



**Naples Therapeutic
Riding Center**

**Executive
Director
Letter**

BY MISSY LAMONT



**Scene +
Herd**

OCTOBER 2020 NEWSLETTER



Through adversity comes opportunities for growth. This is something NTRC participants and families know a lot about. The coronavirus pandemic has brought many challenges for people all over the world, as well as for NTRC. The virus has impacted everything from our personal health and wellbeing, to financial security and social gatherings. We have all been stressed knowing that the future is uncertain. We worried that those who rely on NTRC for health and healing couldn't access their therapy. We knew we had to focus on solutions. Through patience, hard work, collaboration, and most of all donor support, NTRC is persevering and we are thrilled to be getting back to business with a new normal.

In this issue, you will learn how our staff, led by Program Director David McKenzie, worked tirelessly and creatively for months to prepare for the safe reopening while maintaining the health and wellbeing of our participants and frontline workers until riders could get back in the saddle. While we waited patiently to reopen, we missed your faces, so we hosted a COVID-19-safe drive through horse parade and our spirits were lifted with your signs, waves and smiles.

Like many other businesses, NTRC felt the financial impacts of COVID-19. Because of lost revenue and increased expenses from our new safety protocols, NTRC had to rely heavily on donor support especially in light of the uncertainties surrounding our fundraisers. But our smiles kept growing when we were blessed with a COVID-19 Relief Grant from the Community Foundation of Collier County, a general operating grant for rider scholarships from the League Club and a first-time gift from American Gold Star Mothers. Another blessing came just in time for our reopening in September, when each rider received a brand-new helmet from the Young Professional Strides.

As we turn our focus to the future, in order to care for our horses and staff who in turn are (finally) able to care for our participants once again, we are looking forward to making our first-ever Barn Dance Appeal a huge success. Learn more in this issue about how you can ensure our riders can continue to get the help they need through these trying times.

Tally Ho!

Donor Dollars at Work



DONOR SUPPORT CRITICAL TO GET RIDERS BACK IN THE SADDLE

NTRC faced many challenges after the coronavirus pandemic forced programs to temporarily suspend in March. As we worried about financial uncertainty, how to retain our dedicated staff and care for our horses, and the wellness of our riders, we realized that with the unwavering support of our donors, NTRC can persevere.



With the arena and barn no longer abuzz with the smiling faces of riders and volunteers, the team got creative to stay connected, worked hard to prepare for a safe reopening and developed a new program to support the mental health of frontline workers.



Concern for riders' progress was a top priority. Instructors immediately began developing a series of exercise videos that riders could do from home to ensure they kept up their physical strength. Instructors spent extra time exercising the horses, so they too were ready to work when riders returned. To lift up spirits, NTRC hosted our first-ever, drive through campus horse parade in April. The team worked tirelessly to create and implement new safety protocols. Once volunteers were trained, programs slowly began resuming in July with limited group sizes.

Realizing the toll the pandemic was having on first responders, in August, NTRC launched a new mental health and wellness group for Healthcare Heroes with the help of mental health professional, Lourdes Araujo, our newest team member. By September, all of our programs were fully operational.

Throughout these difficult last few months, donors ensured NTRC had the funds to continue the expert care of our horses – costs that remain steady whether programs are running or not – and supported our mission from afar despite canceled fundraisers. For that we are eternally grateful.

Donor Spotlight

SWINGING WITH PURPOSE™ GOES VIRTUAL WITH GOLF RAFFLE

For the third year in a row, Swinging With Purpose™ (SWP) has continued its investment in NTRC's equine programs for vulnerable women, girls and children in Southwest Florida. SWP grants have helped fund the equine groups for participants from PACE Center for Girls and Shelter for Abused Women and Children – both also SWP beneficiaries.

SWP hosts various annual golf fundraisers to fund their grantmaking program. When COVID-19 hit, they, like NTRC and many other charities, had to cancel critical fundraisers and get creative in order to continue their great work. When the Liberty Mutual Invitational, SWP's signature event scheduled for May, had to be canceled, they had to find alternate ways to continue their mission.

They reached out to two of their biggest supporters, golf Hall-of-Famers Jack Nicklaus and Nancy Lopez, who personally signed priceless golf memorabilia to be raffled virtually in July. A limited number of tickets were sold and the proceeds benefited NTRC and Valerie's House – also one of our valued community partners. NTRC and Valerie's House worked together to help promote the fundraiser and host the virtual raffle drawing.

NTRC received a much-needed \$7,000 donation from the raffle proceeds. We are so grateful for SWP's continued support during these trying times and for our donors who bought raffle tickets. Congratulations to the raffle winners Stonebridge Men's Invitational Group and Dawn Melvin.



“COVID-19 forced us to promptly move to Plan B for our fundraising efforts. We pivoted with amazing community support and have been successful in providing grants to NTRC and our family of beneficiaries.”

**– Diana Riley,
SWP Founder**

Barn Dance Debuts as an Appeal with Virtual Elements Amid COVID-19 Safety Concerns

For the first time in the 15-year history of our wildly popular Bootstrap Boogie Barn Dance, NTRC made the difficult decision to convert our signature fundraiser to an online appeal. Because the Barn Dance gathers more than 500 of our supporters, due to health and safety concerns as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we felt it was the right thing to do, until it is safe to gather and celebrate together.

Revenue from the Barn Dance, our largest annual fundraiser, supports the annual operating costs to care for the horses, staff and provide rider scholarships. Last year's event raised over \$568,000. Our goal for this year's appeal is \$350,000.

Funds raised through the appeal are important now more than ever due to the lack of program revenue and loss of fundraising income as a result of having to postpone programs and cancel fundraisers for five months during stay-at-home measures. Donations towards the appeal will be accepted through November 14, 2020, culminating in a virtual Pony Pie Bingo game when the winner will be announced on FaceBook. Pony Pie Bingo is a fan favorite at the Barn Dance and an element the committee wanted to keep as part of the new format.

The appeal includes a variety of donation levels starting at the Horse Power level of \$50,000. Donations can offer strength, hope, empowerment, encouragement and compassion to the more than 800 participants who rely on NTRC's innovative, evidence-based, equine-assisted programs for health, wellness and healing. The appeal also includes several fund-a-need categories where supporters can direct donations specifically to sponsor a rider, horse or barn cat – each with varying levels of associated costs.

Longtime supporters Gary and Connie Sharpe have already stepped up with a matching gift to leverage the impact of the Barn Dance Appeal giving. They will match up to \$50,000 raised through the appeal.



Appeal Donors:

Horse Power - \$50,000+
Gary and Connie Sharpe

Hope - \$15,000+
Anonymous

Encouragement - \$4,000+
FineMark Bank

Compassion - \$1,000+
Marcia Garvey
Mr. and Mrs. Frank Pinto
Quarles and Brady
Katherine Todd
Mr. and Mrs. Harry Witt
Nancy White

Meet a Rider

By: Lydia Eldridge, Brayden's Mom

"HIDDEN THERAPY" HAS BRAYDEN GROWING STRONGER

I first noticed Brayden only using his right hand when he was four months old. After insisting that something was wrong, the pediatrician finally determined that he had a mild stroke in utero. The stroke affected the muscles on the left side of his body making them tight and weak.

Brayden has always loved horses. When his physical therapist referred him to NTRC three years ago, we couldn't wait to get started. Riding and Jiu Jitsu are now his only "hidden therapies".

Riding helps strengthen his core and balance and makes him more aware of using his left hand. He can now mount a horse more independently and he's working on riding without the assistance of a volunteer leading. These new skills helped him get his dream ATV on his 10th birthday because he can mount and drive it independently.

Riding horses gives Brayden great pride. It makes him so happy to be around them. He likes how intelligent they are. He also loves learning everything about all the new horses. He looks forward to therapy all week. He looks so free on the horse. I love watching him.

When NTRC was closed due to COVID-19, Brayden was disappointed he couldn't ride and super bummed when they had to cancel the June summer camp. He couldn't wait to get back in the saddle in July when camps resumed. Even under his COVID-19 safety mask, he's smiling from ear to ear and happy to be back in action, growing stronger with the help of his horse therapist.



"Brayden always comes to his lessons with a smile and ready to work. He aspires to be an advanced rider, and I am sure he will achieve that goal."

– Lea Haven,
PATH Certified
Instructor

The Scene at NTRC



Employee Spotlight

NTRC IS GROWING, WELCOME TWO NEW TEAM MEMBERS



LOURDES ARAUJO

joined NTRC in March as a Mental Health Professional working with participants in the Equine-Facilitated Learning and Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy programs. She has

more than 15 years of experience as a Licensed Mental Health Counselor. She is also a Counselor, Education, and Supervision Doctoral Scholar from National Louis University. Lourdes is a bilingual (Spanish) Registered Mental Health Counseling Intern specializing in the treatment of trauma and mood disorders for children, teens, adults, and seniors. Her training includes cognitive behavior therapy, dialectical behavior therapy, trauma-focused therapy, and holistic mindfulness approaches as a counseling intern and in individual and group therapy in community mental health settings.



JOSEPH MEEK

joined NTRC in April as the Finance Officer. He will be providing financial modeling, budgeting, accounting and strategic analysis support for the Board of Directors and NTRC management.

Joseph has more than 40 years of strategic and senior level experience in the areas of corporate finance, accounting and treasury with an increasing focus on healthcare. In 2019, Joe founded Physician Practice Advisor, LLC which provides financial management including profitability, enhancement, budget and practice growth for physician and dental practices. Prior to starting Physician Practice Advisor, he served as the Chief Financial Officer for Neighborhood Health Clinic and Sanibel Captiva Holdings and as VP and Treasurer for Health Management Associates. He also has vast experience in banking and investor relations in Illinois and Missouri.

“We are thrilled to welcome Lourdes and Joe to the NTRC family. These two newly created positions were implemented by the strategic planning committee to help sustain our growth and the continuous improvement of our programs.”

– Missy Lamont, Executive Director

SAVE THE DATE

Bootstrap Boogie Barn Dance Appeal

Now Through November 14, 2020
Online Appeal and Virtual Pony Pie Bingo



The Barn Dance has been converted to an online appeal. Help us reach our fundraising goal of \$350,000 to support the annual

costs to care for our horses, the staff who cares for them and supports our participants, and to provide much needed rider scholarships. Donations will be accepted through November 14, 2020, culminating in a virtual Pony Pie Bingo game when the winner will be announced on Facebook. While much has changed, our need for your support has not. Whether you sponsor a barn cat or sponsor a horse, there are a variety of donation levels available. All gifts are appreciated. Together, we can get through this and dance again soon!

Hoof & Hike Poker Run

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

Hoof & Hike



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

After getting an extra year to plan, Chair Marc Halcrow and his committee are looking forward to making 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 OR CALL 239-596-2988.

Volunteer Appreciation Goes Virtual

COVID-19 can't get in the way of us celebrating our cherished volunteers and honoring our annual volunteer award winners. We made the tough decision to cancel our in-person Volunteer Appreciation Dinner – one of our favorite annual events. Instead in August, we announced our award winners virtually. Congratulations to these stand-outs for their invaluable support of our riders, participants and our mission.



Paula Bowes
Volunteer
of the Year



Sue Lottridge
Bootstrap
Boogie Barn
Dance
Volunteer
of the Year



Tony McClure
Board
President's
Recognition



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BOOTSTRAP BOOGIE BARN DANCE APPEAL

Virtual Pony Pie Bingo Tickets Now on Sale!



\$25 a plot or \$100 for five plots. Win a table of 10 to the next Barn Dance, a value of \$4,000. The winner will be announced November 12, 2020. Tickets available at **NTRC.org**



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, Sara White, Esq., 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

ALICE CURRY IS HAPPY TO BE BACK HELPING RIDERS HEAL

Prior to COVID-19 wreaking havoc on us all, my days were spent exercising Fancy, giving her spa days, feeding the horses, serving as a leader and helping with events.

I volunteer 12 hours a week. My days during the program closure were empty without all the joy, serenity and love I feel from the horses, participants and volunteers. I'm so happy to be back on the job! I am very impressed with the safety precautions and training volunteers have received for the reopening of programs.



Alice Curry

I've worked with Fancy for a year. It's my job to care for her.

I was attracted to her because she had 11 homes before coming to NTRC. She just needed someone to believe in her.

After I retired I wanted to volunteer with children and use my strengths as a 27-year veteran teacher. I had horses all my life. I really missed being around them. NTRC was the perfect fit. Now four years later, I've realized this is the most worthwhile thing I've ever done. Not only is it a stress reliever, I get to help others doing what I do best.

Volunteering is so rewarding. Many participants have been with me for years. You bond with them. Seeing their progress, smiles and mood improve gives me goosebumps. It brings me great joy seeing people feel good about themselves. If you are a people person and want to help others, NTRC is a wonderful place to spend your time.