

THE PALS POST

A LEARNING LUNCHEON AT PALS

-Lisa W., PALS Rider/Volunteer

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PALS was the setting this past summer for presentations, lunch, and a demonstration of therapeutic horseback riding; designed especially for those who have multiple sclerosis (MS). The event, which was free and open to the public, was a joint effort by its sponsor, Bloomington neurologist Dr. Jamie Bales; Hossam Senousy and Jennifer Makalusky, representatives for Copaxone (a drug often used in the treatment of MS); and PALS.

A group of about 30, made up of people who have MS and their friends and families, attended this presentation, which took place at PALS on July 9, 2008.



Lisa W. goes on a trail ride with PALS Horse Dev.

Many locals with MS know that Dr. Bales, founder of Neurology Specialists P.C., takes a particular interest in this disease. What they may not have known as well is that she is also an avid horsewoman. She owns three horses and engages in competitions across the country. Dr. Bales gave a slide presentation to the assembled guests on the nature and effects of multiple sclerosis.

Mary Jordan of Team Copaxone was another presenter, with a message to inspire. Team Copaxone consists of ten athletes in different sports; all of these athletes have MS. Mary has ridden horses since childhood, competing in dressage and eventing. She was diagnosed with MS in 2002, but this did not stop Mary from pursuing the equestrian life she loves so well. Today she continues to compete, and she is a riding instructor as well as a freelance editor and writer. She joined Team Copaxone in 2005.

During these presentations, the guests had opportunities to ask questions and also to have lunch, arranged and provided by Hossam Senousy of Copaxone. After enjoying the presentations and the meal, the guests were invited down to the arena. I myself have MS, so I demonstrated riding a pattern on my usual PALS Quarter Horse, Patti Pine. I'm happy to report that this lovely chestnut mare was on her very best behavior that day! It was as close to a perfect ride as I could ask for.

While I rode, PALS instructor Barb Bonchek explained to the crowd the how-and-why of my riding. She noted the therapeutic effects riding can have for someone with my types of physical disability. She also described the specialized tack that PALS provides, such as ladder reins that can be controlled using just one hand. Together we were able to show how I have learned in my lessons to make compensating movements with my undamaged left side, in order to gain the same effects an able-bodied rider achieves using both sides of his or her body. After the demonstration, we held a Q&A session with the attendees. It was exciting to be able to share with fellow "MSers" what riding at PALS has done for me.

Everyone had a good time, and I have since been able to follow up with some of the guests that I know through MS circles. The thought of riding a horse had not previously occurred to them, and some have told me that at the very least they are considering riding in the future. Sally Stephenson said of the experience: "I was impressed with the work and attitude of the helpers. It impressed me enough to make a donation to PALS. Good work." I agree—good work!



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HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- Refer people to PALS
- Volunteer in lessons
- Volunteer in marketing and fundraising efforts
- Make a financial donation *
- Donate a horse, tack, or equipment *
- Sponsor a horse and/or rider *

*All donations are tax-deductible

MESSAGES FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & HEAD INSTRUCTOR

Although winter winds are still blowing out at the barn, the PALS staff, volunteers, and horses are ready for a busy and warmer spring session!

There is no way that PALS could provide lessons to people with disabilities in our community without all of our amazing volunteer support! The PALS family had a great time at the Volunteer Appreciation Banquet in December. Over 100 PALS volunteers and friends attended the banquet this year at the KRC Banquets & Catering. We were pleased to recognize Kara Szabo and Heili Tomusk as the 2008 PALS Volunteers of the Year (see pg. 5).

The shortening of the “North American Riding for the Handicapped Association” to simply “NARHA” was a new development this winter. This change reflects the wider role NARHA and its centers play in equine-assisted activities. According to Carol Nickel, NARHA CEO, “the full, original name had become outdated and inaccurate,” because:

- “Handicapped” is no longer a correct and appropriate term to use for people who have disabilities.
- “Riding” is no longer an inclusive description of the services provided at NARHA centers. Currently NARHA centers provide many different activities in addition to therapeutic riding such as driving, vaulting, equine-facilitated mental health, hippotherapy, groundwork, stable management, and much more.
- NARHA membership is no longer limited to North America, since NARHA now has individual and center members in countries around the world. NARHA would like the name to be more international now.

We are very excited and are in preparation for the Fifth Annual Wine/Beer Tasting & Silent Auction fundraising event, which will be on June 11 from 7 to 9:30 p.m. We are looking forward to seeing all of our PALS friends as well as making new friends at this event. Please be sure to get your tickets for this event, and make sure to invite your family and friends to our largest fundraising event (see pg. 4).

Please make sure to visit our website for up-to-date PALS information. Don't forget that you can now make donations and pay for lesson fees online at our website as well as purchase your Wine/Beer Tasting & Silent Auction tickets!



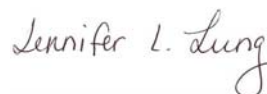
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Winter at the barn is definitely our slow season. Fewer of our riders are able to venture out into the cold, so our schedule is much less hectic than in other seasons. The extra time gives me the opportunity to reflect on our program's mission. I am blessed to have a job here at PALS that combines my passion for horses and riding with my passion for working with the special needs community. I come to the barn to work every day with people with disabilities, but their abilities are what stand out.

It is so rewarding to watch my riders in action. I treasure the trust they display towards me, the volunteers, and their horses. They come to the activity with no preconceived notions, no ideas about what “should” happen or what they “ought” to do. The process of learning how to ride and developing skills is very natural and organic for many of my riders. It is so very different from the forced, high-pressure environment found in so many “traditional” riding arenas. My riders don't judge each other or themselves. Rather, they are always quick to provide support and encouragement, and are so easygoing and forgiving.

A friend recently shared a quote with me from *The World According to Mr. Rogers*. It said, “Part of the problem with the word *disabilities* is that it immediately suggests an inability to see or hear or walk or do other things that many of us take for granted. But what of people who can't feel? Or talk about their feelings? Or manage their feelings in constructive ways? What of people who aren't able to form close and strong relationships? And people who cannot find fulfillment in their lives, or those who have lost hope, who live in disappointment and bitterness and find in life no joy, no love? These, it seems to me, are the real disabilities.”

This sentiment embodies the abilities of the riders I am so fortunate to teach. In many ways, I feel the attitudes of my riders have insinuated themselves into my beliefs and character. They display for me every day the fact that a sense of humor and a gentle nature combined with patience and perseverance are the key to a happy life. I am so blessed to have these amazing people in my life. It's hard to say, in the end, who really is the teacher, and who is the student.



Head Instructor
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Fern Bonchek is the founder and executive director of People & Animal Learning Services, Inc. (PALS). Fern has a B.A. in Psychology with a specialization in Human & Animal Interactions from the Union Institute and is a NARHA Advanced Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor. Fern served as the chair of the Higher Education Committee of NARHA from 2004 to 2006 and now serves as a committee advisor. Fern is a NARHA Registered On-Site Workshop/Certification Associate Evaluator and an adjunct instructor at Indiana University in the School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (HPER).



Jennifer Lung is the head instructor at People and Animal Learning Services, Inc. (PALS). Jennifer has a B.S. in Outdoor Recreation with a minor in Environmental Interpretation from Indiana University and is a NARHA Registered Therapeutic Riding Instructor. In addition to her work at PALS, Jennifer has worked with people with disabilities at Options and Bradford Woods. She has been a PALS instructor since 2001 and head instructor since 2005.

A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

-Kara Lasher, PALS Instructor & Newsletter Editor

When PALS rider Timothy M. arrived at the barn for his first lesson last fall, he was very shy and quiet, remembers his instructor, Sandy Zywar. In just a few short weeks, he opened up to his instructor and sidewalkers, revealing the sweet, enthusiastic, and energetic nature that he is known for throughout PALS.

Timothy, a second-grader at Summit Elementary School, is in therapy for aggression and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. His mother, Marycarole Matlock, first learned about PALS through a director at Monroe County United Ministries, where she is a pre-school teacher.

“Since Timothy has started riding at PALS,” said Marycarole, “I have seen in him a sense of pride, of having something to look forward to, and an excitement that just all encompasses him when he is getting ready to ride. Being given a trophy [at the PALS Fun Show] has also added to Timothy’s pride in what he does. He shows it off all the time!”

According to Marycarole, Timothy’s riding activities at PALS enhance his traditional therapy by giving him another atmosphere that requires him to focus and be attentive to instructions. However, in addition to these requirements, while riding Timothy must be aware that he not only is responsible for his own actions, but is also responsible for another being, his horse Walter. He also gets to share the experience, not only with the volunteers and instructor but also with fellow PALS rider Matt D., with whom Timothy takes a group lesson. Timothy looks forward each week to spending time with Matt and his instructor, Sandy Zywar, both of whom Timothy considers to be his friends.

“Timothy loves high-energy activities like trotting,” said Sandy. “He is so energetic and fun-loving.”

Marycarole also says that trotting at his riding lesson is one of the highlights of Timothy’s week, as is just getting to



Timothy examines his Fun Show trophy and ribbon with pride..



Timothy and Walter show off their skills at the 2008 PALS Fun Show..

spend time with his horse, Walter. In addition to Timothy’s lessons, the Matlock family also partially sponsors Walter, providing financially for part of his care and keeping.

While many people support the horses at PALS through donations, it is unusual to have a rider’s family provide a horse sponsorship. The horse sponsorship program at PALS is only a few years old, and it is exciting to have a rider’s family take part in the program through a partial sponsorship. Only two PALS horses are fully sponsored, and there are eight other PALS horses who are in need of sponsors.

“We are aware of how expensive the upkeep of horses can be,” said Marycarole, “and how very valuable this therapy is to my son. It also gives Timothy the excitement of knowing that he is helping to take care of Walter. We donate to a lot of organizations, but I felt this one is especially important, because my children can actually see and understand where the funds are going and how important it is.”

In addition to riding, Timothy loves to go fishing and is an avid kite flyer. He is also very interested in all kinds of science. He has one sister, Makayla Rose, who likes to come to the barn to see her brother ride and was very excited to see him ride at the PALS Fun Show.

“This has been one of the most beneficial and exciting experiences Timothy has ever had,” said Marycarole. We are so very grateful that he has been able to do this and will continue riding this spring. He is so excited for the spring session to start!”

*** PALS Horse Club ~** You can sponsor your favorite PALS therapy horse. Visit www.palstherapy.org/donate/ for specifics!

MEET WALTER!

-Lisa W., PALS Rider/Volunteer

“An old man in a young man's body”—that's how instructors at PALS describe Walter, one of the newer additions to the barn. Mitsi Bennett, his donor, puts it a little differently: “Walter's a good boy with a quiet mind.”

This handsome, leggy fellow (whose formal name is Bodacious Martini) is the son of another PALS bay Quarter Horse, Cookie. Mitsi says that Walter was “pretty much born calm, adult-like.” In June 2005, when Cookie finally gave birth to her overdue colt, Mitsi found him in the barn standing next to his mother, snoozing—like being born was no big deal.

Mitsi says no matter what new situation he is confronted with, “Walter just doesn't care!” She was able to put a pony saddle on him when he was just six months old. She noted Walter's easygoing nature, as he never complained about the pony saddle and allowed her to sit astride his back while he napped.

It is Walter's unflappable disposition as well as his leanness that makes him a natural choice for younger PALS riders. When Fern and Barb Bonchek first went to meet him in Dixon, Kentucky, as a two-year-old, this potential new kid seemed “too good to be true.” So Mitsi suggested, to their surprise, that they try tossing balls and hula hoops at him! What did Walter do? He just put his ears up. “He looked at them like they were crazy.”

Walter's also something of a love sponge. PALS Head Instructor Jennifer Lung worked with him a lot this winter, and she reports that he “pretty much acts like a dog and always wants to be in your lap or in your business.” But don't be fooled; this sweet and serene young man shows plenty of get-up-and-go when he's asked for it.



Mitsi says that he did much trail riding on some 200 acres, and that he has “an awesome lope.” He also is known at PALS for his remarkably smooth trot, but Jennifer says that these days Walter keeps trying to convince her that it's always time to canter! Walter's also begun to work before an audience, participating in the PALS Fun Show of 2008 with many riders, including Timothy M., whose family provides a partial horse sponsorship to care for Walter.

Do say hello to him when you're at PALS. You might want to bring Walter his favorite treat, peppermints—and some for Cookie too!

Fifth Annual Wine/Beer Tasting & Silent Auction on June 11th

-Tessa R., PALS Volunteer



PALS invites you to our Fifth Annual Beer/Wine Tasting and Silent Auction fundraising event on Thursday, June 11, from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m. at KRC Banquets & Catering, located at 216 S. College Ave., Bloomington, IN.

Come enjoy a selection of fine wines and beers from eight to ten local vendors as well as a non-alcoholic spritzer/juice-tasting bar courtesy of Bloomingfoods, while feasting on hors d'oeuvres, listening to live music, and bidding on over 80 exciting silent auction items and wonderful packages from popular Bloomington businesses, as well as much, much more!

This is our largest fundraising event of the year. Last year we raised over \$12,000 and had over 175 guests in attendance. This year, we anticipate over 200 guests and hope to raise more than

\$15,000 with your help. Tickets are \$20 for advance purchase and \$25 at the door. Tickets are currently available online at www.palstherapy.org, by contacting PALS at pals@indiana.edu, or by calling 812-336-2798. Tickets will also be available for purchase at the Trojan Horse restaurant and at all Bloomingfoods locations after May 8 and will be available at the door the day of the event. Guests must be 21 years old with valid ID to attend. All proceeds from this event benefit PALS. You will soon be receiving an invitation to this event in the mail.

If you are interested in becoming an event sponsor for the Wine/Beer Tasting & Silent Auction, would like to donate a silent auction item, or would like to sell tickets for the event to family members, friends, co-workers, etc., please contact Fern Bonchek at pals@indiana.edu or 812-336-2798.

2008 PALS VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR

-Emily G., PALS Intern

PALS is pleased to recognize two very deserving volunteers, Kara Szabo and Heili Tomusk, as the 2008 Volunteers of the Year.

Kara began volunteering at PALS as a sidewalker and horse leader in January 2006. The fact that she decided to begin volunteering in an outdoor environment when the weather was at its coldest is typical of Kara's work ethic.



Kara (left) and Heili (right) at the 2008 PALS Fun Show.

Since she began volunteering, Kara has done it all. She began by sidewalking and leading in lessons, serves as a stable manager, and is currently working on her internship to become a certified NARHA instructor. We hope that once she completes her hours and passes the certification, she will work for PALS in the future!

Head Instructor Jennifer Lung said, "Kara has been right at home at PALS since the day she began volunteering. She was one of the volunteers that quickly became friends with everyone and completely 'fit in.'"

Kara has become a regular face to many PALS riders, volunteers, and guests. She is a "rock" for PALS, always willing to help out, never afraid to get her hands dirty, and ready to fill in for anything at a moment's notice.

Heili Tomusk is a volunteer extraordinaire at PALS.

Heili not only is very good with horses, but is also a very patient and easygoing person, two important traits in a PALS volunteer.

Currently a senior at Bloomington High School North, Heili began volunteering at PALS the summer of 2007 as a sidewalker and horse leader. Heili was encouraged by her mom to begin volunteering at PALS. After years of horse experience, it seemed like a natural fit.

Her experience at PALS since then has influenced her career and life aspirations.

Heili has been a peer tutor in the special education department at Bloomington North for two years. This year she is also participating in a special education internship at Fairview. She plans to go to college to become a special education teacher, but she may delay college in order to work for a year in the Monroe County School Corporation as a special education aide.

In her volunteer work at PALS, Heili has gone from a volunteer horse leader and sidewalker to her current position of stable manager.

Jennifer Lung said, "Heili is a fantastic horse person and a favorite at the PALS barn."

Heili is very dedicated to her work at PALS. She is an incredibly reliable and energetic volunteer, and her presence at PALS has had a positive impact on the entire program.

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Elisa Duncan, Vol. Instructor
Kara Lasher, Vol. Instructor/
Newsletter Editor
Taryn Lyman, Instructor
Lindsey O'Haver, Substitute
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Sandy Zywar, Instructor/
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In Memoriam



Stephen "Shayne" Fetter

Dec. 1, 1971 - Nov. 14, 2008

"I have often thought that there are some men too gentle to be of this earth. That describes Shayne." - Elisa Duncan, PALS Instructor/Volunteer

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HOW YOU CAN HELP SUPPORT PALS

FINANCIAL DONATIONS

In order for PALS to continue this good work, your financial support is needed. If you are interested in improving the lives of PALS participants through a financial donation, please fill out the form below and mail to PALS, call Fern Bonchek at 812-336-2798, or email pals@indiana.edu. Donations are tax-deductible.

Yes, I want to support PALS with a tax-deductible donation of:

- _____ \$3,900 ~ Full board and care for one therapy horse for one year
- _____ \$2,700 ~ Full board for one therapy horse for one year
- _____ \$1,050 ~ One whole year of therapeutic riding lessons
- _____ \$350 ~ Ten weeks of therapeutic riding lessons
- _____ \$250 ~ One month board and feed for one therapy horse
- _____ \$100 ~ Three therapeutic riding lessons
- _____ Other ~ Your gift will be used where it is needed most

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

I want my gift to remain anonymous

IN-KIND DONATIONS

PALS is in need of the following new or gently used items. Please call Fern at 812-336-2798 or email pals@indiana.edu if you would like to make a donation.

New/gently used items needed:

- Brushes, currycombs, hoof picks, tail combs
- Rainbow Reins
- English bridles
- English saddles
- Girths
- Halters
- Lead ropes
- Plastic water and feed buckets
- Saddle pads (soft and gel)

- Snaffle bits
- Therapeutic riding surcingle
- Cosequin/Arthogen
- Cordless drill
- Helmets

Larger items:

- Truck
- Horse trailer
- Sponsorship of horses
- Sponsorship of riders
- Reliable horses

Visit our website at: www.palstherapy.org

PALS would like to disclose that we will not share your contact information with any outside organization. We will publish your name in the annual list of donors & annual report unless we are told that you want to remain anonymous.