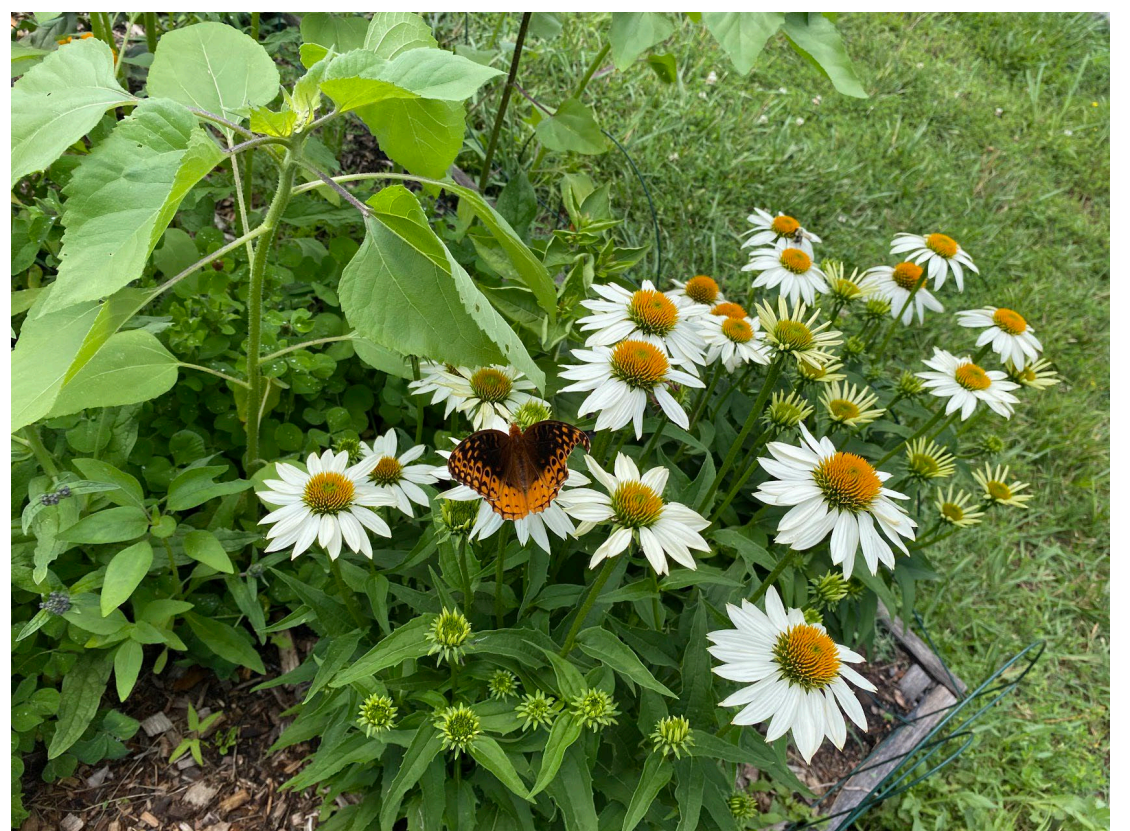




## 2022 Annual Report





# Mission Statement

To provide equine facilitated experiences in an environmentally sustainable way using rescued horses as a means to enable educational, social and emotional learning, and personal growth opportunities for children and adults in our community.

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## **I. The Birth of Labyrinth Training Center** (Letter from Executive Director)

This is the first report as a CEO of anything I have ever had to write. Suffice it to say, I never imagined myself here with such a title. I imagined all the rest endlessly. How many kids exclaiming, "You have horses?!" and bouncing up and down when I extended the invitation to meet them? How many conversations with people whose eyes lit up when talking about horses, but sent them downward when I asked if they still had a horse? What was the disconnect? Access. Money. Sometimes knowledge.

There is so much going on in this world at such a speed that it is often hard to catch my breath. Truths are hard to hold still. Suffering is ever present and heavy. When I could not find center, I kept hearing, "Do something. Anything." We have land that cradles us as we try to heal it and horses willing to guide us as we try to provide them space and a place to heal themselves. "Share them." And so, Labyrinth Training Center was born. It is not huge, it is not momentous, but it is a small kernel our family and the volunteers who end up on our doorstep offer up in response to the paralyzing overwhelm.

If you are reading this, then you have supported this journey – and for that we are eternally grateful. And to the horses we owe the greatest debt of gratitude of all.

*"From horses, we may learn not only about the horse itself but also about animals in general, indeed about ourselves and about life as a whole."*

– George Gaylord Simpson

Have a wonderful and peaceful holiday season.



kindest regards,  
 Alexandra Hess  
 Founder & CEO,  
 Labyrinth Training Center

## II. Areas of Impact

### 1. Clinics

LTC was pleased to host two one-day clinics with our friend, inspiration, and teacher, Debbie Draves Legg. Debbie's clinics (one for kids and one for adults) enabled community members to learn about their own intuition, emotions, and internal guidance through interactions with horses. We are very thankful that Debbie has recently relocated to Central Virginia and we look forward to partnering with her in the future. For more information about Debbie's work, please go to <https://eponicity.com/about>.



### 2. Spa Day

Our spa day program has proven to be one of the most popular opportunities at LTC. This year, we welcomed multiple volunteers who participated in weekly spa day sessions of brushing the horses and giving each horse individual attention. The volunteers seem to get a lot out of the time with the horses and the horses, who are becoming a bit spoiled through all the attention, clearly enjoy it. Some of our volunteers, with some lessons from Alex, have also started doing groundwork with the horses, which has been an unexpected but positive addition to the spa day experience.



### 3. Summer Camp

The centerpiece of LTC's efforts this year was our summer camp. For a week in June, LTC hosted six elementary-school campers plus four camp counselors. Founder Alex, and #1 volunteer / board member Sheri ran the entire week and led all the camp activities. We were thrilled to host the campers' families on the final day for a horse show and demonstration where the campers (and counselors) could show off all that they had learned. The camp week also included several guest presenters who conducted nature walks and other activities.



These campers are kids recognized by their schools or other community organizations as great kids who have shown an interest in horses or the outdoors, but did not otherwise have an opportunity for such an experience. LTC's summer camp – which was only possible thanks for LTC's donors – gave these kids an unforgettable week. Did our summer camp change the world? Perhaps not. But the campers were happy and tired at the end of each day, and we are committed to continuing a relationship with these kids as they grow, and hopefully extending similar opportunities to more kids in the future.





## 4. Poppy

This year, we found ourselves with an opportunity to rescue a beautiful old soul we named Poppy. Poppy was an older quarter horse mare that came to us with a Henneke horse body condition score of 2. Had we planned on rescuing a horse this year? No. Is LTC a horse rescue itself? No, there are already great horse rescues doing wonderful work that we support. (Check out the list at the bottom of this page: <https://www.labyrinthtrainingcenter.org/why-rescue-horse>).

But there was a need, and it was a privilege to step up. After several arduous months, Poppy began to experience respiratory failure. Euthanasia is not a subject that makes for great annual reports or end of the year messages. But we were there for Poppy and we made the compassionate decision to end her suffering. A group of volunteers were with her in her final moments and like all things at LTC, it was not planned to go this way, but we are forever changed for the experience.



We gave Poppy love and comfort in her final months. She gave us so much more. We miss her. But we are thankful for the time we had with her.

## 5. Open House

In September, we put up some posters along the road, announced on social media that we were open for visitors, and wondered if anyone would come out for an open house / tack sale / charity auction. Bets were taken: would anyone show? 7 people? Perhaps 15?

We had 77 people come to our open house, meet the horses, and spend at least a few minutes talking to us about LTC, our community, and just what the heck we are trying to do here. Thank you everyone that came out! What a day!



Beyond just welcoming so many current and new friends, LTC also raised \$3,386 during our open tack sale and charity auction. The sale and auction was only possible because of significant volunteer work and numerous donors who stepped up and gave us auction items. Thank you to everyone that made this possible! \$3,386 is a significant amount of money raised because this year's summer camp cost us approximately \$3,000. That means, thanks for the tack sale and auction, we already have the funding needed to put on a summer camp next year.





## 6. Other Farm Visits and Lessons

Throughout the year, LTC was able to offer additional services and opportunities on an *ad hoc* basis as opportunities came our way. Beyond the five horses that live here year-round, six additional horses spent time here and received training from Alex. These are horses that are now better trained, had exposure to kids, and will hopefully now have better daily lives with their owners.

Alex was also able to provide lessons to four kids beyond those that participated in our summer camp. Because we are a small and new nonprofit, LTC is not able to offer riding lessons to the general public. But at the same time, each of these four kids found his/her way here and presented a great opportunity for us to get great kids exposed to horses. Some of these experiences were only possible because of volunteers. Thank you to those volunteers! Facilitating these lessons and experiences demonstrates that there is a need here: kids want to ride and spend time with horses, and our rescued horses want the attention. We hope these opportunities only grow in the future.

Finally, we were thrilled to host a few additional farm visits. For example, through our open house, we met a wonderful woman from the area that is caring for her elderly mother and wondered if she and her mother could come meet the horses and walk our trails. Of course! We had such a wonderful afternoon together and these types of unstructured visits have proven to be some of our most memorable experiences.



“[A]griculture that focuses on living soil is not an innovation; it’s an apologetic response to the many wrongs forced upon the land and for the attendant harm and loss suffered by many people.”

Jesse Frost, *The Living Soil Handbook*

## 7. Sustainability Efforts

LTC’s sustainability efforts this year were significant. Many visitors noticed that we have started a small apiary (since this report is being written in early winter, it’s too soon to know whether the apiary is a success). It has been fun to watch the honeybees and to find them on flowers throughout the property.

But less noticeable is the work we have done below ground. We are improving our composting processes and using our horse manure to build more and more raised beds throughout the property. This year, those manure-fed gardens allowed us to have a three-sisters garden and several rows of vegetables; but it also supported the planting of many native wildflowers and shrubs.

Our riparian buffer zone is officially a year old! Of the 33 baby trees we planted in fall of 2021, all but 2 or 3 are alive and well. We continue to work with the James River Association to get these trees established and protect the seasonal stream that our property drains to.

With the help of volunteers, we also installed three new fence lines that split a large pasture into three and allowed us to begin a proper rotational grazing program. (Although that program was suspended when we met Poppy and learned that she had some very special dietary requirements, see above). We also installed a 4-ball thermal waterer that saves roughly 50 gallons of dumped water each week. The waterer and fencing supplies were provided as part of a USDA / NRCS Virginia Environmental Quality Incentives Program and a research study that we are participating in that is conducted by Virginia Tech and the University of Kentucky.



### **III. Looking Ahead to Next Year**

#### **1. Two new board members: Kate O'Donnell and Marsha Pryor**

LTC is pleased to announce that, beginning in 2023, we will have two new members on our board of directors: Kate O'Donnell and Marsha Pryor.

Dr. Kate O'Donnell is a long-time friend and a like-mind soul. Kate is a parent and works as the principal of St. Andrew's School, a tuition-free school in Richmond that provides whole child programming that "nurtures intellectual, creative, moral, and spiritual growth." (<https://st-andrews-school.org/>). Kate has a masters and a PhD in education from the University of Virginia and is terribly over-qualified to serve on the board of a small nonprofit.

Marsha Pryor is also a long-time friend, ally, and rescuer of horses (not to mention goats and even a zebra). Marsha and her husband own and operate an actual farm in Goochland County (as opposed to the small hobby farm that is LTC) all while each working off-farm jobs and raising two boys. Marsha currently works at Elk Hill's Schools, which provides "mental health services, individualized education, special enrichment, and workforce development" to students that are referred there "due to their serious emotional and/or behavioral challenges." <https://www.elkhill.org/schools>. Marsha previously worked as a veterinary technician and is the only person we know of that may have a bigger heart for taking in and caring for animals than Alex. She has been a tireless volunteer (and donor) for LTC during 2022 and we are humbled that she agreed to join our board.

#### **2. Days End Farm Horse Rescue Training Clinic in April**

LTC is pleased to partner with Days End Horse Rescue (<https://defhr.org/>) to offer a one-day clinic this coming April. The clinic will be for adopters of rescued horses in our area and will teach participants how to build on their relationships with their horses. We hope to finalize the date, provide further details, and start accepting reservations for this clinic soon.

#### **3. Summer Camp 2023**

LTC is hard at work planning for summer camp, 2023. We plan to invite back all of last year's participants as well as provide a few spots for new campers. We will announce details as soon as we have them.





## **IV. Donor & Volunteer Impact (By the Numbers)**

### **14 Kids**

In 2022, LTC provided opportunities to 14 different kids. Six of those 14 kids participated in the week-long summer camp; whereas the remainder participated in lessons, clinics, or other opportunities here at the farm.

### **11 Horses**

In 2022, LTC worked with 11 horses. Five of those horses live here and are discussed on our website. The other six horses spent some portion of 2022 here and received training, riding, or just lots of love.

### **16 Volunteers**

In 2022, LTC benefited from the work of 16 volunteers who donated at least 827 hours of time (likely more that they are not telling us about). Three of those volunteers are our board members, one is Alex, our founder and CEO, but the rest are new volunteers who found us this year and gave us their time and energy. We hope it has been a worthwhile experience! Please know that our programs and care of the horses would not be possible without you. Thank you!

### **\$9,511 in Donations**

In 2022, LTC received **\$9,511** in donations from 46 different donors! Thank you! We are humbled and inspired by your faith in us and your willingness to donate to a brand-new nonprofit. We also received in-kind donations from 26 additional donors, who provided everything from horse blankets and tack to auction items. Again, thank you! The community support has exceeded our wildest dreams.





# Thank You!

## V. Donor & Volunteer List

Al Sickler	Jane Henderson	Molly Smithers
Alexandra Hess	Janet Anderson	Nancy Eismann
Alison Visokay	Janice F. Curtis	Nataline Viray-Fung
Ashley Calkins	Jason Usury	Nicholas Gehring
Bradley Grant	Jeanne Delicata	Nina & Leah Estes
Brenda Stephens	Jennifer Wilson	Pam Anderson
Carol Sherwood	Jerald Hess	Paul Kugelman
Carolyn Johnson	Johnny Blankenship	Peaks View Forge, Inc.
Catherine Plante	Karen Fritsch	Renee D'Antonio
Christina Kemp	Karlene T. Jones	Ross Braun
Christy Ottaviano	Kathleen King	Roy Hoagland
CJ Weldon	Kathy Corker	Ruth Thyen
Claire Larson	Kay Hamlin	Sandra Neal Dawson
Crystal Neilson-Hall	Kim McCray	Sarah Tracy
Daryl Perkins	Kirsten Knull	Sharon Glover/Glasser
Deborah Draves Legg	Kristina Frolova	Sheila Armel
Dorothy Ruqus	Larry Anderson	Sheri Blankenship
Ed Bradley	Laura Case	Sonja Armel
Elaine Scully	Leo Delicata	Steven Legg
Elizabeth Stutts	Lilly Russell	Susan Cane
Erin Foley	Liz Liverman	Thomas Long
Gabriella Singh	Lori Murray	Tiffany Severs
Glen and Bobbi Sickler	Maria Russell	Tobie Greenlee
Heather Newton	Marsha Pryor	Vicky Velicky
Helene Austin	MaryAnn Massie	Victoria Beaulieu
James Boykin	Megan Donovan	
Jane Bradley	Melinda Martin	
	Meredith Milligan	



## VI. A Final Word of Thanks

What is Labyrinth Training Center (and how do you spell it again)? We have asked and answered this question so many times this year and it continues to be our favorite question. Ultimately, the answer seems to be that LTC is whatever it needs to be. It is a canvas for those who come here to paint upon. For the 60-year-old volunteer that had a childhood love of horses never fulfilled, this is a place to brush horses, learn, and laugh. For the 9-year-old kid that dreams of galloping adventures, this is a place to brush horses (notice the theme?), learn, and maybe trot or canter. For a horse that has known pain, hunger, and abuse, this is a place to heal.

For the Hess family and the LTC Board of Directors, this is a place to grow and to give thanks. Words cannot express how fortunate we are to know this place, these animals, and each other. Our hope is that for anyone wishing to expand and experience connection, LTC is a balm that makes the wounded whole. Thank you for helping make this all happen.

- Alex, J., Sheri, and Maria

