

2022 Annual Report

# A Horse Can Change a Life

Time with horses helps us heal and relax. Horses teach us about trust and teamwork. And reaching a goal together builds confidence and strength we never knew we had. This is why we keep coming back. We look forward to the joy and peace they bring us. Read on to learn how our horses are making a difference.



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# Lyla Shines at Fieldstone

On Saturdays, a bright beam of light bounces into the barn and her name is Lyla. Eight years old with sandy blonde hair, she radiates a joy and enthusiasm that is contagious. It's hard to have a bad day around Lyla, says her mom, Julia.

You would never know that this little girl almost didn't make it. Just days after she was born, she was diagnosed with a rare genetic disorder that doesn't allow the body to process proteins. Doctors felt that if she lived, she likely would not be able to speak or walk.

But this happy little girl beat the odds. She is walking, talking and embracing life with a big smile and frequent giggles. Getting here has taken a disciplined approach to diet, medication and limiting exposure to illness. If she got a fever early in life, it could have significantly compromised her health.

Homeschooling was the answer, and by age five, the risks lessened and she was ready to get out into the world. First it was a visit to the grocery store. Then the playground. Soon after, a family friend recommended Fieldstone Farm. On her very first visit, she bonded with a horse named Pilgrim. Now, three years later, Saturdays are the highlight of her week as Lyla rides, sees friends and experiences the healing farm environment.

Riding has boosted her confidence as she controls a horse around the arena and on trail. She has also built up core strength. On top of that, Lyla embraces all of the social opportunities, especially talking with her good friend, Katie, who is her volunteer leader.

"She makes my day," says Katie explaining that it is hard to get up on a Saturday as a graduate student but all she has to do is think of Lyla and she is out the door! She knows Lyla will greet her with a big smile and a beautiful drawing that she can add to her collection on her refrigerator at home.

Lyla's experience has been full of firsts. First ride. First horse show. First win. We can't wait to see what other firsts are in store in Lyla's bright future!

Top Left and Right - Lyla works with one of her favorite horses, Jackson. Bottom Left - Julia, Lyla's Mom, listens while Lyla tells her all about her lesson. Cover photo and photos by Ryals Photo

"Riding has been a huge boost to Lyla's confidence. The experience has also taught her how to trust. There have been so many positives at Fieldstone," says Julia, Lyla's mom.

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"Sometimes I just give the horses a hug and I feel relieved. The stress and anger goes away," says Da'Von, a freshman at Gaitway High School.

# Da'Von Learns from Horses

At 7:40 a.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, you will see 14-year old Da'Von, one of our Gaitway High School students, in the barn working with our horses, delivering water and whatever else is needed alongside several of his classmates. It is part of his equine management course and he enjoys the peace during those early hours before classes begin.

"It puts me in 'work and pay attention' mode," says Da'Von, who has ADHD. It sets a tone for a productive day. Da'Von came to Fieldstone last year as an eighth grader because he was having difficulty getting along with other students, as well as concentrating at school. Gaitway offers individualized instruction which helps students succeed academically. He has learned a lot from our horses.

"They sense your energy and know what you are going through," he says explaining how they have helped him learn how to manage stress and frustration. "Sometimes when I am upset, I just give them a scratch and hug, and when I see them happy, I feel happy."

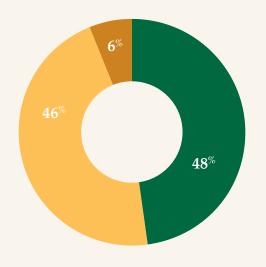
Smoke and Tex are some of Da'Von's favorites. He identifies Smoke as the "younger Da'Von," full of energy and excitement. He thinks of Tex as the "older, wiser Da'Von," who is more relaxed and easy going.

Da'Von also enjoys riding the horses, which is part of the physical education at Gaitway. At 5 foot 11, Da'Von likes riding our tallest horse in the barn, Romeo, who stands at 17-hands. He says it is a confidence builder.

The future for Da'Von -- he has his sights set on getting back to "traditional" high school where he can be with his peers playing basketball. Someday, he hopes to become a firefighter.

### **Interesting Facts**

900	Students Annually
3-80+	Ages Served
40	Therapy Horses
13,525	Program Hours
15	Certified Instructors
200	Volunteers
9	Counties Served
10,400	Pounds of Feed
5,400	Bales of Hay
ALL	Needs Served



## **Primary Diagnosis**

Emotional\* Cognitive\*\*

Physical\*\*\*

\*Anxiety, depression, anger issues, emotional dysregulation, substance use, PTSD, survivors of trauma, etc. \*\*Autism, developmental delays, Down syndrome, learning disabilities, neurological disorders \*\*\*Cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, spinal

cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, sensory impairments Below - Matt leads Cody with Willy in front. Right - Matt with Brody. Photos by Marty Culbertson



# Healing with Horses Matt's personal account

I began my journey with minimal horse experience. I always had an interest in horses but was intimidated by their size and strength. Fieldstone took me in and taught me. I started out not knowing what a curry comb was, to becoming a member of the barn staff, learning how to ride and traveling out-of-state for a 20-mile horseback ride.

Prior to coming to Fieldstone Farm, I suffered a lot from PTSD, depression, anxiety and negative coping strategies. I was lonely, depressed, and didn't want to be around anybody or anything. I still struggle at times, but now I have a new outlook and have gained skills to help me cope with the harder times.

Horses ground me. All of my worldly worries go away while I am present with a horse. When I groom, I "zone out" and focus solely on what's in front of me. This gives me relief from my daily anxieties. The best feeling is when I see a horse relax. It calms me. Working with horses has helped rebuild my confidence and given me a sense of accomplishment and responsibility. I am also more outgoing and happier, and I enjoy things once again.

Last fall, Fieldstone sensed I was ready for more and asked if I wanted to participate in a 20-mile ride called the Trail to Zero to raise awareness about veteran suicide. After many riding lessons, I traveled west to ride a Mustang through the streets of St. Louis with BraveHearts, another therapeutic riding center located in Illinois. This ride was a big step in my progress because I had to face and overcome a lot of personal obstacles along the way. I met some of the most incredible horses and people in the process.

The healing powers of horses have changed my life. It is beyond anything I could have ever imagined. The military was a big part of my life, and now, horses are as well.

Matt came here two years ago after serving eight years in the Marines including two deployments to Afghanistan. He lost fellow Marines on the battlefield, in training exercises, and here at home. Horses have helped him heal.





*Terry, U.S. Navy veteran, enjoys time with Tex. Photo by Tammie Packer* 

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# **Conway's Gift Helps Veterans**

Ten years ago, the TurtleCon Fund of The Cleveland Foundation donated seed money to develop programming solely dedicated to serving veterans. Since then, the family has continued to give to ensure that all programming at Fieldstone Farm is free to veterans and to enable us to find more ways to help. Their support has changed the lives of thousands of veterans and their families.

Mary, one of the trustees of the foundation, was drawn to supporting veterans as she learned how difficult coming back home to civilian life can be. "It saddened me and I wanted to help," she says.

Supporting the military was part of her DNA, as her father, a surgeon, and her mother, a nurse, volunteered during WWII to care for the wounded. The couple was stationed in England, and in field hospitals in France including Normandy and Paris, helping to care for hundreds of injured soldiers. Looking back, she says, "I never noticed that they had any assimilation issues but now I have so many questions," explaining that they both passed away before she had a chance to ask them.

When Mary heard about Fieldstone from her friends, she was eager to get her family foundation involved. "The power of animals to heal is huge," she said.

The TurtleCon Fund's support has helped Fieldstone hold four to five veterans sessions each week, host community gatherings for Veterans Day and Independence Day, conduct breakthrough research, advise other centers on veterans programming, and also to offer a Summer Camp for children of veterans, among many other initiatives.

"Fieldstone has left no stone unturned. The program has grown beyond my wildest dreams," says Mary.



### **School and Community Partners**

- Aurora Public Library
- Bainbridge Police Department
- Beachwood City Schools
- Berkshire Local Schools
- Caley Home
- Case Western Reserve University
- Cleveland Metropolitan School District
- Cleveland VA Medical Center
- Cleveland Sight Center
- Crossroads Health
- Fostering Hope
- Geauga Public Libraries
- The Gathering Place
- Gaitway High School
- Galvin Therapy Center
- Groovy Garfoose Music Therapy

- Hamlet at Chagrin Falls
- The HERD Institute
- Hospice of the Western Reserve
- Kenston Girl Scout Group
- Kidslink
- Lake County Board of Developmental Disabilities
- Landerbrook Transitional Care
- Mayfield School District
- Maple Heights City Schools
- Maplewood Senior Center
- Medicore Transportation and Achievement Centers
- Metzenbaum Center
- Nordonia School District
- Northeast Ohio VA Healthcare System
- Orange School District
- Positive Education Program

- Re-Education Access
- Renee Jones Empowerment Center
- Shaker Heights School District
- Solon Fire Department
- South Euclid / Lyndhurst School District
- Stella Maris
- Survivors Outreach Services
- Twinsburg Fire Department
- Ukrainian Language Camp
- Ursuline College
- USO
- Valor Home
- VFW
- Warriors Journey Home

"Fieldstone is the best place for a horse. They get so much attention and are taken care of so exquisitely," says Rachael Cooper Schindler, former trainer for Cooper and Weber.

Cooper, left, stands with his brother, Weber. Photo by Tammie Packer

# Haffie Brothers Join our Herd

Cooper and Weber, our new handsome Haflingers, couldn't act more like brothers. Stalled next to each other, they whinny as the other comes and goes. In the pasture, they stay close, running and playing, and scratching each other's backs.

Born in 2004 with the same sire, they look like twins, with golden coats, similar markings and both standing at 15.1 hands. You would think they have always been together but they were apart for the first half of their lives.

Molly and Jeff Keller of Wisconsin generously donated the brothers at the recommendation of their friend, Rachael Cooper Schindler, who volunteered at Fieldstone Farm when she was in high school and found the horses for the Kellers 10 years ago.

First Rachael found Cooper, whose registered name is Words of Wisdom, at a Haflinger sale. He was easy going, a good mover and a great height. While she was training him, she tried to find another horse for the Kellers. She asked around and through a connection, found, if you can believe it, Cooper's half brother, Weber. It was the perfect match and soon after, she delivered both horses to the Kellers in Wisconsin.

The brothers lived together on the Keller farm with chickens, goats, and loads of attention from the Kellers and the neighborhood children. Trained English and Western, they also were shown. When the Kellers' last child was heading off to college, it was time to find a new home for the horses and Rachael immediately thought of Fieldstone.

A big thank you to Rachael and the Kellers. The brothers have been a wonderful addition to our herd. They love people and have very good manners and steady gaits. Who's who? Just remember Cooper's blaze is wider and Weber's coat is a little darker.

### **Financial Summary**

(Based on 2022 unaudited financials)

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

\$2,818,393	<b>Total Operating Income*</b>
\$2,394,786	<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>
\$423,607	Total Revenue Less Expenses

\* Includes in-kind donations and the federal Employee Retention Credit.

# Income Expenses Income Expenses Income Expenses Income Expenses Income <



# **B** Gives Heart to the Farm

One day last year, Lynnette, our CEO, had the pleasure of opening up a surprising letter from a longtime volunteer.

### Dear Fieldstone Staff and Board,

Ed and I are happy to give last year's donation amount, plus my salary (from Fieldstone) this year. The horses and staff do incredible work helping people. I'm so glad to be part of it. Riders Up! B and Ed Neimeier

What an incredibly generous act! Not only is B one of our "goto" volunteers working in Lynnette's lesson, as well as with our school groups, but two years ago, she became a part-time member of our barn team. This meant that in addition to her volunteer work leading horses in classes with students, she also wore a staff hat and was bringing in horses at 6 a.m. and cleaning stalls. We were delighted to have her help but we had no idea that she would donate her entire salary back to the farm. Wow! No one had ever done that before!

B came to the farm in 2015 initially to get her "horse fix." She had owned horses in the past and missed being around them. But what was unexpected was how much satisfaction she received from helping our students progress in class. It was incredibly rewarding, she says.

Some of her favorite memories over the years are from our horse shows. She said it is so great to see the students all dressed up and ready to demonstrate all they have learned in front of their family, friends, instructors, volunteers and the whole Fieldstone Farm team. It's always a day full of pride, celebration and smiles!

# 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 2022. (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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Our Board recognizes individuals as Grand Champions in gratitude for their outstanding service. We sincerely appreciate their dedication to our program.

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Rose with her newborn foal, Summer, the first foal ever born at Fieldstone Farm, Aug. 5, 2022. Photo by Maureen Foster

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