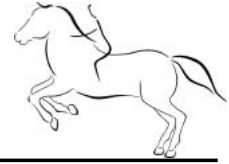




Highlights & Headlines



Rider Profile — Kyle Strain



Kyle is shown with Jan Gavin (L) and Fern Bonchek (R) after completing his course at the 2002 Monroe County 4-H Fair.

Kyle Strain, 15 years old, started riding at PALS when the program first started in July 2000 and was among the very first of PALS riders. Kyle has Autism and global seizures. He has participated in the Adapted Martial Arts Program at the YMCA and enjoys shooting hoops and swimming. By far, Kyle's favorite activity is riding a horse at PALS. His enjoyment at PALS is unquestionable. He even has a special giggle that he shares only from horseback.

He was first introduced to riding at a former babysitter's house; where he would sometimes ride with his mother. Kyle rides Wolf, a retired show horse that now works part-time as a therapy horse in the PALS program. They fit together hand and glove. Together they have successfully completed two shows. One at PALS and one at the Monroe County Fair, where they won grand champion in their class. This represents the present pinnacle of Kyle's riding career. Never-the-less, what Kyle does

better than anything else is influence the lives of those around him. He does not talk much but his cheery disposition affects all those who see him. Here is a kid who, with just a grin, can change your day.

Apart for sheer enjoyment, riding has real benefits for Kyle's muscles, stretching them and providing exercise for many muscle groups. Also taking lessons improves his cognitive skills and concentration. The therapeutic riding environment also helps to improve social skills as he interacts with many supportive people. Lately Kyle has been staying on at the barn after his lessons and helping out with barn duties with a staff member from Options for Better Living who volunteers at PALS.

Kyle also takes his lessons home with him. A year after he first started riding at PALS, his family acquired a new dog named Titan. Kyle soon began learning how to lead him. "Navaar, walk on," he now commands. The name of his PALS horse was at the time, Navaar.

Kyle is big brother to three brothers and a sister and gets along well with all of them. Teresa, Kyle's mom, when asked how she feels about horse riding, had this to say, "What could bring more enjoyment than being atop a horse?" This is certainly a sentiment shared by Kyle; his smile says it all.

By Bruce (PALS Volunteer)

PALS

What is Autism?

Autism is a disorder characterized by abnormal self-absorption. Children and adults with autism do not develop the ability to socialize with other people, and they have often been described as being "in their own world." Signs of autism often are evident even in early infancy; these babies do not meet the expected developmental milestones of having a social smile or making eye contact. A lack of normal speech development also occurs. Many autistic children and adults have little or no useful speech, although they may repeat what they hear quite fluently. This is called "echolalia" and has to be distinguished from actual communicative speech. People with autism may have normal intelligence but more frequently have mental retardation as well, often with "developmental scatter" (memory functions may be good but understanding of abstract concepts is lacking).

Autistic people with markedly abnormal nonverbal IQs frequently have abnormal EEGs and about half of them develop seizures by the time they reach adolescence. People with autism often have normal gross and fine motor development, although toe walking (not related to spasticity) is common. It is also common for autistic children and adults to have repetitive movements such as rocking, head banging and twirling of their hands and arms. There is often some confusion in making the distinction between people with autism and people with "Asperger" disorder. Asperger disorder involves an inability to connect or interact socially, without any significant language or cognitive problems, some may be highly intelligent.

There are special considerations that must be addressed in the teaching of autistic riders. The mount chosen must not be too tall for effective sidewalking, because these riders sometimes decide to dismount unexpectedly. These riders have a short attention span and the instructor and sidewalkers must have

Continued on next page



Letter From the Director — Fern Bonchek

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the second PALS Newsletter. Happy New Year! Thanks for all your support and dedication to PALS in 2002! In 2002 PALS provided over 700 lessons to children and adults with disabilities. In 2003, PALS plans on providing 900 therapeutic riding lessons.

PALS is proud to announce that we are now a North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) Premier Accredited Center. PALS is the only NARHA Premier Accredited Center in the Bloomington area!

PALS is also very excited to be offering a 3-credit class in therapeutic riding (R317-Introduction to Therapeutic Riding) through the School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (HPER) at Indiana University. This class will be offered to students from Indiana University. Students will also participate in field experience during PALS lessons.

PALS is currently on winter break. New PALS riders will start back up on March 3rd or 4th and returning riders will start back up on March 10th or 11th at Fleur de Lis Farm. Parents, riders, or caregivers of riders should contact Fern ASAP to discuss your spring lessons schedule! PALS volunteers will start back up on February 24th and 25th. We will have New Volunteer training on February 22nd at 1:00 p.m.



Fern Bonchek and Sugar pose for a picture.

If you are a returning PALS volunteer please contact me ASAP to discuss your spring volunteer schedule. If you are a new volunteer who is interested in volunteering at PALS, please contact me ASAP to sign up for the volunteer training on February 22nd. I will see you all soon!

Everyone stay tuned for new and exciting developments for PALS in the summer of 2003!

In this issue I would like to introduce you to the PALS Instructors, a PALS horse, a rider, and a volunteer. Once again, thanks for all your support to PALS and please come visit lessons on Mondays and Tuesdays in the spring of 2003. Please call first for specific times.

I hope to see you soon!

By Fern Bonchek, PALS Director

Fern Bonchek is the Founder and Director of People and Animal Learning Services, Inc. (PALS). Twenty-eight years old, Fern has a B.A. degree in Psychology with a specialization in Human & Animal Interactions from the Union Institute and is a NARHA Advanced Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor. Fern serves on the Higher Education Committee of NARHA and is an adjunct instructor at Indiana University in the School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (HPER).

PALS

Autism

(Continued from Page 1)

eye contact to maintain communication. It helps to divide the lesson into short segments to keep the rider engaged, and these riders often respond well to games. The instructor has to be alert for an autistic rider turning a lesson activity into a repetitive, self-absorbed activity; for example, any work with rings can result with the rider starting to twirl the ring while staring at it.

Autistic riders are often resistant to change, especially tactile change. Overcoming this resistance can be incorporated into the lesson plan as part of the goals for that rider. Directions to autistic riders should be short and concise. Sequenced instructions are difficult for these riders to follow because although they may repeat the instructions fluently, it doesn't mean they understood them. Although progress is often slow in the teaching of autistic riders, it does occur. These riders are not often demonstrative about their enjoyment of riding, but it is clear that they like their time on the horse and often are reluctant to dismount at the end of their lesson.

Sources for this article include *Aspects and Answers, Pediatrics Review and Education Program*, published by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

By Dr. Chris L. Holmes M.D. (PALS Volunteer)

PALS

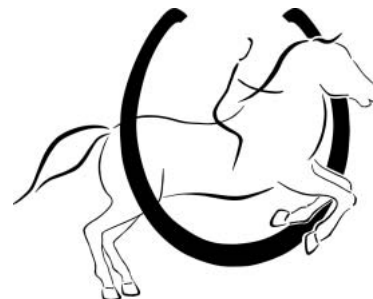
PALS Still Has NAP Credits



NAP:

PALS is proud to have Indiana's Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP) state Tax Credits. With NAP Tax Credits for every \$100 that is contributed to People and Animal Learning Services, Inc. (PALS), the out-of-pocket cost could be as little as \$15 for individuals and \$11 for corporations. This huge savings is because the donor will receive a state tax credit that reduces the Indiana State Tax bill by one-half of the amount owed. If itemizing on federal taxes, the donor will receive an additional 34% deduction. For more information regarding this program, contact Fern at 812-336-2798 or email pals@indiana.edu.

PALS





Volunteer Profile: Bruce Moffitt



Bruce Moffitt, PALS volunteer, poses with Justin, a PALS rider.

For Volunteer Bruce Moffitt, Bloomington, Indiana is a long way from his native Zimbabwe. Yet, in becoming involved in PALS, Bruce has found himself quite at home again.

It was Bruce's life-long experience with horses, and an early volunteer stint with the Special Olympics in Zimbabwe, that prompted his wife to send an e-mail about PALS his way about one year ago. As a result, Bruce began to volunteer in the Spring 2002 session, giving two days a week to PALS through the remainder of the year. "The more involved I become," Bruce says, "the more I want to do for PALS."

While Bruce serves as a Lesson Volunteer and a Stable Manager, he is also in training to be a therapeutic riding instructor. Bruce has also given time to fund-raising and writes for the PALS newsletter as well. Fern Bonchek, PALS Director, says, "Bruce is an incredible asset to the PALS program. Bruce can train volunteers, train horses, and best of all he is incredible with the PALS Riders. We are so lucky to have him as a PALS volunteer."

Born and raised in Zimbabwe, Bruce began riding horses with his dad, perched on the front of the saddle. As a professional in farm management, Bruce's dad led his family to farms throughout the country. When Bruce was about 7, he recalls, his father set he and his sister on a pair of horses and turned them out to the pasture to teach them to ride. While he may lack formal riding lessons, Bruce brings a wealth of intuition and years of experience in training and understanding of horses, all of which proved portable from Africa to PALS.

Bruce met his wife, Diana, seven years ago, when she, a native Hoosier, was serving as an aid worker in Zimbabwe. When the time came for her to return to IU to complete her

degree, the couple packed up and moved to Bloomington in April, 1999, along with daughter Alexandra, now 5. "Talk about culture shock!" Bruce exclaims. He settled in as a printer with Graphic Impressions, but found himself still restless in adjusting to his new home.

As horses were part of his early life, it was horses that led him to finally find his niche in Bloomington. Bruce's smile broadens as he speaks of his acquaintance with the PALS community, which he describes as "a remarkable collection of people with a common purpose." He adds, "PALS people are people who value children, who value working with people with disabilities, who are humble about their own worth, willing to do any task for the common goal."

By Julia (PALS Volunteer)

PALS

PALS Horse Show Follow-Up



On November 2, about 200 people gathered to watch 27 riders participate in the 2002 PALS horse show. Despite the chilly weather, the mood was festive as the riders took their turns in either obstacle course or dressage classes. Each rider was judged, and the judge's comments were presented along with ribbons and certificates during the awards ceremony that followed each group of riders. All of the riders did an outstanding job of guiding their horses through the required maneuvers. Here is a list of riders by group:

Group I

Obstacle course: Tasia, Sophie, Kelsey, Ben, Chase, Kyle, Alex, Eli, Rachel, Galina, Judd, Raslan, Taylor

Group II

Obstacle course: Tom, Ian, Jody, Karen, Bob, Wyatt, Skylar
Dressage class: Melinda, Brad, Pat, Mckaila, Dan, Justin, Jill

The riders were assisted by about 45 volunteers, who also ran the information booth and concession stand, directed traffic, got horses ready, and kept everything running smoothly. In addition, about 20 parents, riders or rider

representatives, 5 PALS volunteers and an IU student group brought food for the concession stand. PALS made \$163 from the concession stand, \$410 in donations, and \$50 on t-shirt sales during the day. We are very grateful to everyone who helped make the horse show such a success, and extremely proud of all the riders who participated! You are warmly invited to next year's show that is tentatively scheduled for October 18, 2003. More details of the 2003 PALS horse show will be available later in the year.

By Amy (PALS Volunteer)

PALS



PALS Feature Horse: Navaar



Navaar is a beautiful horse and PALS riders love him!

In order to have a successful therapeutic riding program, you need to have good and gentle horses. When starting PALS, Fern enlisted the help of her horse, Navaar. He is a model therapy horse and a pleasure to work with. Navaar is a 23-year old white (or more appropriately flea-bitten) Arabian horse who is a favorite in the barn.

As a breed, Arabians have smaller hooves, small noses, larger eyes, short strong backs, and a higher tailset that sets them apart from other breeds of

horses. Arabian horses were developed throughout the centuries by Beduoin tribes in Arabia. Horses were so important that it is said that prized horses slept in their owner's tents! As the breed developed through the years, the animals were selected for their gentle nature, intelligence, beauty, stamina, speed, and courage.

Navaar makes an ideal therapy horse due to his gentle, loving nature, his patience, and intelligence. He is also very beautiful! In his successful therapy career, Navaar has mastered the following tasks; the ability to stand at the mounting lift, tolerate noises, objects (such as balls and rings) thrown past him (or even on him!), wheelchairs and walkers, and various weight shifts during a lesson. He works well with the riders and is intuitive to their movements. Fern is proud to own such wonderful horse and loves to see him being so careful and in tune with the riders.

Navaar has a unique past that includes a famous ancestor! Navaar's grandfather was in the second Black Stallion movie! He was the chestnut Arabian that raced the Black Stallion through the desert. The Arabian is a versatile breed and Navaar is no

exception. His resume includes stints working as a jumper, hunter, dressage, and cutting cattle! In addition to his many talents, Navaar has also survived a horrible accident in which occurred during a bad thunderstorm. When he was found the next morning, his head was split open above his right eye and he was in a daze. Also, he sustained an injury that separated the muscles in his shoulder. It is believed that a tree fell on him or that he might have ran into a tree. All of the bones around his eye socket had to be removed. He was under intense medical care for one week. For the next few weeks, his wound had to be cleaned and drained many times each day. Fortunately, he has healed and has full eyesight. The only sign of the accident is the scar above his right eye.

The PALS program is very fortunate to have Navaar working within its ranks and we always have our eyes open for more horses like Navaar. Please contact PALS if you are interested in, or have any questions about, donating a horse to PALS.

By April (PALS Volunteer)

PALS



Do you have concerns with the health of your crawl space under your home?

Is your crawl space properly insulated preventing waterlines from freezing?

Do you have humidity or mold issues originating in your crawl space?

Do you even know?

I have started a company using my thirteen years experience working in crawl spaces along with researching modern practices to develop the best solutions to control humidity and help prevent mold issues originating from the crawl space. Call Tom Saucier for a free inspection and if you are affiliated with PALS or refer a friend to my services and contract Crawlspace Doctor to perform services in your crawl space I will donate \$25 to PALS. Please help spread the word.

Tom Saucier Crawlspace Doctor 812-322-1615 or 812-275-6039.



PALS Therapeutic Riding Instructors



Chris Holmes, M.D.

Chris Holmes

Age: 44

Position: Therapeutic Riding Instructor

Degree/Certification: NARHA Registered Therapeutic Riding Instructor. B.A. in Economics and Politics from Randolph-Macon Woman's College in Virginia & M.D. from University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas Texas.

Bio: Chris is originally from Sarasota, Florida, Chris has lived in several states and one foreign country before she and her family settled in Bloomington. Chris has been riding since the age of six or so, and has taught her husband and their two kids to enjoy horses as well. She became involved in therapeutic riding in 1990. She is a pediatrician but considers her own children her primary job. The rest of her time is divided between teaching in PALS, caring for patients in a low-income clinic in Columbus, and playing with Houdini, her horse. Houdini (a.k.a. "Half Ton"), whom she describes as a sweet, lovable 1300 lb. goofball, spooks at almost anything, and provides her with endless entertainment. You can see Chris in action with her riders on Monday afternoons and Tuesday evenings.



*Cathy Wrigley with Galinaa,
a PALS rider.*

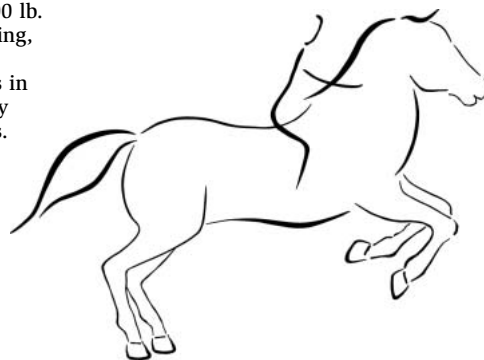
Cathy Wrigley

Age: 47

Position: Therapeutic Riding Instructor

Degree/Certification: B.S. in Occupational Therapy from Indiana University

Bio: Cathy became involved with horses 12 years ago because of her two daughters. Cathy currently has three horses at her house and farm in Bloomington, IN. Cathy works as an Occupation Therapist in the local school system. Cathy enjoys volunteering as an instructor at PALS because she enjoys seeing the benefits that PALS offers to children and adults with disabilities. She loves to witness how much fun the riders have and progress they make from interacting with the horses. You can see Cathy in action with her riders on Monday evenings.



Penny Akers

Penny Akers

Age: 44

Position: Substitute/Volunteer Therapeutic Riding Instructor

Degree/Certification: NARHA Registered Therapeutic Riding Instructor

Bio: Penny has worked with horses for over 30 years and currently has 10 horses and 2 ponies at her house in Center Point, IN. Penny became interested in therapeutic riding because of her granddaughter who has CHARGE Syndrome. Penny has her own therapeutic riding program at her farm in Center Point, IN. and also runs the SMWC therapeutic program in Saint Mary of the Woods, Indiana.

Also:

PALS also has three volunteers (Bruce Moffitt, Barb Bonchek and Jennifer Lung) who teach lessons under a NARHA certified instructor's supervision and who are training to be NARHA Registered Therapeutic Riding Instructors.

By Fern Bonchek, PALS Director



or e-mail us at:
pals@indiana.edu

Visit our website at:
www.palstherapy.org

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Important Spring Session Dates!

Wish List



Volunteers:

- Current volunteers contact Fern ASAP to set-up your volunteer schedule will be for the spring.
- New volunteers please contact Fern ASAP to sign up for the new volunteer training on February 22nd at 1:00-4:00.
- New Volunteer Training is from 1-4:00 on February 22nd.
- All Volunteers start coming to barn on February 24th and 25th.

Riders:

- Parent/Riders/Caregivers please contact Fern ASAP to discuss spring lesson schedule.
- New Student Assessments on March 3rd and 4th.
- PALS Lessons from March 10th – May 20th (PALS will be closed the week of Spring Break – March 17th and 18th).
- Make Up Lessons are on June 9th and 10th.
- For a complete PALS Schedule for 2003 please look at the PALS Web Site www.palstherapy.org.

PALS

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

Here are some of the items that PALS needs:

New or gently used:

- 10 sets rainbow reins.
- Brushes, Currycombs, hoof picks, tail combs.
- English bridles.
- English saddles.
- Girths.
- Halters.
- Lead ropes.
- Plastic water and feed buckets.
- Saddle pads both soft and gel.
- Snaffle bits.
- Therapeutic riding surcingles
- Portable saddle stands
- Arthrasooth for the "old timer" horses and ponies
- Fly spray
- An indestructible tack shed (rubber maid)
- Fisher price basketball net.
- And those who really want to help could donate items such as: gravel for the driveway and parking area; a truck and/or horse trailer; or even a horse that is as reliable as a recently donated horse, Patti. She has surpassed all expectations.

By Bruce (PALS Volunteer)

PALS