

THE PALS POST

CEREBRAL PALSY

by Margret Kingrey, PALS Volunteer

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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

Eleven-year-old Skyler J. has ridden five different horses during his nearly seven years at PALS.

"I like trotting and trail rides best," Skyler said in a recent interview. "Riding the horses helps me sit up better."

Skyler has cerebral palsy, one of many disorders for which PALS offers therapeutic horseback riding. Cerebral palsy (CP) is a term given to several motor control disorders that are the result of a brain impairment that is usually acquired before or during birth. It is not genetic, so having one child with cerebral palsy does not increase the risk of having another child with the same disorder. Types of cerebral palsy



include: quadriplegia, manifesting as spasticity (uncontrolled movement) of both the arms and legs; paraplegia, characterized by spasticity of the legs only; diplegia, in which there is increased muscle tone in the arms with lower tone in the trunk muscles and legs; hypotonia, manifesting as low muscle tone in the trunk and all extremities; and finally athetoid CP, in which there is writhing movement in arms and legs.

Persons diagnosed with CP often also have difficulties swallowing, talking and digesting food. They can have visual impairments and may or may not have cognitive impairments. Specialized equipment, including braces, walkers and wheelchairs, help with mobility during daily activities.

The interaction between a person with CP and a horse can be therapeutic on many levels. At PALS, instructors consider all of the aspects of an individual's CP in order to determine which horse has a gait, girth and personality that facilitate the therapeutic goals of the rider. For example, an instructor will assess a rider to determine if tight inner thigh muscles would not accommodate a rather chubby, wide-backed horse.

A horse with an even gait is suggested for a rider whose spasticity is high, because the gentle, even movement can lower the rider's muscle tone. The warmth of the horse's body can also reduce muscle tightness. A horse with a different gait can help increase tone in a rider who is hypotonic. The rider can more easily move in the exercises and activities of the lesson once the muscle tone is either relaxed or heightened appropriately.

Jennifer Lung, PALS lead instructor, stated that she selected a horse with a wide girth to help stretch and relax Skyler's inner thigh muscles after consultation with his physician.

"Lola, the horse that he currently rides, also has an active gait that helps Skyler stay alert and work his trunk muscles to stay upright," she said.

Just as persons diagnosed with CP might use braces or a wheelchair to help with mobility, PALS employs many tools to aid riders.

"A surcingle is used to help him not slump over from the hips," Jenn added. A surcingle is a leather covered arch that is placed in front of the rider and cinched around the horse. Some riders hang onto it for stability. Others, like Skyler, need the surcingle to remind them to sit up, as he is skilled enough to use reins to control his horse.

Along with uncontrolled movement, CP is sometimes accompanied by low self-esteem and other psychological difficulties, often a result of the lack of independence. Having positive, fun activities, like horseback riding, can enhance both self-esteem and one's sense of control. The interaction between horse and rider develops a mutual respect and regard for another living being. This interaction increases social awareness in the rider that carries over to other situations. Instructors foster this interaction by having the rider thank the horse and members of the team who assist with the lesson for that rider at the end of the lesson. Sharing these experience with classmates and peers can be empowering.

It looks like fun, but riding a horse is so much more. The trained instructors at PALS know how to make the most of it for riders with CP!

* Sources: www.mayoclinic.org and www.narha.org



Q & A WITH PALS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

What is new and exciting at PALS?

We are preparing for the fall session, and riders are working hard to prepare for the Indiana Equestrian Special Olympics on September 12, 2009. Riders are also preparing for the PALS Fun Show on October 24. I hope to see you at the PALS Fun Show! Don't forget to contact us about riding in the fall session, which starts on Sept. 14.

What is your favorite PALS event, and why?

I love all PALS events, but I think that my favorite is the PALS Fun Show, because it is an event for the riders, and this is why we do what we do. The PALS riders prepare all year long for this event and invite family and friends to watch them demonstrate their skills and abilities! The smiles on all the riders' faces say it all! But of course the PALS Wine/Beer Tasting & Silent Auction is a great event also, and a lot of fun!

What would you recommend to a person who may be interested in doing what you do?

I recommend that people spend time volunteering at a current therapeutic riding program and research NARHA. I recommend that people do it right and provide high-quality services to people with disabilities. Increase your horsemanship skills if you are working on becoming an instructor, so you can really foster independence and set your riders up for success!

If you have a question for Fern or Jenn or future ideas for newsletter articles, please e-mail them to Laura Anderson at laura_elizabeth_bodges@yahoo.com, and they may end up in the next newsletter!

What changes or goals would you like to see happen in PALS' future?

In the future I would like PALS to be able to increase our number of lessons and riders served to fulfill the needs in the community. I would like to be able to develop other programs to serve more people as well as other populations of individuals with disabilities and at-risk youth in the community. I would also like to develop more partnerships with local organizations who work with similar populations as PALS.

If you were a PALS horse, which one would you be?

I would be Lola. I have a special connection to her since I have known her since she was one year old. She is the PALS baby and project!

What has touched you the most working in this industry?

I find all aspects of PALS truly remarkable. The volunteers, horses, riders, staff - it is all an example of fantastic teamwork! The riders are why we are here. The horses are saints! The volunteers and staff put so much blood, sweat and tears into this program that it is really truly amazing. We just have so many incredible people involved in PALS. It all touches me!

Fern Bonchek

Executive Director
 Fern Bonchek
fbonchek@indiana.edu , 812-336-2798 (Office), 812-325-5102 (Cell)

Fern Bonchek is the founder and executive director of People & Animal Learning Services (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).



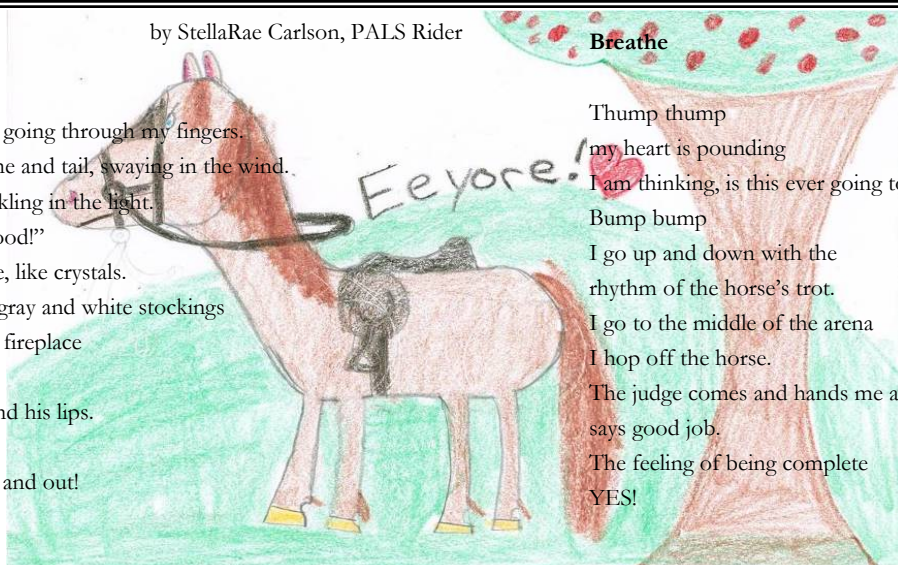
Jennifer Lung is the head instructor at People & Animal Learning Services (PALS). Jennifer has a B.S. in Outdoor Recreation with a minor in Environmental Interpretation from Indiana University and is a NARHA Registered Therapeutic Riding Instructor. In addition to her work at PALS, Jennifer has worked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

The Chestnut Pony

Short chestnut fur like grass going through my fingers.
 Long, light brown wavy mane and tail, swaying in the wind.
 Handsome brown eyes twinkling in the light.
 Twinkling with the word "food!"
 Eeyore's eyes, up on his face, like crystals.
 Short stubby legs with little gray and white stockings
 like the ones you put on the fireplace
 a week before Christmas.
 A little coat of slobber around his lips.

This is Eeyore on the inside and out!

by StellaRae Carlson, PALS Rider



Breathe

Thump thump
 my heart is pounding
 I am thinking, is this ever going to stop?
 Bump bump
 I go up and down with the
 rhythm of the horse's trot.
 I go to the middle of the arena
 I hop off the horse.
 The judge comes and hands me a purple ribbon,
 says good job.
 The feeling of being complete
 YES!

IT'S THAT FUN TIME OF YEAR

With October 24, 2009, fast approaching, it is important to mark your calendars and save the date! PALS is hosting its 9th annual Fun Show, where friends, family and the community come together to experience horsemanship at its highest caliber. This event offers all PALS riders a chance to showcase their hard work and talent, while offering guests a fun-filled day of equine-assisted activities and the possibility of winning door prizes. Come cheer on your favorite riders at Ellington Stables at 680 West That Road. Admission is free and everyone is welcome!



THE HEALING ABILITIES OF HORSES: BEYOND PHYSICAL

essay by Petra Sabine Marshall, PALS Volunteer

It is an honor for me to be chosen to write an article about one of my life's greatest passions and companions...the horse.

Horses are the great healers. Just the silent closeness of a horse is a state of bliss, being embraced by their infinite wisdom. In the company of a horse, already perfect in his nature, we can discover our authenticities. We form a trusting relationship, not by controlling, but by earning our place as a loving leader while remaining ever the student.

Horses have healing abilities for those dealing with emotional trauma, such as survivors of domestic or other abuse, veterans of war suffering from post-traumatic stress disorders, and those with other emotionally traumatic experiences. Horses have a special ability to mirror human actions. They teach us how to approach challenges, leverage opportunities and relate to others and ourselves. Relating to horses this way fosters personal development, accelerated understanding, growth and, most of all, emotional and physical healing. In a way, horses are co-facilitators. The "rescued becomes the rescuer," so to speak.

It is often a humbling experience when we are confronted with fear, self-doubt or buried emotions. But it is also a rewarding place that finely tunes natural intuition and compassion. Horses teach us the way to handle problems, deal with lack of thoughtfulness and achieve inner peace and joy. People can talk to one another about all kinds of things and still remain distant and lonesome. In partnership with a horse, one seldom lacks thought, emotion and inspiration; a great companion always attends us. Horses can build character.

Riding is a place of empowerment, opening new doors to adventure, fueling the imagination and introducing us to the role of finding our inner selves.

The horse, while forgiving, demands the honesty in the rider's ability. Horses teach us the gift of patience, gentleness, forgiveness, compassion, courage and never-ending personal growth. The presence of a horse recalls what Marie Curie once said: "Nothing in life is to be feared. It is only to be understood."

Horses change lives. Being with a horse gives you the freedom to be yourself, not only to elaborate on your own uniqueness and fulfill the perfections you are born with, but also to enhance your confidence and self-esteem.



Graysun S. at the 2008 PALS Fun Show

A RIDER REMEMBERS DEW

-by Lisa Williams, PALS Rider & Volunteer

I was determined not to like Dew. Nope! The only horse I'd really known since coming to PALS was Chico, and I had dug in my heels about staying on him. My instructor Barb Bonchek had different ideas and dug in *her* heels. So there I was, sitting Dew, prepared to at least keep my stubborn attitude.

I might as well have tried not to like chocolate. Or sunny skies. Or laughter.

Dew's real name was North Star Pioneer. He was a handsome liver chestnut quarter horse with a blaze. Dew was loaned to PALS in July 2005 by Anne & Dave Burd, and in 2007 he became the first PALS horse to have a full corporate sponsorship, from the Old National Bank Foundation. A barn favorite, Dew was especially appreciated by the adult riders, for he was strong and stocky. His smooth trot was one reason Barb insisted I ride him when I was ready to learn that gait.

I will never forget the first time Dew trotted for me. I wasn't a bit afraid, and in fact I started to giggle. The next thing I knew I was laughing nonstop around and around the arena. If Dew wondered about me in that moment, he didn't let on.

Dew had some eccentricities of his own. He was a vocal horse, which used to startle me if my mind wandered. He was also a bit of a sneak. Barb always had to recheck his girth once we were in the arena. He'd expand his belly while he was being saddled and then go back to his normal size, making the girth too loose. Dew was such a character!

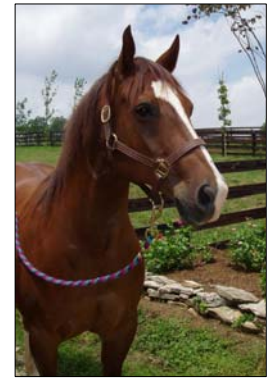
We did some challenging synchronized work in addition to trotting. We certainly shared the "fun" in Fun Show, where Dew performed dressage just as I asked. That wasn't much surprise, seeing as Sierra L. had ridden him to a first-place finish in the Indiana Youth Challenge in 2005. (She rode him at the UPHA in Kansas City that year as well, despite his strong dislike for horse trailers!)

Dew was the first horse I had ridden independently in decades, and that meant having trust for each other. It was easy to trust him. As PALS instructor and stable manager Elisa Duncan says, Dew taught the inexperienced how wonderful and gentle horses can be. She has described Dew as a hardworking fellow volunteer, with a "servant's heart."

There came a time when my learning needs meant moving to yet another horse, Patti. Ironically, I then wanted to cling to Dew, whom I had come to love. But I had to let go, so I patted his soft, warm coat and scratched his nose goodbye. I still saw him most weeks, of course, and I often brought his favorite treat. He would come over to the window of Stall #3 whenever he saw me, and I'm pretty sure he thought my real name was "Apple."

I gave him his last apple slices on May 14, 2009. On May 16 he was playing happily with some other horses in the pasture. That evening he passed away, suddenly and swiftly, from a brain aneurysm. He was 13 years old.

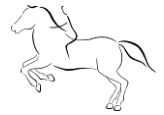
Dew is buried in Elisa Duncan's pasture, under some trees and beside Elisa's own beloved horse Domino. It is a place where many wonderful horses have known much happiness. To be given such a resting place is a rare honor, and it's one I find fitting for the horse you couldn't help but love.





PALS WELCOMES TWO NEW FACES TO THE BARN!

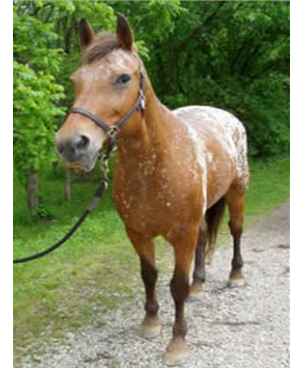
by Annie Cornett, PALS Volunteer



The summer of 2009 has been full of new riders, volunteers and even horses around the PALS barn. Our two newest four-legged additions have quickly fit into the PALS program and have become rider favorites, with many jockeying for the opportunity to ride “the new horse.”

Our newest girl, Britt, was donated by Carol Hanquier, who felt that she would make a great addition to the PALS program. Her unique blanketed hindquarters make her easy to “spot,” but don’t expect to get too many pictures of this gorgeous girl—she’s quite camera-shy even for the PALS staff!

A former lesson and trail horse, Britt has quickly adapted to the weekly routine and is already helping many riders fine-tune their skills. Her calm nature and eagerness to please have made Britt a trustworthy and enjoyable partner for many riders.



Britt

“Britt is a gem. She's very sensitive to the needs of her riders and can adjust accordingly. For her confident, secure riders, Britt offers a nice bold stride. When her riders are less advanced, Britt is very gentle,” said PALS Instructor Sandy Zywar.

Jon, the newest gelding at the barn, was donated by Christy Hartsburg and has quickly stolen the hearts of many volunteers and riders. His gentle nature and stocky build make him a great mount for many of our new and veteran riders.

“Jon has always been one of my sweetest boys, and I knew that PALS would give him a job that he would enjoy. After becoming a volunteer and working with so many riders, I knew he would fit right into the program and make an impact,” said Christy.

Jon’s calm and tolerant personality helps new riders become comfortable in the saddle, and he alleviates the anxiety of new volunteers who need a sweet horse to practice grooming and tacking skills. He has quickly become a friendly face at the barn and loves all the attention that comes along with being so popular!



Jon

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



SHOWS COMMUNITY VALUE OF EQUINE RELATIONSHIPS IN FAIR EXHIBITION

by Kamilla Benko, PALS Volunteer

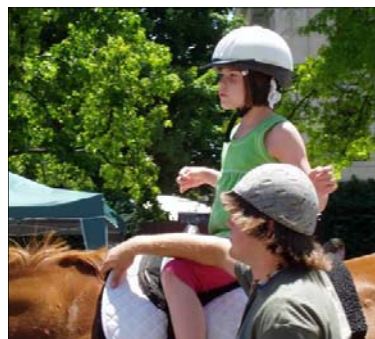
Visitors to the annual Arts Fair on the Square June 20 might have been surprised. Not only did they see displays by 65 local and regional artists, but they also saw the art of horseback riding.

Fair on the Square is an event that allows families and individuals to purchase art and visit community booths, said Kathleen Anderson, Arts Fair on the Square coordinator. This year the fair expanded to include the 6th Street area, and PALS was invited to give a demonstration in the new space.

“We were very excited to have PALS and felt like it was a wonderful opportunity for the community to see what a PALS horse and rider could do together as a team,” Anderson said.

Instructor Taryn Lyman and rider Piper D. showed the Bloomington community what happens every week at PALS. Piper and PALS horse Patti went through a sample lesson while onlookers asked questions.

“It was very hot [that day],” said Fern Bonchek, PALS Executive Director. “It was like one of the hottest days of the year, so Piper only rode for 15 minutes.” But this was enough time for Piper to present her standard exercises of stretching, core training, balance and games while riding Patti.



Piper D. with sidewalker Matt T.

Many audience members asked the six PALS volunteers questions and signed up to volunteer or have lessons at PALS.

“We are a fairly new nonprofit organization, and not many people have heard of PALS, so this got us good public awareness,” Fern said. “It was also a good chance to see how [Patti] did.”

While Fern said she was never really worried about her behavior, she was not quite sure how the horse would respond to the new environment. Luckily, there was no need to worry.

“She was a superstar,” Fern said.

“Patti was fantastic,” agreed Suzanne D., Piper’s mother. “She was a little feisty at first but calmed down quickly and was ready to do her job.” Suzanne also added that, at the moment, Patti is Piper’s favorite horse.

Piper, 8, has been riding since the fall of 2007. Her mother said she loves being the center of attention and had a lot of fun at the demonstration.

“Piper enjoyed showing off in front of the crowd and talking to kids afterwards. She got to feed Patti a treat and help a few other kids give Patti a few more!” said Suzanne. “It was a lovely afternoon.”

To learn more about Fair on the Square, visit www.artlives.org

PALS 5TH ANNUAL WINE/BEER TASTING & SILENT AUCTION FUNDRAISER

by Brooke Baker, PALS Volunteer

The PALS 5th Annual Wine/Beer Tasting & Silent Auction fundraiser, held on June 11, 2009, at KRC Banquets and Catering, was a great success. The auction raised \$16,000, exceeding our goal of \$15,000, and will help PALS to continue to serve children and adults with special needs, as well as at-risk youth in our community. A wide variety of goods and interesting activities were auctioned, while guests enjoyed food catered by KRC, listened to great jazz music, and sampled a large selection of wine and beer from both local and national companies. Many thanks go to the event committee, generous event sponsors, local business donors, numerous wine and beer vendors, and the support of over 300 guests. Fun was had by all and we look forward to next year's event!



Neal Heidler plays bass to the crowd of 300+



Julie Dailey
Oliver Winery

A special thank-you to all the event sponsors and wine & beer vendors listed below.

~ 2009 EVENT SPONSORS & VENDORS ~

Staff Directory

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Becca Bryan, Instructor
Elisa Duncan, Vol. Instructor
Sandy Gaier, Instructor/
Horse trainer
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Lindsey O'Haver, Substitute
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- From page 3 (*Healing Power of Horses*)

One feels accepted as long as one is genuine. Horses awaken fantasy; they fuel the imagination of children and nurture the youthful souls of adults. The most beautiful thing we can experience, I believe, is the mysterious. As Albert Einstein said, "[The mysterious] is the source of all true art and science."

Horses are highly alert animals, responding to our touch, smell and even changes in heart rate. Horses help us to explore and re-establish the ability we all have for a language without linguistics, which is easily diminished when we are disconnected from animals and nature. The only way to be able to understand a horse is to think like a horse. Gestures and facial expressions are words unspoken, conveyed in body language as communication tools. Horses teach us about true friendship, which at its core has honor and mutual respect.

Horses are experts at mirroring the truth of who we are and what we are feeling. Horses open the door to our sensitivity. Being around horses, we find a sense of child-like humor, which releases us from the complexities and burdens of our daily routine. Relaxation and balance emerge. Horses have a special dignity that requires authenticity from us. If we are not genuine in our care and kindness towards them, they sense the manipulative nature of our actions. Horses teach us that kindness becomes a way of selfless giving that, in its highest form, must be disengaged from self-gain. If altruism had a perfect manifestation, it might be kindness.

Horses instill creativity and inspiration within us. They own a hidden element that harmonizes with their aesthetic beauty and grace. Horses teach us the possibility of new horizons and secret gates to our souls that need unlocking. Being our best is what they ask of us.

Horses symbolize freedom. When riding a horse, one finds freedom in abandonment while letting all else go, moving together so comfortably and becoming one in spirit.

"Thou must learn the thoughts of the noble horse whom thou wouldst ride. The horse is a wise animal. Let him show you the best and most natural way to accomplish a desired end."—Johann Wolfgang Goethe.

May you empower yourself with the spirit that is this noble animal.



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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, or donate online at www.palstherapy.org. 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.