



**Naples Therapeutic  
Riding Center**



# Scene + Herd



MAY 2021 NEWSLETTER



## Executive Director Letter

BY MISSY LAMONT



So much is happening at NTRC and we couldn't be happier. Programming is in full swing, events are making their way back, and we are growing our programs and expanding our outreach once again.

Since welcoming our new minis, Toulmin and Itty Bitty have been busy bringing smiles to all who encounter them. The minis are a big draw for a new weekly donation-based yoga class held every Monday. In this issue you will also learn about Mini Tales, our new children's literacy program – something I am very passionate about. As a child, I struggled with dyslexia and had a lot of anxiety about reading out loud. If they had a program like this where I could be around something I loved while working hard to do something I dreaded, it would have made the process of learning to read a lot easier.

Through a new collaboration with Home Base SWFL, we hosted a group of Veterans from their program and their family members for a special two-hour educational horsemanship encounter. Many of them returned for subsequent Operations Strides sessions.

As we continue expanding our private programming options, NTRC recently launched a six-week, equine-assisted occupational therapy program and hired long-time supporter and clinical partner, Mary Fellenz, as the part-time Occupational Therapist to run the new program.

We could never accomplish this exciting growth without our volunteers and donors supporting us every step of the way. We were thrilled to once again host our volunteer appreciation event to properly acknowledge the role volunteers play as the foundation of NTRC. The pandemic made volunteering more complicated, but that didn't sway 392 volunteers from donating over 10,000 hours last year. Learn more about Claire Lawrence our Volunteer of the Year in this issue!

We also brought back the Kentucky Derby Party in support of acquiring new therapy horses. Check out who took home the prize and sported the craziest hats and pants! The Barn Dance is coming back too and it is going to be better than ever with a new fundraising twist focused on our superheroes – our donors, our horses and our riders! Thanks for your unwavering support!

Tally Ho!

# Donor Dollars at Work



## MINIS ENCOURAGE YOUNG READERS THROUGH NEW LITERACY PROGRAM

NTRC partnered with teachers from the Collier County Public Schools (CCPS) to launch a new literacy program utilizing our new minis, Toulmin and Itty Bitty, to encourage students to read out loud in an exciting, non-judgmental format.

The Mini Tales Literacy program is part of the new mini traveling horse therapy outreach program which launched in December of 2020. Currently due to COVID-19, students are reading to the minis virtually, but the hope is to eventually bring the minis into the schools.

NTRC Board Member Kristin Carolan, a licensed marriage and family therapist working in the CCPS intensive behavioral unit, connected teachers with NTRC to help launch the program. As word got out about the success students were having reading to the minis, more teachers began utilizing the program. To date, the program has reached 4 elementary schools and 54 students.

Students who have histories of trauma, are on the autism spectrum and have emotional or behavioral challenges, often struggle with frustration tolerance. The minis are motivating them to want to read in a low stress, safe and fun environment.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been especially hard on children's well-being and some are struggling academically. The launch of this new program during these trying times is a positive silver lining to come out of the pandemic and we are grateful for the support of our donors for making this happen.

*“My students look forward to our time with the minis each week. My readers are more engaged and they remember more about the books. They are reading with more fluency and, more importantly, with more confidence.”*

– Nicole Sponseller,  
Naples Park  
Elementary School

## Meet a Rider

### NEW OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROGRAM GIVES ONE RIDER A LEG UP

Ryan is a lovable, sweet 11-year-old. He goes with the flow and people are drawn to him. He was diagnosed with autism when he was three and started working with Mary Fellenz the Occupational Therapist (OT) who now runs NTRC's new equine-assisted occupational therapy program. He has also worked with Applied Behavioral Specialist Marcee Brown since he was four. She now works with him at home through virtual schooling where he is thriving. He is verbal, but struggles finding the words in conversations and has difficulty socially.

Mary referred Ryan to NTRC six years ago. He has made great strides socially, academically and physically. He has no fear jumping on the horse now and confidently speaks his horse commands. Because of riding, he built up his core strength, even enough to ride a bike – something many children with autism can't do. He's made friends at NTRC that he sees outside of his lessons. Our entire family comes to watch him ride and cheer him on. His teacher is a volunteer sidewalker and she incorporates his school work into his lessons.

Ryan was thrilled to start working with Mary again through the six-week OT program. They work on sequencing and hand coordination while doing math facts, sight words and puzzles all while on the back of a horse. It has been an amazing addition to his treatment.

I love the opportunities NTRC provides children with special needs. Ryan has so much fun and doesn't even realize he is in therapy. He feels accepted and is able to learn and grow in a relaxed, supportive and unique environment.



*“Everyone is so kind, understanding and happy to be there. You can tell they love what they do. I love the joy horse therapy brings him and the opportunities it provides children with special needs.”*

– Amy Pike

# SPECIAL EVENTS



## Bootstrap Boogie Barn Dance

November 13, 2021 | 6:00 pm | NTRC

Whose ready to boogie once again? We are so excited to bring back our signature fundraiser, the 16th Annual Bootstrap Boogie Barn Dance, to our campus with all the fan favorites and few new exciting additions! The mission critical proceeds from the Barn Dance support the annual operating costs for NTRC's therapeutic riding and other equine-assisted activities and therapy programs.

This year's Barn Dance is presented by our title sponsor, Westwood Cleaning. For the first time, guests will enjoy live music to the sounds of the Ben Allen Band while chowing down on tasty vittles, taking barn tours and supporting our wildly creative fundraising activities. Back by popular demand, our Pony Pie Bingo is your opportunity to become a valuable land squatter. To all you cowpokes who have a gamblin' streak, a limited number of land plots are available for purchase. Our horse will be grazein the paddock during the event and when he drops his "pie" (hopefully on your plot) you could be \$5,000 richer! Plots are \$25 each or five plots for \$100.

Something new this year is our Silent Auction Golden Boot Raffle. We will have five amazing silent auction packages that will be displayed in the Clark Family Foundation building on the night of the event. Raffle tickets are \$100. This year's Fund-A-Need will include an opportunity to support our full roster of programming which includes therapeutic riding, group programs and community outreach programs.

Last, but not least, Barn Dance supporters can bring out their inner superhero during the cash call to help make our future expansion possible. Because of our generous supporters, NTRC is one step closer to having the ability to provide even more for our community with the recent purchase of the property directly adjacent to our campus. Your support of the cash call, will help us maximize the functionality of our current facility, expand programming and increase participation in our therapeutic programs. Barn Dance tickets are \$500 per person. Let's dance and dig deep for our riders. We can't wait to celebrate with you in November.

## Hoof & Hike Poker Run

January 16, 2022 | 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.



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

## We are grateful to *Welcome:*



### MARY FELLEENZ

Long-time NTRC supporter, volunteer and clinical partner, Mary Fellenz, has joined the staff as the part-time Equine-Assisted Occupational Therapy program coordinator. Fellenz is a licensed pediatric occupational therapist with 25 years of experience. She owns and operates MF Therapy Group, a sensory integration-based pediatric occupational therapy practice in Naples. Fellenz has been providing clinical services utilizing NTRC horses through the TROT program to since 2018.



### JEFFREY FORTIER

a partner and the Managing Director of Private Capital Management, has joined the Board of Directors. He brings more than 20 years of experience in private client investments and wealth management to his board position. In addition to his leadership role at NTRC, Jeff also serves on the national Board of Directors for the New Canaan Society, a Christian men's fellowship organization, and is active in his church, St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church.



### MICHAEL RUBENSTEIN

a Senior Fiduciary Advisor for BMO Harris Wealth Management, has joined the Board of Directors. Michael brings to his board position a strong personal connection to and appreciation for NTRC as his son, Matias, is on the autism spectrum and benefited greatly from NTRC's therapeutic riding program. In addition to his passion for the mission, Michael brings more than 10 years of expertise in trust and estates, tax, asset protection, charitable giving, and other related areas of wealth management to the Board.

Michael is very involved in the community having served as a board member of variety of local non-profits. He is also an active member of the Collier County Housing Finance Authority, Lee County Bar Association, and Collier County Bar Association. In 2019, Michael was named a Top 40 Under 40 from *Gulfshore Business* magazine.



### SARA WHITE

a Senior Associate with the law firm Porter Wright where she focuses her practice on a variety of complex commercial litigation including real estate, banking and finance, has joined the Board of Directors.

White is a member of the Florida Bar, Collier County Bar Association and the Collier County Women's Bar Association.

In 2020, White was named to the *Naples Illustrated's* list of Top Lawyers.

## The Scene at NTRC



# Donor Spotlight

## KENTUCKY DERBY PARTY DONORS SUPPORT EXPANSION

After having to postpone last year's Kentucky Derby Party due to the pandemic, we were so excited to safely host our donors on campus once again for this spectacular day at the races in support of expanding our therapy herd.

Because he realized how critical the funds raised at this year's Derby were, our Chair Marc Halcrow overcame challenges presented by the pandemic. He and his committee worked tirelessly and creatively to come up with a format that included safety logistics for this outdoor event such as pre-packaged food and pre-purchased buckets of beer and wine already placed at sponsor tables.

Our stately horses and not so stately minis, along with surprise weiner dogs, were paraded to the crowd as attendees generously and excitedly placed their bets on the winning horses. Lucky number 8 (Medina Spirit) won the Kentucky Derby for the most exciting 2 minutes in sports. The Horse Auction winners were Jeff Fortier, Harry Witt, Dave Joyce and Jano Janoyan. They surprised us by donating all of their winnings back to NTRC, bringing the total raised in the auction to \$37,850! The excitement continued when long-time supporters Connie and Gary Sharpe matched the amount raised in the cash call bringing the total raised in support of our expansion to \$80,800.

This is the first time proceeds from the Derby Party were specially allocated to help purchase new therapy horses for the expansion of NTRC's programs, which are in demand now more than ever as awareness for our new mental health and outreach services continues to grow.

Attendees came dressed to impress and win! The Best Hat category for the ladies went to Patty Witt with her big overflowing pink hat and the Best Crazy Pants category for the gents went to Brian McNamara with his rose-themed suit and cane. Thank you to all the volunteers and donors who made this Derby Party one of our most successful yet. We are so grateful for your unwavering support.

### Sponsors/Donors

Janet & Peter Dawson  
Masquerade and Balloons Galore  
Bulleit Frontier Whiskey  
Claire Lawrence  
Marc Halcrow  
Paula Bowes  
Nothing Bundt Cakes  
Shula's for providing the catering  
Rick Gallo with Rick Gallo Auctioneer  
DeRomo's  
Publix

### Kentucky Derby Committee

*Chair – Marc Halcrow*  
Lee Pinto  
Susie Newlon  
Alice Curry  
Claire Lawrence  
Jeff Jerome  
Lea Haven

*“We are so grateful for the support of our Derby donors. Their investment in the purchase of new horses will ensure they have greater longevity with the program and lower veterinary costs and allow our riders more time with the horses to continue developing the unique bond therapeutic riding provides.”*

*– Marc Halcrow*





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### IN MEMORY OF BONNIE

*Our beloved barn cat, Bonnie, passed away. She will be remembered for her affectionate, tolerant and entertaining nature. She was the BEST! We will all miss her terribly.*



## Board of Directors

Lee Pinto, *President*; Gregory Otis, *Vice President*; Harry Witt, *Treasurer*; William Villafranco, *Secretary*; Kristin Carolan; James Dati, Esq.; Mackindy Dieu; Jeffrey Fortier, Jack Fulmer, III; Jeff Jerome, Brian McNamara, Esq.; Melanie Penner; Michael Rubenstein, Connie Sharp; Bill Swartz, DVM; Sara White, Esq.; 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

### CLAIRE LAWRENCE NAMED VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

My love of horses began when I was a child growing up near a farm in New Jersey where I had a pony. I attended a private equestrian college and enrolled in an equine vet tech program. I was on their equestrian team where I showed and trained American quarter horses. We traveled to Britain and I was honored to ride for the queen! My passion turned into a career and I became an equine specialist working with children and adults with cerebral palsy until we moved to Naples 20 years ago.

Once my kids were off to college, I started working with Mary Fellenz in her occupational therapy practice. I began volunteering as a sidewalker at NTRC six years ago when we were retiring our last horse. I worked my way up to leader and now exercise Bear and Clyde – something I consider an added perk. When NTRC launched the new TROT program, Mary asked me to help because of my horse experience. I volunteer five days-a-week and love the opportunity to incorporate my professional and personal passions.



**Claire Lawrence**

I've seen what horses can do. Equine therapy reaches so many people with special needs who are in great need of something other than typical therapy. There is a magical connection between the rider and horse that opens them up to possibilities that wouldn't be possible without NTRC. I was humbled and honored to be chosen Volunteer of the Year. It really taught me how loved and appreciated I am. I feel very blessed in my life and volunteering is an opportunity to pay it forward. My favorite part about volunteering is the riders' joy and fulfillment and seeing their progress physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.