals allowing them to offer Hippotherapy as a service in their practices.

Now, through an expanded partnership with CFCC, NTRC will participate in their Give Where You Live Collier 24-hour online giving challenge, where gifts are multiplied through matching funds from the Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation and CFCC. The event has raised nearly \$19 million since its inception in 2015! We couldn't be more excited to partner with our donors and CFCC on this new effort to invest in our equine programs. Remember to log on February 19 through February 20, 2020, noon to noon at [GiveWhereYouLiveCollier.org](http://GiveWhereYouLiveCollier.org).

*“At the Community Foundation of Collier County, we are proud to assist Naples Therapeutic Riding Center with it’s mission. They are a vital community partner and share our commitment to investing in the mental health needs of local children and adults.”*

– Eileen Connolly-Keesler President, & CEO Community Foundation of Collier County

## Meet a Rider

OPERATION STRIDES HELPS VETERAN MANAGE STRESS

I entered the Army at 18-years old, and was proud to serve my country. For more than 15 years, I was an Infantry Sergeant, and then worked in Administration. The physical demands of the job took a toll on my body, requiring multiple surgeries to my back, ankle and shoulder.

My physical ailments, while taxing, were nothing compared to the challenges I faced transitioning back to civilian life. I got a good job in sales, but became frustrated with people. Civilian life is very different than military life. I hated it. The people I worked with didn't have the same work ethic.

My wife of 36 years told me about Operation Strides. Being from Kansas, I've always liked horses and have ridden in the past. She knew I would enjoy being around horses and other Veterans and thought it could help me manage stress.

Operation Strides has enabled me to work through challenges. The camaraderie with other Veterans really helps too. Horses are large, powerful animals. They are as kind and as gentle as you want them to be. They don't judge. Being around them is very relaxing.

It means a lot to know there are programs like this for Veterans and that NTRC supporters understand that military service men and women face many hardships. Serving our country was never about ourselves, it was for everyone else. This program is a way to bring us all together and give back to those of who served.



*“Doing something with an animal takes your mind off the stress of a day. The horse absorbs your stress and relaxes you. I always feel better when I leave.”*

– Rick Sjolander, Army Veteran, and his wife, Karen Sjolander



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*Save the Date!*

**MAY 2, 2020**  
**KENTUCKY DERBY PARTY**  
**4:00 PM**

*Hors d'oeuvres, Mint Juleps*  
*50/50 purse for Place and Show Winners*  
*Prizes for Best Hat and Crazy Pants*  
*\$125 per person*

**LET'S GET DOWN AND DERBY!**



## Board of Directors

Lee Pinto, *President*; Gregory Otis, *Vice President*; Harry Witt, *Treasurer*; William Villafranco *Secretary*; Kristin Carolan, James Dati, Esq., Jason Diefenthaler, Mackindy Dieu, Anthony McClure, Esq., Brian McNamara, Esq., Melanie Penner, Bill Swartz, DVM, David Winebrenner

## ABOUT NTRC

*NTRC improves the lives of children and adults with special needs through therapeutic riding and equine-assisted programs. Volunteers and donors make it possible for NTRC to serve 700 participants each year. NTRC is funded by Naples Children & Education Foundation, The Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, and private donations. NTRC is a Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship Premier Accredited Center.*

## Volunteer Spotlight

### RIDER ACHIEVEMENTS AND SMILES KEEP VOLUNTEER ENGAGED

I learned about NTRC 13 years ago when we were looking for resources for my special needs grandson who couldn't walk. We liked what we saw at NTRC, and enrolled him right away. I became a sidewalker soon thereafter.

It is enlightening to see the riders, who have to work much harder on everyday tasks, smile and achieve major milestones. They feel good, and I feel good. That's why I continue to give back.



**Edward Jones**

I started helping with fundraising and facility projects, and at development meeting, I learned about NTRC's desire to invest in staff training. For the last 30 years, I've provided Fortune 100 companions nation-wide with staff development training. So rather than have NTRC outsource it, I offered to use my professional expertise to create a customized, full-day training program that incorporated the horses in team and trust building. And now, we are hoping to offer this unique program to local businesses to generate revenue.

My grandson is thriving in a special school in Jacksonville and, not only can he walk, he downhill skis! He never would have been able to do that if it weren't for NTRC. NTRC is a family of dedicated volunteers who care deeply about the mission. We take a lot of pride in seeing the riders improve and get to feel a part of their success. I am proud to be a part of that.