



Friends For Tomorrow News

Summer 2015

Our mission is to enhance the lives of children and young adults facing extraordinary cognitive, emotional, social and physical challenges through the therapeutic benefits of horse back riding and unmounted activities.

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Sixth Annual Run for Our Roses Kentucky Derby Reception & Auction

For the past six years, on the first Saturday in May, we have hosted Friends For Tomorrow's most important fundraiser, the Run for Our Roses Kentucky Derby Reception & Auction. This year's event was particularly special as it marked our 21st year of bringing children and horses together.

The evening began with a Kentucky Derby Reception. Guests were offered mint juleps and Derby-themed hors d'oeuvres while a live telecast of the 141st running of the Kentucky Derby played overhead on a large screen. Congratulations to American Pharoah! Following the reception and dinner, our guests were able to see and feel the essence of our program through speeches given by three of our students: Annika Marie, Kayla and Dylan.

The generous support of friends and families helped us raise more than \$40,000! The proceeds from this evening will help support many aspects of our programming: our daily lesson programs and the engaging elements that encourage creative learning, our equine partners and their care, staff development, and much-needed funds to support the many requests for scholarship assistance we receive.

We extend a special thank you to the many volunteers, donors and supporters who make this event possible. They include our event sponsor the Wells Fargo Foundation, Rob Spence and Deryl Humphrey of Lynx Audio Services, who for the past five years have generously donated their time and use of their audio/visual equipment, Benchmark



This issue is dedicated to Bert Lesneski & George Berry. They will be greatly missed.

Assisted Living who sponsored the beautiful centerpieces on each table, and Jay Athur and ProPrint who generously donated their printing services. Student parent Karen Moran made the



Students Annika & Kayla with Instructor Lucy and her mother, Marian

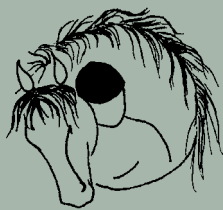
decadent desserts enjoyed by all. Special thanks to parent guest speaker Stephanie McHale Donovan for sharing her heartwarming story of her daughter Grace's experience at Friends For Tomorrow.

Photography from the evening, by Nick DePasquale, can be viewed at <http://www.friendsfortomorrow.org/fundraiser/>.

We look forward to welcoming everyone back next year for our Sixth Annual Run for Our Roses Derby Reception and Auction on Saturday, May 7, 2016.



The outside of a horse is good for the inside of a child.



Dear Friends,

Spring is the season I look forward to with all my heart. Stepping outside and feeling the world coming alive out of winter's time of rest is a true gift in my life. Although the season promises birth, renewal and growth, some lives are changed forever and no longer sing Spring's song. It is with both sadness and with great honor that I mention the loss of two very special men who both supported my dream, and made it possible for Friends For Tomorrow (FFT) to grow and thrive during these last 20 years. I hope you will remember with love and great appreciation my father Bert Lesneski, who loved to watch our children ride and was so proud of what they enjoyed. I offer my sincere respect in memory of George Berry, whose generous and quiet philanthropical support allows FFT to have a home to thrive and continue to reach for the stars.

From reaching for the stars to the Run for Our Roses Kentucky Derby Reception and Auction, we keep quite busy as you can imagine! This year has been no exception. We continue on with our riding program, during which we share friendship and laughter, quiet conversation and energetic dialogue, movement and centeredness, reflection and projection. We have several new additions to FFT which I share with you in this issue! These new aspects of our program encompass our program offerings, our staff and volunteers, our herd, and our outreach capabilities.

It is with excitement that we invite you all, if you have not had the chance yet, to visit our newly designed and updated website, www.friendsfortomorrow.org. We eagerly anticipate our upcoming partnership with Lucy's Love Bus, which brings me back to my earliest intentions for FFT's important work.

We are pleased to formally introduce our newest program, Horse-n-Buddy. Last fall, we welcomed Skippy and instructor Kelli as the team on the ground for our pilot cart-driving endeavor. This petite duo has enormous heart and personality, and has proven themselves to be true partners in work. Driving helps our students experience new aspects of cause and effect relationships. It offers new ways to experience the importance of communication and teamwork. Most importantly, our new drivers feel the independence that comes with guiding a horse through the use of their voice and hands. We now have a place in the forefront of equine-assisted activities. We are proud to be one of only three PATH Int'l programs in Massachusetts currently offering this newest therapeutic approach.

“ This year has been a time of exploration and expansion, tempered by careful planning and measured discovery of new ways to reach even more families.”

Our weekdays end with the sun lowering over the far end of the barn. As they leave, young equestrians of different abilities share stories of their successful outings with their FFT friends, humans and animals alike. Our year has been so full, with many tender and many exhilarating times. This year has been a time of exploration and expansion, tempered by careful planning and measured discovery of new ways to reach even more families. We are grateful for the many ways you support the efforts to uphold our dreams of bringing children and horses together, one child at a time. Thank you for joining with us, and I wish you all a great summer as we move into the excitement ahead.

Here's to sunny days and gentle rains to come,

Diane

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Diane Lesneski Auger

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Partnering to Serve Children with Cancer

As a certified PATH Int'l Center Member, Friends For Tomorrow has been invited to join in partnership with Lucy's Love Bus to "Deliver Comfort... Until A Cure" by providing therapeutic horseback riding and cart and ground driving services to children with cancer.

Lucy Grogan was 8 years old when she was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia. Throughout Lucy's long illness, concerned individuals raised money to help support her. Lucy learned about the benefits of integrative therapies such as massage, acupuncture, art therapy, and therapeutic horseback riding during her treatment.

When Lucy was 11 years old, she told her mother that when she was "done with cancer" she wanted to start a program that would provide free integrative therapies to all pediatric cancer patients to help manage the side effects and late effects of traditional cancer treatment. Lucy founded Lucy's Love Bus from her hospital bed, six months before she died at age 12. Since 2006, supporters have helped Lucy deliver love and comfort to over 280 children with this life-threatening illness. Families supported by Lucy's Love Bus come from all over the US (and world) for treatment in Boston-area hospitals.

"We are honored to provide some of the therapies Lucy found so comforting during her battle with cancer. Sharing our majestic and gentle four-legged friends with pediatric cancer patients and their families allows us to deliver Lucy's wish for hope, healing, love and encouragement. We thank Lucy's Love Bus for asking us to join their mission." said Janice Gilman, Director of Marketing and Administration at Friends For Tomorrow.



Recognizing Carol Bailey

We are happy to announce that the 2014 Friends For Tomorrow (FFT) Volunteer Award, "A Friend for Today and Tomorrow" was awarded to Carol Bailey. This award is given annually, in Anne DeFilippo's honor, to an FFT volunteer who demonstrates the similar passion, commitment and energy that Anne has shown our program.



Honorees of this award display excellence in their..

- * Commitment to give their time weekly
- * Attitude to make each and every student feel welcome, special and safe
- * Compassion towards the care and handling of the horses
- * Initiative to learn about horsemanship and embrace FFT best practices
- * Support of fellow-volunteers through mentoring and/or collaboration

Carol offers physical support to those struggling to support themselves, emotional support by exuding calm, centered energy. She patiently teaches grooming skills, vital to horses' well-being and a grounding experience for the students. She can be counted on to provide confident and kind direction to our horses as a leader, as well as to incoming volunteers she helps mentor. Additionally, Carol is a professional photographer and she has for years helped us capture the joy and endearing partnerships created between student and horse. Her pictures have been used in our promotional materials, on our website and also as gifts for our students.

The true spirit of FFT ineffably shines through when we witness our young riders' focus and confidence beam through the smiles on their faces as they mature into self-reliant young adults. These successes for our students would not be possible without the undying support, enthusiasm and encouragement from our volunteers. No-one exemplifies that more than Carol. She arrives each week with a contagious smile and bubbly enthusiasm that can cheer up our students on even on their most trying days. During the past 20 years, Carol has touched the lives of hundreds of children through FFT and I am sure there are many more to come!

Thank you to our donors!

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Skippy is ready for the Derby!

Newton Trevens, in

Lincoln Public School Community Service Day

On May 20th, we welcomed three lovely young ladies from the Lincoln Public School for a Freeman’s Bureau Community Service Day. Eighth graders Addie, Anya, Ashley, and Ella joined us for an afternoon of beautifying cavalletti poles, cleaning tack, and getting to know the horses we use with our students.

In addition to the community service hours component, the girls spent time with Diane, Friends For Tomorrow’s founder, to gather information about the program. They were eager to learn the history of how the organization originated and about the students we work with throughout the year. They appreciated what



Thanks for your help girls!

Diane found inspirational when she was in eighth grade, and the importance of recognizing what drives our passions within. Blending educational opportunities with real-life experience, such as community service opportunities, helps us all thrive. We are excited to inspire the interest and commitment of these young ladies and all our volunteers.

**Run for Our Roses
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A Big Thank You to HomePride!

Our friends from HomePride, Inc. (Kris Auger, Pete Richardson, Scott Perkins and Kevin Babcock) generously donated materials and their time to install our new fencing! We are privileged to have our program-owned horses welcomed at the Wise Family's home. After the extraordinary winter we all endured, not much escaped the ravages of the cold and heaving ground, including the fences we depend on to keep our animals safe and secure. Teamwork and the gift of some new and gently used fencing, now firmly set, provides renewed boundaries offering each of our horses the individual space they need to relax and still be close to each other. Thank you, HomePride!



The new fence line is ready for horses



Announcing Horse-n-Buddy Therapeutic Cart and Ground Driving for Children and Young Adults

Since our founding in 1994, Friends For Tomorrow (FFT) has offered one-on-one therapeutic horseback riding to children and young adults. Over time we have expanded our programming twice. In 2007 we added Pony Partners, an equine-facilitated learning group program for girls between the ages of 8 to 11. Four years later, in 2011, we expanded once again with Hooves, Paws and Claws, an animal-facilitated learning group program for children and young adults. Today, we proudly and formally announce our one-on-one therapeutic cart and ground program offering driving lessons for children and young adults! The program name, Horse-n-Buddy (HnB), reflects time students spend acquiring skills and therapeutic benefits of cart and ground driving in partnership with an equine friend.

Horse-n-Buddy focuses on developing knowledge of safety around horses, harnessing, and driving skills using teamwork. Each lesson teaches the students about caring for and driving their equine partner. Driving activities include harnessing, identifying parts of the harness and how each works, hitching a horse to the cart, and learning to navigate a driving course.

HnB offers a unique learning opportunity to develop a set of skills by providing the student with a distinct range of movements and a vast set of motor-sensory experiences. Driving a horse from a cart or wheelchair gives students an alternative to horseback riding. This opens up the world of horses to those who may be unable to ride due to limited balance, physical limitations, fear of heights or other challenges. For some it may provide a means to prepare for horseback riding.

With program growth, our staff and herd also expands. We welcome Horse-n-Buddy instructor Kelli Gerrior and her equine teaching partner Skippy to the FFT staff team. Kelli is a certified PATH Int'l Driving Level Instructor and Massachusetts Licensed Riding Instructor with 24 years of leisure and competitive driving experience. "Since I was very young I've had a passion for horses and driving. I am very excited to share my love of both, combined with my professional training with the students," says Kelli. She is a member of the Berryfield Farm staff and has been a volunteer in our programs for the past two years.

Kelli's equine teaching partner Skippy is an eight-year-old paint mare VSE (Very Small Equine) who is naturally comfortable working with cart and ground driving activities for children and young adults. Although small (Skippy is only 9.2 hands tall and 250 pounds), VSE's can impressively pull approximately 2-3 times their weight.

Horse-n-Buddy lessons are one-on-one and will meet for 45 minutes one time per week during the late afternoon. To inquire about the student guidelines to participate in Horse-n-Buddy and/or to inquire about lesson opportunities, email our program coordinator Lucy Cornish at lucycornish@gmail.com.



Kayla & Maddie get to know Skippy

Student Spotlight: Nicky

Contributed by Kate Etcheverry

The plains thunder with the roar of hooves as Pharaoh Tutmose III leads his army into battle, urging his chariot horse ever faster. In reality our Pharaoh is Nicky, the first student of our new Horse-n-Buddy driving program, and his mighty chariot horse is Skippy, a Very Small Equine (VSE) with a mighty personality. Nicky has been riding with Friends For Tomorrow (FFT) since he was in the second grade. Now 23, a graduate student of International Relations at University of Massachusetts Boston, Nicky admits that he enjoys indulging in “a bit of fantasy,” as he draws from his passion for world history, imagining himself as a powerful pharaoh as he drives.



Nicky driving Skippy this fall

Diagnosed with cerebral palsy at 18 months of age, Nicky quips, “I was a bit floppy,” as a young child. His feet curved inward and he had not yet begun to walk. Nicky would end up having nearly a surgery a year for the first 10 years of his life. In addition to surgeries, physical therapy and check-ups found the Ruiz family at Children’s Hospital almost every week. Seeking an alternative to the constant cycle of physical therapy, his mother Vicky spotted a flier at the hospital for FFT and gave Founder Diane Auger a call. “I was happy riding instead of being scared when going to the hospital for physical therapy. Riding also made me proud. I could do something other kids could do too. In fact, my friends in school thought it was awesome that I rode horses. It was cool!” Nicky says with pride.

Nicky considers his shyness one of the great challenges that FFT has helped him to overcome. He carried so much tension in his body, he couldn’t properly lower his legs around the horse he was riding or open up enough to speak with his instructors. “In the beginning, I was scared and reluctant. Diane would have to coax me onto Thumby or Fox or Doc or Snuther and she would get the guys to coax me – like Kris Auger or Jon Drew who volunteered to be my sidewalkers and make me brave.” His instructors would lull him into a calm of relaxation and comfort by drawing him out of his shell talking about his favorite subjects. As he relaxed, he found his posture improved and his legs stretched out comfortably to sit astride his mount.



Nicky riding riding Dayton MANY years ago!

In the fall of 2014, Nicky joined Horse-n-Buddy, FFT’s therapeutic cart and ground driving program. Driving has given Nicky the opportunity to continue working on his core strength as he learns new ways to communicate with a horse. As he’s gotten to know Skippy, she has risen quickly through the ranks of his affections to become one of his all time favorites along with Dayton and Snuther. “I want to get good enough to give other passengers the chance to ride with me, especially Mrs. Berry!”

Nicky attributes much of his confidence and his ability to walk so well to the therapeutic benefits of participating in horseback riding and now cart driving. He often finds himself fielding questions about his success from others and is proud to share his accomplishments.

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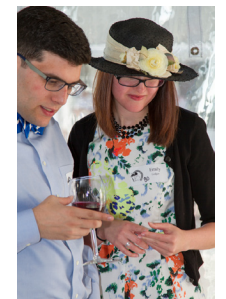
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Bringing children & horses together, one child at a time.



Photos by Nick DePasquale