

# Nickers & News



Lois & Clark greeting Avery

## Happy Spring



### Notes from the Hayloft...

After a long winter, we have begun our spring session. We are serving 59 individuals... 30% more than we have served in average sessions over the last four years. Growth in our programs is good, because it means we are able to help more people realize the benefits offered by equine-assisted activities and therapies.

I never tire of telling people the stories we have seen play out at Free Rein and other centers like us... stories like:

- ✦ Increased core strength and balance for people with Multiple Sclerosis, traumatic brain injuries, and strokes
- ✦ Young people with Autism becoming more interactive and, in some cases, uttering their first words while riding our horses
- ✦ People with Cerebral Palsy gaining strength and flexibility

I also never tire of thanking the people who make it possible for Free Rein to do what we do - our "herd" of volunteers, our supporters and donors, the families of our participants, our dedicated instructors and staff, and our tireless "equine therapists" - the horses.

On a sad note, we report the recent passing of Macho del Rosa, who cantered off to far-off green pastures on February 25th. Macho was one of Free Rein's longest serving therapy horses. He brought much joy into the hearts of the many people he helped along the way.

Doug Poad (Chair of the Board)

### Upcoming Events

MAR 16, 2015	Spring Session Classes Begin
MAY 9, 2015	Spring Session Classes End (Make-ups the following week)
MAY 16, 2015	Volunteer Appreciation Picnic (at Las Praderas)
MAY 22-24, 2015	White Squirrel Festival - we'll be there !!



### Fun Horse Facts

The horse has the largest eye of any land mammal. They rely on them to remain alert to any danger to them or their herd... or to notice when someone they like is nearby.

## Free Rein is a member of PATH International - so what?

PATH Intl. is the preeminent authority on Equine-Assisted Activities and Therapies (EAAT), with more than 4,500 certified instructors and equine specialists working at more than 850 member centers around the globe. Free Rein is a PATH Intl member center... but what does that mean to you - as a Free Rein student/family, volunteer, supporter, and/or donor.



**First, it brings safety and professionalism.** PATH Intl maintains comprehensive standards for all aspects of a center's operations. These standards dictate how we structure our programs and the training & certification of instructors. Instructor certification requires many hours of training in horsemanship, first aid, CPR, and more. It ends with a two-day certification visit to a select center for a rigorous personal evaluation. All aspects of the two-day test must be passed successfully. We are proud to report that *all* of Free Rein's instructors have and maintain their PATH certification.

**Second, it brings efficiency and better use of scarce resources.** Through PATH Intl, Free Rein enjoys significant cost savings on our insurance. We also gain access to valuable training and other resources that help us focus more of our resources where it matters - delivering therapeutic programs to individuals and groups who benefit from it.

As a result, Free Rein is part of a very large group of professionals working in cooperation to bring world class standards of excellence to a center near you... and right here in Brevard, NC at Free Rein Center.



## Meet one of our Volunteers (by Joyse Witheridge)

### Michael Rosenthal - the "Volunteer-in-Chief"

Michael, shown coordinating our 2014 volunteer appreciation picnic, first heard about Free Rein's rewarding volunteer opportunities the way a lot of folks do... from a friend who was already enjoying volunteering with us. He started volunteering with us in the spring of 2012. He became our Volunteer Coordinator in 2013.

He and his wife Nancy make a great team. They both volunteer in classes at Free Rein and, literally, across the county. When they aren't at Free Rein Michael does trail maintenance in the Pisgah Forest and serves as a Master Gardener with the Transylvania Extension Office - serving as the Silvermont Woodland Garden volunteer coordinator for the last two years. He and Nancy also volunteer together at the Dupont Forest Visitor Center and serve as volunteer ushers at the Brevard Music Center.

Michael says he has been a horse guy for many years and when you meet him there is no doubt he is also a people person. This is probably why he's so effective in his role as Free Rein's Volunteer Coordinator. We all know that matching our 60+ volunteers with our 60+ students is not an easy undertaking. Even at almost 76 years young, Michael always does it calmly and precisely and always with a smile... except, perhaps, for the two weeks before each session starts when he may not be quite as calm as usual, but is still smiling.

When asked after a session why he works so hard to make this all happen he grins and says, "Seeing the progress of the students sends chills down my spine. I've had the pleasure of seeing this many times and each time it still amazes me that riding a horse can do this for someone."

Michael and Nancy are great ambassadors for Free Rein and we are so glad that they share their energy and enthusiasm with Free Rein.

## Meet a group of our Riders (by Doug Poad)

Transylvania Vocational Services (TVS) is a local nonprofit organization where “Americans with disabilities work to feed the world.” In addition to blending and packaging a variety of tasty food products at their 60,000 sq. ft. plant in Pisgah Forest, TVS provides life-changing opportunities to adults with disabilities.



TVS' LifeSkills Program focuses on the development of independent skills through activities that encourage social, physical, and emotional growth. Free Rein and TVS have developed a natural partnership to serve these individuals, with Free Rein offering no-cost programs to LifeSkills program participants. TVS' staff and the participants tell us that this is a highlight of their week and an important addition to their lives.



Last fall, they threw a great “Thank You” party at TVS for Free Rein’s staff and the volunteers who worked with them (photo above). Michael (left) and Taylor (right) were two who enjoyed riding in the fall 2014 session.

This session, six individuals from TVS are riding at Free Rein and another eight are coming out just to groom and walk our horses.



## Meet one of our Horses (by Kara Franks)



Barn Name: Skip

Registered Name: Skip N Go Trouble

Nickname: Skipper

Breed: Quarter Horse

Color: Bay

Age: 15

Height: 15.3 hands

Sex: Gelding

Favorite Treat: Carrot Cupcakes

Favorite Color: Yellow (OK, we really don't know, but it is believed that horses only see shades of blue and yellow, so it's a 50-50 shot)



We are very happy to welcome Skip to his first session at Free Rein. Skip belongs to Brittany McCathern, one of our Horse Care Coordinators. After a previous career as a barrel and show horse, he is more than happy to participate in a more laid back lifestyle. Quarter horses are known for their willingness to please everyone and their versatility, but everyone loves their gentle personalities.

This sweet guy definitely has a knack for leadership and he is quick to make sure his "herd", including his riders, are all protected. He loves attention from everyone, riders and volunteers alike. He enjoys being ridden and he loves to jump, but being groomed is his favorite thing of all.

Please enjoy this newsletter packed with fun and interesting news and information about Horses Helping Humans Heal

Contact us at 828-883-3375 / [www.freereincenter.com](http://www.freereincenter.com)



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Free Rein Center, P.O. Box 1325, Brevard, NC 28712

Free Rein is a qualified 501(c)(3) public charity. Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by current law.



Brevard Elementary School  
Students - Fall 2015



Richard

## Lois & Clark's Adventures



Like most of us, Lois & Clark stayed pretty “low key” over the winter. They recently developed spring fever, though, and are “ready for action” now.

They did get out to The Red Lion Inn for Valentine’s Day and got to listen to their “favs” - Jerry & Suzanne from The Moonshine

Babies. It got a little dark, as the ice storm knocked out the power during dinner, but “the band played on.”

They are looking forward to seeing their friends at Free Rein and around town - at the White Squirrel Festival, 4th of July, the Blue Ridge Classic Horse Show, and OctoberFest... not to mention at some of our local businesses and tourist attractions.

I wouldn’t expect to see them racing down Sliding Rock, though.



## Spring Session “Snapshot

As noted earlier, our spring session is off to a great start. We are serving 59 individuals. They are participating in one of three different programs:

- ✦ 20 school children from Brevard Elementary, Brevard Middle School, and Davidson River School. These programs are offered to the school system at no cost to them or the participants.
- ✦ 14 individuals from Transylvania Vocational Services’ LifeSkills Program (this issue’s featured students - see inside for more details).
- ✦ 25 “traditional” students - individuals with a variety of developmental and/or physical challenges.

**Classes are held Monday - Saturday and visitors are welcome.**

As the old saying goes, “seeing is believing.” Reading about what we do is (we hope) interesting, but seeing it in person is something altogether more moving.

If you’re interested in seeing something to believe in, call the office at 828-883-3375 to arrange a visit to see a class in session that might interest you.

