



# CHEFF CENTER VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

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*There is no newsletter for September, we'll be back in October!*

August-September 2023 Issue 33

## VOLUNTEER PROFILE: DIANNE BACKUS



Dianne and Art

Our volunteer of the month is Dianne Backus. Dianne has been with us for a little over a year and has already donated 180+ hours of her time here, volunteering for Shindig 2022, Read and Ride summer camps, Girlz in the Barn, and our regular therapeutic riding classes.

Dianne grew up in Ann Arbor, MI, and started being a part of 4-H when she was 13. (She was

lucky that her 4-H leader's daughters were grown, and he had a barn full of horses she could ride!) She was able to ride with 4-H until she graduated from high school. After graduation, she bought her own Quarter Horse gelding, and showed him in Western and Hunt Seat.

Dianne married her husband, Don, and they moved to Battle Creek. They still had their Quarter Horse, and Dianne was fortunate enough to quickly get a job with the Kellogg Company, where she worked as a secretary and later in Consumer Affairs. She worked there for 30 years until she retired in 2006, and she has stayed busy ever since!

Shortly after they moved to Battle Creek, they bought a Quarter Horse mare and ended up breeding and showing quarter horses. She became involved in the Rebel Riders 4-H group in Calhoun County and worked with them for 10 years.

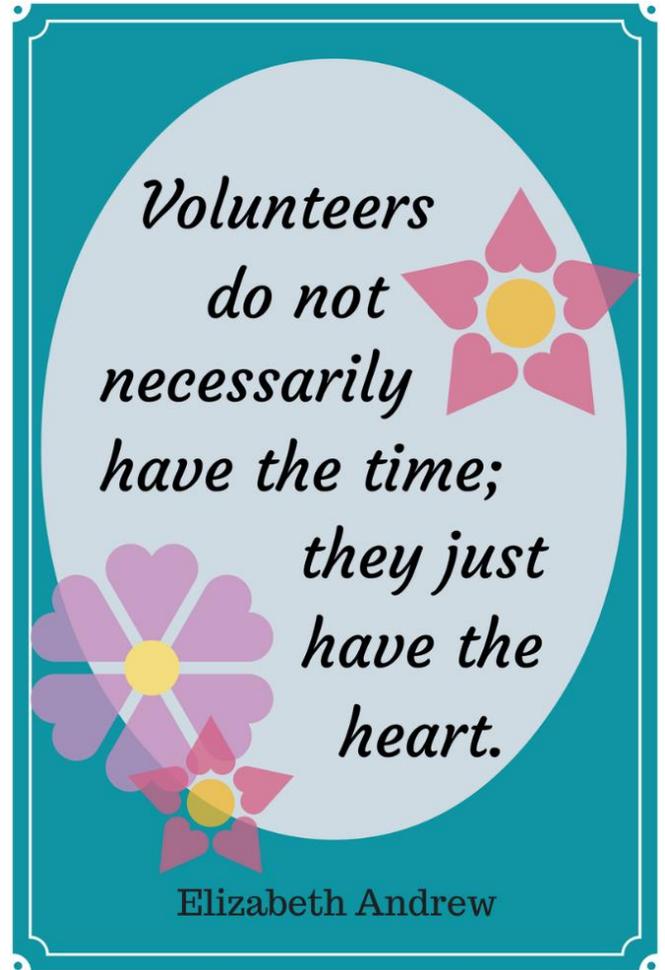
Sadly, Dianne had a riding accident which caused her to need back surgery, and she could not ride any longer. They sold their horses, and she was horseless for eight years afterward. She ended up buying another Quarter Horse mare (Stinky) and although she could not ride, she was able to show Fitting and Showing, and was very successful in the show circuit. Stinky was also being shown by the trainer and another student at the barn and racked up many accolades. Stinky ended up retiring due to foot

issues and then passed away, but she had a good, long life.

Dianne and Don have a winter home in Carefree, Arizona, where they spend most of the fall and winter. While there, a friend suggested that she go to a local Therapeutic Riding center, Silver Spur, where she could continue to volunteer with horses and children. Not only is Dianne dedicated to the Cheff Center, but she gets to continue volunteering while she is “wintering” in Arizona!

Dianne and Don will be celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary (Congratulations!) this fall and taking a cruise before they go to Arizona for the winter. We will miss her this fall and will look forward to her return next spring!

If you have not met Dianne, please introduce yourself if you see her—she’s incredibly friendly! Thank you, Dianne, for all that you do for and with Cheff!



### ***SHINDIG UPDATE***

*We are still accepting donations for the silent auction - but are basically set for volunteers! Of course, if anyone still wants to volunteer, we will not turn them away! Just contact [Sara Putney-Smith](#) to sign up!*



# HORSE OF THE MONTH: PHILLIP



Handsome Phillip

Let's give a warm welcome to our new Cheff herd member, Phillip!

Phillip is an 11-year-old American Paint Horse (APHA), that stands 16.3 hands high. Everyone has already noticed what a fun personality he has!

In his previous careers, Phillip was a show horse for a while, before transitioning to a racetrack in California where he was a pony horse.

A pony horse is a track or lead pony - horses that offer support and comfort for racehorses as they travel to and from the racetrack. Often, they are older than their charges, and a track pony or lead pony offers guidance and support, which allows the racehorse to focus on their job rather than the sights and sounds of the racetrack.

Phillip didn't particularly love his job as a pony horse, which is how we were so fortunate that he ended up at Cheff.

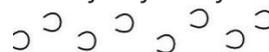
Phillip arrived at Cheff at the beginning of July, right after the 4th. While on his journey from California, the truck and trailer he was traveling in caught fire! Phillip survived and was treated for a week or so in Lexington, Kentucky.



Phillip could use SmartPak Bug Off and SmartPak Immune Support. We are working on putting some weight on him too, so he is on a special diet, and any financial donations to help towards purchasing supplements would be greatly appreciated! Cheff gets great discounts on horse-related products, so you know that any donation will be well spent. ❤️

Although you may give him attention and love him up, he is only to be handled by staff at this point, as per usual with new horses. We hear he is not too fussy about treats!

*Fun Fact: Did you know that Phillip is derived from Greek for "fond of horses"?*



# INTRODUCING...GREG GAY!



Greg and Dixie

We would like to introduce you to our new Facilities and Grounds Manager, Greg Gay. Greg grew up in the Plainwell area on a farm where they raised cattle, crops, and pheasants.

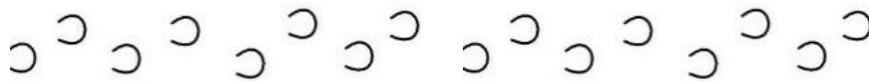
Greg owned CC Supply, a landscaping company in Richland, until 2012 when he sold it to one of his employees.

In 2010, he started building a log cabin in Delton. Greg cleared the land, harvested 140 trees, and built his cabin by hand. He heats using wood only, and pretty much lives “off the grid.”

As a way to see the United States, Greg took a job as a long-haul trucker. He was able to see every state except Maine, which he still vows he will see someday. He had jobs at Safelite Auto Glass, and he did that until he was approached by our Executive Director, Tara, who asked him to come work for her at Eastfork, her riding stable/farm. Greg worked for Tara as groundskeeper/maintenance person for five years. Tara sold Eastfork several years ago, and at that time he left. He was recently approached by Tara again to come work at Cheff, and here he is!

Greg and his girlfriend, Roxy, raise Idaho Pasture Pigs (adorable!) and chickens. He has a vegetable garden as well, so his farm is pretty much self-sufficient. He also has three beagles for hunting, a Bernese Mountain Dog, and a Lab/Shepherd mix. In his spare time, he enjoys hunting, fishing, and farming.

We are so glad to have Greg with us, and hope that if you see him walking through the barn or building that you say hello!



## CHEFF UPDATES

You will notice a few new “faces” in the barn these days! We are happy to announce that we have brought on a couple of leased horses, have a horse on loan, and have purchased Phillip, who is featured in the newsletter this month.

After a harrowing transport here from California, (there was a trailer fire in which four other horses perished), Phillip is settling in and is gaining weight but still has a little way to go. He has a wonderful, inquisitive nature and sweet personality. Although you may give him attention and love him up, he is only to be handled by staff at this point, as per usual with new horses.

Ryan is a leased horse from a man at the Battle Creek Hunt Club. He could be Garth’s twin (although he isn’t as slow as Garth!). You might notice a bump on his nose—it is being treated with antibiotics and should disappear soon. He is adjusting to our program and seems to be fitting right in. Ryan is in classes already, but still needs to be tacked by staff at this point. That should change soon.



Ryan



Scooby

Scooby is on loan to us and is acclimating quite well. He also is a staff-only horse (except in class) and that, too, should change soon.

Blue is another lease who recently arrived, and he is adorable! He has blue eyes, like our Simon, and seems to have a sweet disposition as well. He is also a staff-only horse at this point, but again, that will change soon.



Blue

We will be featuring each of our new horses in the upcoming newsletters, and hope that you get to know and love them in the meantime!

**THE NEXT VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION IS AUGUST 31ST, 2023, FROM 5:30PM to 8:00PM.** We always need volunteers, so invite your friends, family, and co-workers to attend! **There is no volunteer orientation in September, and the final orientation for the year is scheduled for October 21<sup>st</sup>, from 10:00AM to 1:00PM.**

**RIDE-A-THON IS BACK IN SEPTEMBER!** Hit the trails with us to raise money and awareness for Cheff Programs. This event features fabulous trail riding, door prizes, auction items, lunch, and prizes for top pledge earners!

Come on out on **Saturday, September 23, 2023, from 8:00AM-12:00PM** and join in the fun!

## FUN FACT

### Equestrian Events at the Special Olympics

Earlier this summer, the Special Olympics top-level competition, the World Games, took place in Berlin, Germany, from June 17-25. Equestrian was one of 26 individual and team sports at this huge event.

As you may know, Special Olympics was [founded by Eunice Kennedy Shriver](#), with a mission to provide sports activities for people with intellectual disabilities and to change attitudes about disability. The first Special Olympics international competition hosted 1,000 U.S. and Canadian athletes at Chicago's Soldier Field in 1968. Over a half-century later, the organization now involves some five million athletes in 170 countries.

Equestrian wasn't part of Special Olympics initially. It became a World Summer Games sport in 1987 and first appeared at the Special Olympics USA Games in 2022. There are now at least 10 different equestrian disciplines recognized for Special Olympics competition, including:

- **Jumping** – Rider and horse complete a jumping sequence; the number of fences (four to eight total) and fence height depend on the level of competition.
- **Dressage** – Rider and horse perform a predetermined sequence of maneuvers, known as a “dressage test.” (Check out two [sample dressage tests](#) from Berlin 2023.)
- **Prix Caprilli** – Dressage with jumps.
- **English and Stock Seat (Western) Equitation** – An event official calls out actions to perform, such as gait changes, 10- and 20-meter circles, halt, figure-8, reverse, etc.
- **Working Trails** – Rider and horse navigate an obstacle course of objects like ground poles, logs, a labyrinth, a mailbox for removing and delivering items, a rope gate to open and go through, etc.
- **Showmanship** – Showing the horse from the ground.
- **Gymkhana** – Timed events like pole bending and barrel racing.
- **Drill Teams, Unified Drill Teams, and Unified Team Relays** – These are multi-rider events. In **Unified** events, athletes with and without intellectual disabilities team up to compete. Unified sports are found throughout Special Olympics.

Special Olympics equestrian competitions typically offer a subset of all the possible events described above. Berlin 2023, for example, included jumping, dressage, English equitation and working trails. The Abu Dhabi 2019 World Games had these same four events plus gymkhana.

[\(Continued on next page\)](#)

## FUN FACT

# Equestrian Events at the Special Olympics

**Divisioning** is a Special Olympics process that groups athletes by skill level or ability, so everyone has a reasonable chance to win. Equestrian divisions break down like this:

- Level A: walk, trot, canter / Level B: walk, trot / Level C: walk.
- I = Independent riding / S = Supported riding, meaning a leader and/or sidewalker.

As an example, in a level **CS working trails** event, participants would walk their horse (level C), and would have the support of a leader and/or sidewalker (S = support).

In the U.S., some but not all state Special Olympics programs offer equestrian events. Michigan Special Olympics, for example, does not currently have equestrian, while our neighbors Indiana and Illinois do.

Opening ceremonies, Berlin World Games 2023 (from [Wikicommons](#))



Entering the labyrinth in a working trails event, Abu Dhabi World Games 2019 (from [video](#) @ 1m 15s)

#### More info:

[Special Olympics Equestrian Equestrian Event Rulebook](#)

#### Videos

[Special Olympics Equestrian in New Zealand](#) (8 min)  
[Barn volunteer – Berlin 2023 World Games](#) (2 min)



# AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

Josslyn A

David ML

Jenn R

Kent S

Heather F

Morgan M

Mallory R

Janet LF

Carolyn P

Vanessa S



# SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Dustin B

Jennifer B

Heidi L

Ellen S-A

Riley B

Jeffrey B

Charlie L

Paloma S

Joyce B

Samantha D-S

Axel R

Ella W

## **Cheff gets a large discount on horse-related products!**

If you would like to get more bang for your buck, you could make a [DONATION](#) to Cheff and we will gratefully use it where most needed!

## **Harding's**

Harding's customers - if you join their Community Rewards program and select the Cheff Center as your organization of choice, we receive a rebate based on your purchase amounts.

Please let your friends and family know—every penny helps! For more information, click on the link: <https://www.hardings.com/savings-and-rewards/community-rewards/>

## **Rite Aid**

Rite Aid is one of Cheff's partners and extended their shopper rewards program to us. Please consider signing up as a Cheff Supporter. Simply register at: [support.rxfundraising.com/CheffCenter](http://support.rxfundraising.com/CheffCenter)

## **Any Questions/Comments/Suggestions?**

If so, you can contact Sara Putney-Smith, Volunteer Administrator, at [sara@cheffcenter.org](mailto:sara@cheffcenter.org)

**Newsletter Contributions by:** Emily Fields, Ann Lindsay, Ashton Maguire, Morgan Meulman, Sara Putney-Smith, Marianne Stier, Jennifer Zeigler

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