



Naples Therapeutic  
  
 Riding Center

# Executive Director Letter

BY MISSY LAMONT



While the world faces extreme challenges related to the coronavirus pandemic, NTRC has much to be thankful for: the health of our horses and staff; the passion of our devoted volunteers; the generosity of donors; and hope for our future programs and participants.

For the health and safety of our volunteers, staff, participants and supporters, in March, NTRC made the difficult decision to suspend programming. We also canceled the Kentucky Derby Party and postponed the End of the Year Trophy Presentation and Volunteer Appreciation Dinner.

This made us more grateful than ever for the support of our donors and new opportunities that came our way. In February, Give Where You Live Collier raised \$20,306 for our programs. We were selected by 200+ Women Who Care of SWFL as their charity of the month for the first time and received an unplanned, welcome \$10,000 gift. We also celebrated a \$227,950 grant received from the Naples Children & Education Foundation, through proceeds from their record-breaking, 20th Anniversary Naples Winter Wine Festival.

This issue we focus on our horses, the backbone of our program and the many unique ways our NTRC family and community rallies to support them so they, in turn, can support our participants. We also feature stories about Lead Instructor, Lea Haven, whose dedication to NTRC has played a major role in our success over the last 20 years – including how she and supporter Brian Dickerson, have creatively found a way to give downtime to our herd. Sadly in March, Sundance, one of our retired horses passed away. We find solace knowing how many lives he touched, and how well he was cared for in retirement.

As the coronavirus threat continues, we are facing significant operational challenges and need your support now more than ever. Despite closing, we still have 14 special therapy horses to care for. We thank you for your ongoing support of our horses and hope you and your families are healthy and safe.

Tally Ho!

# Scene + Herd



MAY 2020 NEWSLETTER



# Donor Dollars at Work



*“From the first time I rode Sundance I knew he was a special horse. He always gave 100% and all of his heart to our riders. I’m so appreciative of our donors who, not only supported his health and wellbeing, but who allowed Sundance to enjoy a happy, healthy retirement for three years before passing away.”*

– Lea Haven

## IN UNCERTAIN TIMES, DONOR SUPPORT INVESTS IN OUR HERD

Working with donors to invest in our herd is a priority at NTRC. By focusing fundraising initiatives and in-kind support that invest in the health and well-being of our therapy horses, we hope to not only educate donors, but tap into new resources that can help our programs and our greatest assets thrive.



The annual cost to care for each horse is \$19,000. That means \$266,000 is needed every year – whether our programs are suspended due to the coronavirus or not. Our horses must continue receiving the same quality care. Developing healthy and physically fit horses requires a proper nutrition and sound exercise plan.

Events like the Hoof & Hike and the now canceled Kentucky Derby Party support our herd in unique ways. Hoof & Hike proceeds care for our horses in retirement. Donor dollars help horses like Sundance, who lived out his life at Camp Rusk in Texas for the last three years, enjoy their last days with dignity, good health and peace among their green pastures and expansive paddocks. Derby Party proceeds help replace horses like Majesty, who will retire this year, with younger, healthier horses that NTRC can purchase rather than rely solely on donated horses. Despite the Derby being canceled, NTRC is blessed that friends like Gary and Connie Sharpe are giving the same gift they would have donated at the event – giving not because of the event, but because they believe in our mission and the great work being done for and by our herd.

NTRC expects four to five tough months of financial strain during these uncertain times, but we know that with your unwavering support, we will get through this.

## Donor Spotlight

### BRIAN DICKERSON DEVOTED TO THE CARE OF NTRC HORSES

I was just 9 months old when I got on the back of a horse at my grandfather’s ranch in Illinois. I’ve ridden in 44 states and 22 countries. Now, as a busy attorney, riding is my therapy where I destress. Horses have a sixth sense and can feel what you are feeling.

After moving into Pine Ridge Estates 10 years ago, I was invited for a tour and got hooked on the opportunity to work with the horses. I started volunteering in the barn and connected with instructor, Lea Haven, and Board President, Bill Swartz, who both shared my passion for the horses.

I was able to see first hand how the participants are impacted by the power of these wonderful animals. I will never forget one child I worked with for a year. He had never spoken a word his entire life so I would say the commands for him. During one lesson I said to him, “What’s next?” and he said, “Whoa.” I beelined him straight to his mom so she could hear him. It was very moving.

I became driven to support the mission. I became a sponsor and volunteer for the Hoof & Hike and joined the Board in 2012. In 2016, Lorretta Canfield, also a volunteer, and I purchased Grassy Run Ranch, a 150-acre cattle ranch in LaBelle. When NTRC retired Sundance, we brought him out to our ranch. Since then, we began working with Lea on a plan to offer all of the NTRC horses respite care. We finished construction of four new stalls just in time for the unfortunate closing of the programs due to the coronavirus. We were able to give much needed downtime to five horses during this unprecedented time and look forward to starting an ongoing rotation in the future.



*“Loretta and I are passionate about our work with NTRC. Supporting the program and sharing our ranch with these special horses is very rewarding to us.”*

– Brian Dickerson



Virginia B. Toulmin

*The Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation is dedicated to improving the quality of life and improving conditions for children and their families in selected communities across the United States. It will operate primarily in three areas and, in each, will look for opportunities to assist grantees to achieve financial sustainability and integrate educational opportunities into their programs.*

## Matching Challenge Supports NTRC During Program Closure

The Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation is stepping up in a special way to help encourage support during these challenging times. If you give before October 31, 2020 they will provide \$50,000 in matching funds for general operating support, conditioned upon NTRC's successful solicitation of \$50,000 from new donors.

**DONATE ONLINE AT [NTRC.ORG](http://NTRC.ORG)**

# SAVE THE DATE

## Volunteer Appreciation Awards Ceremony + Rider End of Year Celebration

*Postponed*  
Dates to Be Announced

## Bootstrap Boogie Barn Dance

Saturday, November 14, 2020 | 6:30pm  
NTRC Covered Arena

Join Chair Brooke Theriault, Sponsorship Chair Brigid Soldavini-Clapper and Silent Auction Chair Misty Gaynor and enjoy all the Barn Dance fan favorites: live music, dancing, tasty vittles, mechanical bill rides, pony pie

bingo, barn tours and much more. This is our signature event where much of our annual expenses are raised to operate our equine programs for children and adults with physical, social and mental health needs. Tickets are \$350 per person. Come ready to boogie and bid!



## Hoof & Hike Poker Run

January 17, 2021 | 10am  
Picayune Strand State Forest - The Belle Meade Tract



Event chair Lea Haven and her committee are devoted to our horses even after they retire. Whether you plan to hoof, hike or double down, there are plenty of ways to help raise funds at

our annual Hoof & Hike Poker Run. Funds raised benefit the dozens of dedicated horses who served thousands of participants through our equine therapeutic activities. All proceeds fund the extraordinary care of NTRC's retired therapy horses. Tickets are \$50 per person. Hoof it, or hike it.

## Kentucky Derby Party

May 1, 2021 | 4:00pm  
NTRC

With the cancellation of the 2020 event, that just means Chair Marc Halcrow will have extra time to plan and make the 2021 Derby Party the best one yet! Join us for hors d'oeuvres provided by our catering sponsor, Shula's, one complimentary Mint Julep and a cash bar and come ready to bid on your winning horses.

A 50/50 purse will go to the winner. Prizes will be awarded for Best Hat for the ladies and Crazy Pants for our gents. Proceeds will help purchase new therapy horses. Tickets are \$125 per person. Let's get down and Derby!



**TO REGISTER OR LEARN MORE ABOUT NTRC EVENTS, FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK, VISIT [NAPLESTHERAPEUTICRIDINGCENTER.ORG](http://NAPLESTHERAPEUTICRIDINGCENTER.ORG) OR CALL 239-596-2988.**

# Welcome New Board Members



## KRISTIN CAROLAN

is a licensed marriage and family therapist with ten years of experience working with children, adults and families. She currently provides therapy services for children for the Collier County Public Schools. Kristin was the NTRC Program Director from 2018-2019. She also volunteers as a Guardian ad Litem and works with her family's private foundation, The Tina & Richard V. Carolan Foundation.



## MACKINDY DIEU

is the Acute Care Administrative Supervisor at NTRC community partner David Lawrence Center where he works with children and adults in crisis in the inpatient Crisis Stabilization Unit and Detoxification Unit. Prior to working with DLC, he served as a Juvenile Detention Officer for the Department of Juvenile Justice. Mackindy also volunteers as a prevention advocate/counselor for the another NTRC partner, the Shelter for Abused Women & Children.



## JACK FULMER, III

is a US Marine Corps Vietnam Veteran. Prior to retiring to Naples, he worked in information technology for the US Treasury Department and the International Monetary Fund in Washington. Jack volunteers for a variety of local veteran causes and serves on the board of US Marine Corps League Naples, Military Officers Association of SWFL, Collier County Veteran's Council, Military Officers Association of Southwest Florida as well as Avow Hospice.



## LEE PINTO

is a retired nurse who formerly raised thoroughbred horses. She previously served on the boards of the Special Olympics, Naples Zoo and Avow Hospice. While serving on the board of Avow for nine years, she chaired their Butterfly Ball and Women's Board. Prior to joining the NTRC board, Lee volunteered as a sidewalker and chaired the 2019 Kentucky Derby Party. Lee was elected President of the board in 2020.



## BILL SWARTZ, DVM

returned to the board after a brief hiatus. He previously served for nine years and helped lead NTRC's campus expansion. Dr. Swartz enjoyed a 40-year career as a veterinarian owning hospitals in Virginia before retiring to Naples where he continues to enjoy doing relief work in various local animal hospitals. He is also a board member of Greater Naples Leadership. Dr. Swartz serves on the finance and development committees and also volunteers during lessons.

# The Scene at NTRC



# Employee Spotlight

## LEA HAVEN POURS PASSION FOR HORSES INTO LESSONS AND HOOF & HIKE

I found my way to NTRC 18 years ago, when I was searching for a place to volunteer. I had always loved horses, but knew nothing about them. I started as a sidewalker in lessons. Soon, I became a leader and exerciser, and then was offered the position of Barn Manager.

I've been an instructor since 2003, and that same year, I was gifted my first horse from an NTRC boarder. I took lessons and got a second and eventually a third horse. With my love for horses growing every day, it broke my heart when we had to rehome a horse knowing no one would ever take care of them as well as we would. In 2009, I heard about Camp Rusk and asked the Board if we could retire them there, but we didn't have the funds.

I came up with the Hoof & Hike as a way to raise the retirement funds. Our first year we had 15 attendees and raised \$4,300 – enough to retire one horse for a year. This year, we raised \$27,000 and had 135 attendees. Hoof & Hike is my soft spot. Not a lot of therapy places have a retirement program and a lot of the owners who donate horses to us, love that we have this.

When I'm not raising money for our horses' happy retirement, my day job is Lead Instructor. I'm a PATH Intl. Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor and Equine Specialist as well as the Educational and Special Events Coordinator. I also help during the 90-day trials of all new horses.

I really enjoy working with the equine-facilitated psychotherapy participants. Being able to give something back to people struggling with mental health challenges is very rewarding. Our programs are so unique and offer children and families a source of support, friendship and therapy. For some riders, this is their only source of therapy. What our horses do for our participants, is so important. They are the best “co-workers” and it's a pleasure to be around them.



*“I love horses because of their honesty and connection. Their eyes are so deep and kind. I feel we owe our horses the best care while they are with us and after they retire, because of what they do for our participants.”*

– Lea Haven

# Meet a Rider

## MERCEDES JOHNSON IS ALL SMILES WHILE HORSEBACK RIDING

Every little girl has a passion for horses. I grew up riding and knew the impact it had on me. When my daughter Mercedes was born with Down Syndrome, she had low muscle tone. Over time she had delayed speech. I knew horseback riding could help her physically, but had no idea how far it would take her socially and emotionally.

Mercedes has been riding since she was five. When we moved to Naples in 2014, we were blessed to find NTRC. Now 17, she's in advanced therapeutic riding lessons. She rides independently and canters with a lunge line. She is very serious about her horsemanship, and has won gold at the Special Olympics and placed in several NTRC horse shows.

Because of her disability, Mercedes's muscles are limp. Her joints are flaccid, loose and relaxed. The horse's gait helps her maintain posture and balance. Riding has developed her core strength. Her arms, thighs, hips and back muscles are all stronger. But the real magic is all over Mercedes's face. Usually very shy, Mercedes loves everyone at NTRC and feels comfortable there. She has total ownership of her experience. This is her little world. She gets excited to come every week and finds little things to be responsible for.

Friendships that started at NTRC are now a part of her life outside her weekly lessons and very dear to her. Riding gives her inner acceptance, happiness and responsibility. NTRC is a very special place where judgment and expectations are torn down. There is a sense of belonging, peace, comfort and contentment for the entire family.



*“It is unbelievable the way that NTRC is run. Everyone wants to be there. It touches the entire family. We are so grateful to everyone who generously contributes to our wonderful program.”*

– Karen Kapelos,  
Mercedes's  
mom



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## 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, Jack Fulmer, III Anthony McClure, Esq., Brian McNamara, Esq., Melanie Penner, Bill Swartz, DVM, David Winebrenner

## ABOUT NTRC

*NTRC improves the lives of children and adults with physical, social and mental health 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

### LOVE OF HORSES LEAD MARC HALCROW'S VOLUNTEER EFFORTS TO THE DERBY

I have been a horse aficionado for over 20 years. Having worked in international business and living abroad, I was humbled to be the first American member at one of the oldest riding clubs in The Netherlands, a group that dates back to 1837.

When a neighbor, who had children enrolled in NTRC, introduced me to the mission six years ago, I jumped at the chance to get involved. I've been a volunteer ever since. I'm driven to support the passionate staff in any way I can. I volunteer as a leader in lessons, exercise Buddy and feed the horses too.



**Marc Halcrow**

I've been called upon to volunteer on behalf of NTRC at the Naples Winter Wine Festival and also enjoy working with and supporting Lea Haven on the Hoof & Hike.

Last year, when I heard NTRC was bringing the Kentucky Derby Party back and that its proceeds will enable NTRC to invest in healthier, younger horses, I joined that committee and was happy to step in as this year's Chair.

Having to make the difficult decision to cancel the 2020 event, just gives me more time to make next year's event even more successful. I'm hoping to bring the element of fun I witnessed a few years ago at the Belmont, expand on last year's Derby Party success and create new opportunities to support the horses and participants at the 2021 event!