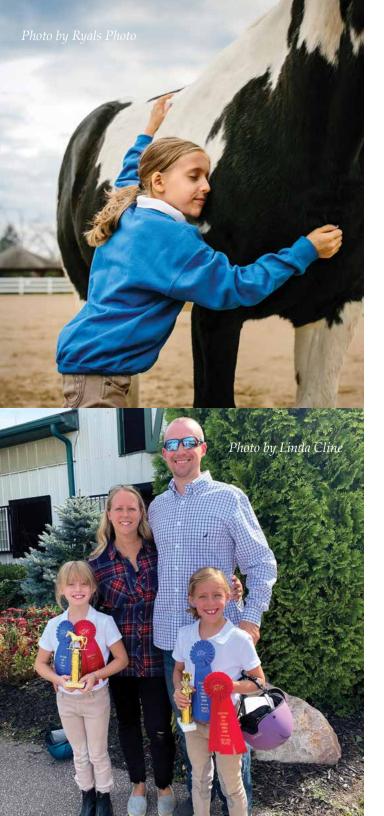


Horses change us! They teach us about trust, responsibility and teamwork. They push us to become stronger and more confident. Their intuitive nature gives us comfort and helps us heal and relax. And they bring smiles to everyone they meet. Read on to learn how our 40 therapy horses are improving our students' lives and those around them.







# Kylie and Kaitlyn find more than they expected

Kylie always wanted to ride a horse. Her dream came true at Fieldstone with the help of A Special Wish Foundation, an organization that grants requests to children with life-threatening disorders.

Now she has been riding for a year with the company of her younger sister Kaitlyn. Both girls instantly found friends in our therapy horses. They come to lessons early to groom, collect their saddles and reins, and tack up their horses. Their riding skills have quickly advanced in the arena and out on trail.

Kylie is in remission but it has been a tough road for the family. At age three, Kylie was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer and underwent surgeries, chemotherapy and radiation to save her life. Going back and forth to the hospital took its toll on the family, including Kaitlyn who was only one year old at the time. Horses have helped the girls find happiness together while gaining strength, confidence and tools to overcome the fears and anxiety that develop during a difficult diagnosis. Riding has also brought the girls closer as they enjoy a shared love of horses.

When the sisters heard about our annual horse show, they were all in. Their instructor taught them the intricate pattern in class, rehearsing it for weeks. To memorize the course, Kylie drew the pattern on paper, detailing where they were supposed to circle, change direction and also where to trot, halt and walk on. For hours, she and her sister practiced at home together.

The day of the horse show, they were decked out in matching boots, breeches and white shirts, ready to display their skills. They rode beautifully amid the cheers of family and friends, and they both brought home a blue and a red ribbon. It was a magical day full of smiles and happy tears.

Kylie's wish has surpassed her expectations. We are so glad A Special Wish introduced Kylie, Kaitlyn and their whole family to the farm. We look forward to watching them ride and develop new skills for many years to come!

Top Left – Kylie gains comfort from therapy horse Smoke. Bottom Left – The Earl family celebrates at the horse show. Kaitlyn, left, Kylie, right. Right – Kylie gives her little sister Kaitlyn a big hug while they pose with Smoke.





# Maya grows with horses

Months before Maya transferred from Kenston to Gaitway, Fieldstone's alternative high school, she was already volunteering at the farm, assisting in our riding and carriage driving classes. She helped in any way she could, taking every chance to engage with our horses and students. Maya had just returned home after running away and was determined to turn her life around. She had been struggling in school and with relationships and needed a safe place to overcome these challenges.

When school started in the fall, she wanted a fresh start and was excited to begin at Gaitway. In addition to her required high school classes, she made sure to enroll in our riding, animal care and equine partnership courses to spend time with our horses. She also continued to volunteer, introducing our students to the joy of horses.

"Volunteering at Fieldstone has helped Maya increase her confidence and feel the satisfaction that comes with helping others," says Bruce, one of her teachers at Gaitway.

Much to Maya's delight, she was given a horse buddy, a responsibility reserved for our most dedicated volunteers. Our horse buddies are asked to give one specific horse just a little extra attention with grooming, walking and loving care each week. Maya was assigned to Duke, a cute Haflinger cross that looks a little like a giant teddy bear. He is an affectionate fellow with a little twinkle in his eye. Maya loves to talk to Duke and lets her guard down with him because she knows Duke won't judge. She trusts him and he gives her unconditional love.

Since coming to Gaitway, Maya has blossomed. She's gained self-esteem, which has transferred into her academics and relationships with friends and family. We are so pleased Maya has found success at Gaitway – thriving on its small group instruction, individualized attention and access to our horses, lessons and 45-acre farm.

Photos by Frank Gwirtz



### **School and Community Partners**

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- Gaitway High School
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- Homeschool Support Group
- Hospice of the Western Reserve
- Hospice of the Western Reserve Veteran's Grief Group
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- Twinsburg City Schools
- Ursuline College
- Valor Home Akron
- Veterans Community Group Chagrin Falls

"The research shows that horses most definitely wash away anxiety and allow us to reset our emotions," says Aviva Vincent, Director of Program Quality.



# Horses help us relax and reset emotions

Many of us have witnessed and even experienced the relaxation that comes from working with horses. They make us feel heard, connected and at peace. But until the last decade, the therapeutic equine industry has had little scientific evidence detailing how a horse can help treat symptoms of anxiety, the number one mental health illness for children in the U.S.

Last year, Fieldstone Farm embarked on a research study with New York University to better understand the benefits of therapy with horses for youth with anxiety. Led by Fieldstone Farm's Aviva Vincent, PhD, LSW, Director of Program Quality, and a team of psychologists and researchers from NYU, we enrolled 39 students, ages 6-16, in a 10-week study in which we analyzed saliva, testing levels of cortisol (indicator of stress) and oxytocin (indicator of relaxation) before and after riding. We also interviewed students and caregivers to assess mood changes and perceptions of bonding with horses during the sessions. In advance of the study, instructors were trained in Reining in Anxiety, a curriculum using cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) during riding lessons, to teach skills to help ease anxiety.

The result? The research showed that after riding, students were more relaxed and anxiety symptoms decreased. Students were also better able to regulate emotions. Our instructors had employed CBT tools true to the curriculum during lessons, all of which enriched our students' experiences. The study proved what we know – horses help us to relax and relieve anxieties.

The study also examined how horses responded to working with students by testing their cortisol and oxytocin before and after lessons. It turns out that the horses were no more or less stressed, proving that therapy work does not induce negative stress in our horses.

This research has expanded our knowledge of the promise of the therapeutic benefits of working with horses. It also demonstrated that instructors, not just licensed therapists, are successful in delivering a CBT intervention when trained and supported. Stay tuned for more.

### **Interesting Facts**

- Fieldstone remains one of the largest therapeutic equine centers in the country offering breakthrough programs that help to lead the industry.
- Our largest population of students are those with emotional challenges (anxiety, depression, OCD, survivors of trauma and violence, etc.), totaling nearly 50 percent.
- Our students come from nine counties including Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Mahoning, Medina, Portage, Summit and Trumbull.
- Nearly 50 percent of our staff have been working at the farm for more than 10 years.
- We have 40 horses of 20 different breeds including Kentucky Mountain Horses, Oldenburgs, Percherons, Haflingers, Quarter Horses, Selle Francais and Thoroughbreds.

### **Student Population**

- **Emotional Disorders** (PTSD, anxiety, depression, OCD, people facing crisis, survivors of violence, etc.)
- Neurological Disorders (multiple sclerosis, stroke, epilepsy)
- Developmental Disabilities (cognitive
- Down Syndrome
- impairments, learning disabilities)
- Cerebral Palsy
- Visual or Hearing **Impairments**
- Autism
- Fragile X Syndrome
- **Attention Deficit** Hyperactivity Disorder





# Vanessa gives back

One of the first times Vanessa came to Fieldstone Farm, she was 10 years old and arrived with a Ziploc bag full of her birthday money to donate to the program. Little did she know that 20 years later, she would be on the Board helping to raise money for the farm.

Philanthropy runs in the family. Vanessa's great-grandparents founded the Kelvin and Eleanor Smith Foundation in 1955. Since then, the foundation has had a long history of supporting northeast Ohio non-profits including Fieldstone Farm. Today, Vanessa is a Board Member of the family foundation, carrying on the tradition started by generations before.

Vanessa's passion for Fieldstone runs deep. She is an avid horsewoman and knows the power of the bond with a horse. She says being with horses has always been a safe space for her after a tough day. She starting riding at the age of five, then quickly went on to compete in hunter jumpers, which is still her passion today as she continues to show her two jumpers, cruising around courses with four and a half foot jumps.

Vanessa remembers judging our annual horse show a few years ago and witnessing all the joy, pride and excitement of the students and their families. She said judging wasn't easy – she wanted to give everyone a blue ribbon because it was obvious how hard each student had worked but one little girl who was riding Jackson made it simple. As she walked into the ring, she looked right at Vanessa and gently asked her if she could have a pink ribbon. Vanessa was impressed that the little girl felt that getting a ribbon in her favorite color was more important than winning.

We are delighted to have the talent of Vanessa on our Board and are so grateful for the generous support of her family and their foundation over the years.

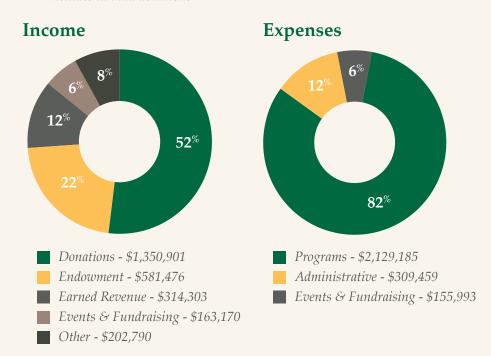
### **Financial Summary**

(Based on 2021 unaudited financials.)

Fieldstone Farm is a non-profit organization that holds a 501(c)(3) status.

\$2,612,640	Total Operating Income
\$2,594,637	Total Operating Expenses
\$18,003	Total Revenue Less Expenses

<sup>\*</sup> Includes in-kind donations.





## Levi finds a home

Everyone loves a happy ending – and we are grateful that our sweet Levi has one. After a long career as an Amish buggy horse, he ended up at a feed lot along with several hundred other horses waiting for slaughter.

Luckily for Levi and all of us at Fieldstone, he had an angel in Julie Copper of Copper Horse Crusade in Massillon. She spotted this kind fellow and rescued him, just like she has done for hundreds of other horses, pulling them out of the slaughter pipeline and transitioning them to good, loving homes.

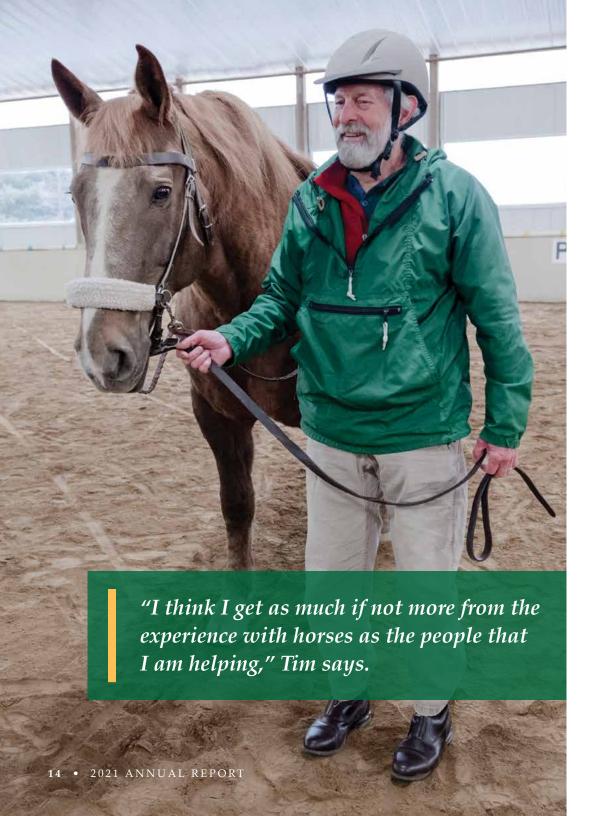
When we met Levi, we saw potential just like she did – a handsome bay, 16.1-hand, draft cross with the sweetest eyes. We knew he would be the perfect therapy horse and adopted him as one of our carriage driving horses.

Now a year later, he is one of the stars of our expanding carriage driving program – working with students as they learn to navigate a carriage around the ring. He responds beautifully to a gentle hand and voice commands, and naturally bonds with our students as they groom him before lessons.

Finding a gem like Levi is so satisfying – but knowing we helped to rescue him makes it even sweeter. We are grateful to Julie for finding Levi for our Veterans Program and for our donors who made the adoption possible. He is a keeper!

Photo on the left by Tammie Packer Photo of Levi with flowers by Elizabeth Krouse Photo of Levi driving by Frank Gwirtz





### Tim connects with horses

You never know how a chance meeting might change your life. For Tim, running into Marcy, one of his neighbors who is also an instructor at Fieldstone, was that moment. She knew he had recently retired and asked if he would like to volunteer at the farm.

That was the invitation Tim needed. After spending 35 years as a teacher at Hudson Middle School and recently stepping away from breeding horses, he was looking for something meaningful to do with his time. He started volunteering with our school groups, then expanded to help with our veterans' groups and now, he is also part of our Equine Management Team, assisting with horse training, saddle fitting and other tasks around the farm.

But it wasn't until his knee surgery last spring that he himself started riding here to help with his strength, flexibility and posture. His doctor was pleased with his progress. Then, unrelated, he was diagnosed with Guillain Barre syndrome and suddenly wasn't able to walk. Thankfully, he bounced back quickly and as soon as he could, he was back volunteering and riding again. The riding has helped Tim a great deal with both of his recoveries.

Tim loves being reconnected with horses and rides to keep up his strength after his most recent dramatic health issue. He has learned a lot about the power of the horse and human bond that he carries with him as he works with our horses and the students here at the farm.

We are so thankful to Tim and all of the volunteers who make our program possible.

Photo by Frank Gwirtz

# We are extremely grateful to our donors

Our program is made possible through the generous support of many donors. Thank you all! Below is a list of our contributors in 2021.

(We have made every effort to include everyone. If your name has been inadvertently omitted or spelled incorrectly, please let us know.)

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