

We are continually amazed at how our horses adapt to our various needs to help us recover, heal, learn and grow. Our lives and the lives of those around us are forever changed. Read on to learn more about how our horses are helping our students accomplish goals they never thought possible.





# Colin Finds a Friend in Dillon

Feeling relaxed and happy after riding our big draft Dillon, Colin proudly strides down the aisle with his instructor, Lauren, to give his horse a treat.

"Lauren, can I take Dillon home?" Colin pleads with wide wishful eyes.

"Where would you put him?" she replies.

"The basement!" he exclaims.

"I don't think he could make it down the stairs," she tells him.

His dad, Ken, hears about the conversation and suggests, "Maybe we need to find a bedroom for Colin at Fieldstone!" Everyone in earshot bursts out in laughter.

This is a typical Thursday night at Fieldstone where students, instructors and families relish spending time with each other and our horses. "Riding has been a big part of Colin's life. Fieldstone is what we do on Thursdays," Colin's mom says. They work everything around his weekly lesson and recently that included his dad's birthday dinner which was delayed until after class.

Colin has Down syndrome and riding has increased his confidence, balance and core strength over the years but even more than that, his mom says it has been a respite from his daily struggles. Recently, he has been coping with advanced Crohn's disease requiring operations and frequent doctors' visits which is exacerbated by his OCD and anxiety. Riding and seeing his favorite horse, Dillon, gives him a chance to take his mind off of his challenges.

"That was awesome! It feels sooooooo good," Colin says in celebration after he trots Dillon around the arena balanced beautifully on his back with his heels down. Colin's joy permeates the arena and everyone smiles along with him.

Grooming gives Colin time to build a greater connection with Dillon. "I love you Dillon, you are my best buddy," he says while brushing his horse's coat. He frequently interrupts this task with kisses and words of adoration. "You are so beautiful, Dillon." As Colin moves the curry comb in circles on Dillon's chest, he finds an itchy spot and Dillon stretches out his head and puckers his lips to let Colin know just how good it feels. Colin smiles, pleased that he has comforted his friend, while at the same time forgetting about his daily hardships.

Dillon has worked his magic once again.

Colin rides Dillon with volunteer Kate walking alongside.





# **Learning From Our Four-Legged Friends**

Our horses teach responsibility. They instill trust and respect. They also motivate our students to learn and help them become stronger, more confident and focused. And they do it all without saying a word.

It is this combination of qualities that we harness to develop meaningful programs for our students sitting atop a horse and working around them in the barn. Today we collaborate with more than 50 schools and organizations on programs customized to each student's specific needs.

"We see so much growth in our students at Fieldstone," says Sue, a teacher at Orchard STEM School, part of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, explaining how she loves watching her students progress over the eight-week session at the farm. "They go from being so nervous to feeling in complete control of their horse." Beyond this increased confidence, she sees improvements in speech, socialization, behavior and thinking outside of themselves.

"We all feel a sense of calm every time we come to the farm," says Sue, adding that it makes for a great environment for learning. We look forward to seeing Sue and all of her students for many years to come!

Left: Students from Orchard STEM School enjoy a trail ride with Julius and Tex and their dedicated volunteer and staff team.

Right: Students work on their riding skills and individualized goals during a lesson.







## **School and Community Partners**

- Aurora City School District
- Aurora Memorial Library
- Beachwood City School District
- Bella Care Hospice
- Burton Public Library
- Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District
- Cleveland Metropolitan School District
- Cleveland Sex & Intimacy Counseling
- Cleveland Sight Center
- Cleveland State University
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- Cleveland VA Medical Center
- Cuyahoga County Public Library
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- Education Service Center of the Western Reserve
- Family First Village
- Fostering Hope
- Footpath Foundation
- Gaitway High School
- Garfield Heights City Schools
- The Gathering Place
- Geauga County Public Library
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- Lake County Board of Developmental Disabilities
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- Maple Heights City Schools
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- South Euclid Lyndhurst City Schools
- Stella Maris Cleveland
- Survivors Outreach Services
- Ursuline College
- VA Blind Rehabilitation Center
- Warrensville Heights City Schools
- Winfield at Richmond Heights

## Fran Shares Her Love of Horses

Fran walks into Rascal's stall, strokes his neck, puts on his halter and lets him know it's time to meet his next class, a group from Stella Maris residential addiction recovery program. These men come to bond with our horses and learn about trust, responsibility and themselves, which is all a part of their healing.

As one man walks Rascal in the arena, Fran reminds him to relax his elbow to give the horse some freedom. Watching them closely, she cues the participant to look ahead explaining that the horse will follow. Together, the horse and handler walk in sync, rhythmically circling and changing direction.

With a gentle pull of the leadline, Rascal halts. As the participant praises the horse with a pat, Rascal returns the love and stretches his head around him as if to give a hug. A bond has been formed. Fran is pleased she has helped facilitate and witnessed another connection.

Fran has volunteered at Fieldstone for 27 years. She has logged 6,557 hours, one of the highest totals in our volunteer history, helping thousands of students experience the benefits of equine therapy. "You just can't have a bad day after volunteering here," she says. Helping others, working with the horses, witnessing miracles and making life-long friends is what keeps her coming back.

"It's like family here," she says. She loves Fieldstone so much that even at age 80, she plans to continue helping out as long as she can. Thank you Fran, we are grateful for all that you do!





# Riding Through the Woods

Riding on trail allows us to connect to the natural world, helping us to relax, improve our mood and feel a sense of belonging. It challenges our muscles and balance as our horse traverses over uneven ground. And it builds our confidence as we learn to trust the partnership we have with our furry friend.

Our nearly mile-long carriage trail takes students around the pond, along the woods and past our back pastures. A labyrinth gives riders a chance to weave along a path of four-foot high grasses.

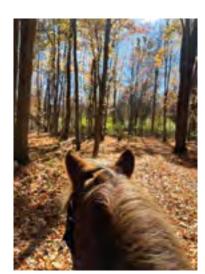
One of our favorite places to embrace nature is our new ½-mile crushed stone, wooded trail that was recently restored thanks to a generous donation from Betsy and Charley Daane and the Frank H. and Nancy L. Porter Fund of the Cleveland Foundation. The Daane family has been a long-time supporter of Fieldstone, including Betsy's donation of one of our former horses, Rudy, who we all dearly loved.

Explore this new trail and embrace the soothing and uplifting sights, sounds and smells of nature such as the sweet scent of

honeysuckle, the whistling call of an oriole or the bellow of a bullfrog. Marvel at the lush green of oaks, maples and beeches in the spring and their yellows, oranges and reds in the fall. As we travel through the woods, we salute the Daanes and Rudy for bringing us closer to nature.

> A class enjoys the wooded trail on a late summer evening.

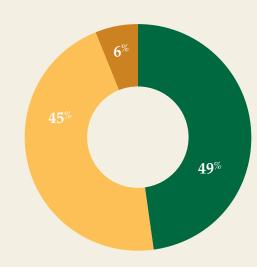
> Photo by Sam Bonath



## 2024 Facts



- 604 Children
- 387 Adults
- 4-80+ Ages Served
  - 35 Therapy Horses
- 14,888 Sessions Provided
  - **15** Certified Instructors
  - **250** Volunteers
    - 7 Counties Served



# **Primary Diagnosis**

■ Cognitive\*

Emotional\*\*

Physical\*\*\*

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

injuries, sensory impairments, etc.



# Our Humble Guy

When you meet Tex, you admire this handsome Appendix Quarter Horse with a muscular topline. His chesnut coat reminds you of a worn copper kettle. He saunters over as if to say in a gravelly voice, "How y'all doing?"

That's our Tex. Friendly, laid back, versatile and humble. He's had a remarkable career but you won't catch him telling you he's a descendent of Man o' War, one of the greatest racehorses of all time, even though he is. And, when you spot the brand on his left hip, you know he's not from around here.

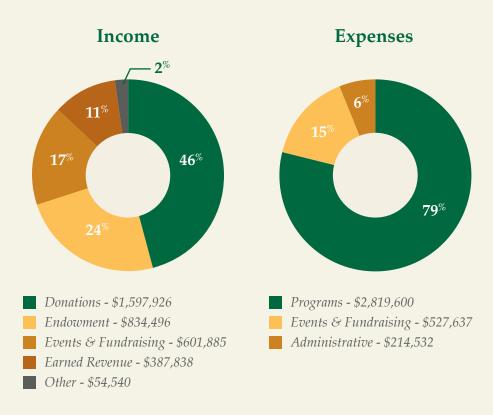
Tex was bred at the Bosen Land and Livestock Ranch in Idaho, where he palled around with a little boy named Bubby. That's why his registered name is Bubby's Buddy. He later moved to Texas and one summer, drove cattle 500 miles! At one point, the rancher's niece tried her hand at barrel racing with him, but it was a no-go for Tex.

When the Frasers from Chardon found Tex, they wanted a trustworthy horse for their daughter, Christina, who liked to ride out alone. "I wanted a horse I knew would bring her home," said Louise, Christina's mom. Christina wasn't so sure about Tex. She had just retired an athletic pony and Tex had no formal training. But she gave him a chance and together they finished their show career, standing second in the nation in American Quarter Horse Association Dressage Training Level Youth. When she went to college, the family donated Tex to Fieldstone, as they did with another one of their horses, Star, years earlier.

Since then, Tex has been a champion therapy horse, working with students of all ages and abilities. He's a willing guy who always keeps his composure. This ol' cow hand has seen it all, but he won't brag, he's not that kind of guy.

## Financial Highlights

Fieldstone is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization which has received the highest ratings from both Candid and Charity Navigator. Candid has awarded Fieldstone the Platinum Seal of Transparency for our financials, goals and the difference we are making. Charity Navigator has granted Fieldstone Farm a 4-star rating based on our financial health, transparency and accountability. Additionally, 100 percent of our Board of Trustees give to the organization on an annual basis.



(Based on 2024 unaudited financials)

# "I'm really proud of myself. I came here with a ball of anger and I am leaving with gratitude and appreciation," says Marlo, a 2025

## **Encouragement is a Powerful Teacher**

When Marlo enrolled in Gaitway High School, our on-site alternative school, he wasn't sure he would graduate, let alone come to love horses. He had fallen behind at Brush High School and needed to catch up.

The teachers at Gaitway changed everything. "Everyone believed in me," Marlo said naming all of his teachers who inspired him. "They would say, you can do it. Don't give up."

Before you knew it, he was getting through his school work, developing connections with our horses and earning the credits he needed to graduate, a semester early!

Marlo realized the power of having people believe in him and paid this forward. He volunteered in our therapeutic riding classes helping children learn about horses. When he first extended a hand to one of our students named Jacob, he didn't know the connection that would form. Every week the two would look forward to seeing each other as Marlo walked with Jacob while he rode, giving him reassurance.

"I loved that kid," said Marlo. "I really love all the kids. It feels good to help them." Marlo is one of the scores of Gaitway students who have thrived here. "I'm really proud of myself. I came here with a ball of anger and I am leaving with gratitude and appreciation."

We are proud of Marlo too. He was recently accepted to the Kent State University College of Nursing where he will attend this fall. Congratulations Marlo!

graduate of our Gaitway High School.

# 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 2024.

(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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16 • 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

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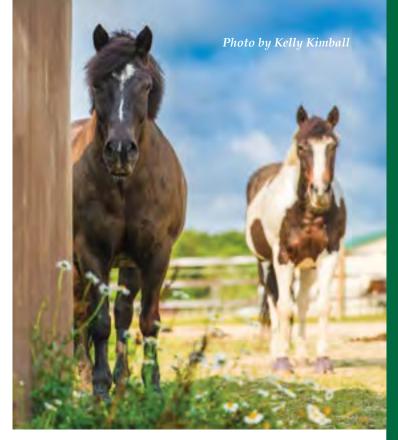
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Levi enjoys turnout time with his friends. Photo by Kelly Kimball

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