



May 2023 Issue 30

CHEFF CENTER VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

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VOLUNTEER PROFILE: MELISSA CRONIN



Art and Melissa

Melissa Cronin is our volunteer in the spotlight for May!

Melissa came to Cheff after a series of fortuitous events. She had seen a Cheff Facebook posting and thought it would be a wonderful place to volunteer, so started to follow the website. A while later, she interviewed a prospective employee who just happened to also be a volunteer at Cheff; that

new hire let her know when the next volunteer orientation was, and Melissa started volunteering at Cheff in June of 2022.

Melissa grew up in the Kalamazoo area, and always had a great love of horses and dogs -- in fact, those were her first words, not "mom" and "dad." When she was a kid, Melissa and her family often rode horses at her grandmother's and aunt's in Rothbury.

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in business, Melissa started at Perrigo, working there until she joined Zoetis in 2016. At Zoetis, she works with the clinical staff as a sourcing manager in research and development, where they ensure the safety and efficacy of products for animals.

Melissa loves traveling, and has been to Israel, Europe, the UK, and Ireland. She has a 13-year-old son, Finn, with whom she goes camping, hiking, and kayaking. At the New Year they made a "Challenge to Hike Every Weekend," selecting a new place to explore each time. Finn can't wait until he can volunteer at Cheff!

There are many things Melissa likes about Cheff: the people, the horses, and feeling like you can make a difference. She says she views her time at Cheff as therapy for herself and as an "escape" from her everyday life that she looks forward to each week.

She said there are so many things she's learned, too, such as getting to know each horse's behavior and understanding how they communicate. She has enjoyed not only learning about the many benefits of therapeutic riding and services Cheff provides, but also seeing the measurable gains the riders have in each session she has volunteered in. Melissa has had the opportunity to work with the Girls in the Barn program as well and loves how the girls may arrive shy and a bit reserved, but by

the end of the program, they have come out of their shell.

Melissa's favorite horses? She LOVES Simon and has bonded with him; she enjoys his sweetheart personality and mild temper. And she sympathizes with him when his feet hurt! Her other favorite is Garth – she loves this gentle giant with his expressive eyes.

Thanks for being here, Melissa, we appreciate all you do at Cheff!



WELCOME KENT!

We would like to introduce you to Kent S, who is volunteering with Randy (our do-everything guy here at Cheff) as his assistant on Thursday mornings.

Kent grew up in Manistee, MI, and moved down to this area in 2020, when his father bought the Inn at Gull Lake. They have remodeled it and are enjoying providing the community with up-to-date lodging. Kent is in charge of Guest Relations.

When he isn't working, Kent enjoys playing darts, singing, and playing pool. He came to Cheff to meet new people and make new friends. He chose Cheff not only because it is close to the Inn, but also because he has Asperger's syndrome, and he enjoys the inclusive environment.

We are happy to have Kent with us and hope that if you happen to meet him you will introduce yourself and help him feel at home!



HORSE BREED OF THE MONTH: MINI HORSE

A special treasure at the Cheff Center is our charming Star, the smallest horse in the herd. Star's personality, size, adorableness, and ability to connect with humans make her a great representative of the Miniature Horse – aka "Mini" -- breed. In this article, we'll take a look at the breed's characteristics and background.



Star

There are Miniature Horses around the world, with many countries having one or more registries that specify their own breed names and particulars, for example, the Dutch Miniature in the Netherlands and the Falabella, a Mini breed developed in Argentina.

As you would imagine, size is a primary defining characteristic of all Minis. A maximum horse height of around 34 inches is a common Miniature standard, though height requirements can vary, with some registries having categories for taller horses, too.



A Friesian/Morgan cross & a Mini

In North America, the American Miniature Horse Registry (AMHR) and the American Miniature Horse Association (AMHA) are the primary representatives of the American Miniature Horse breed.

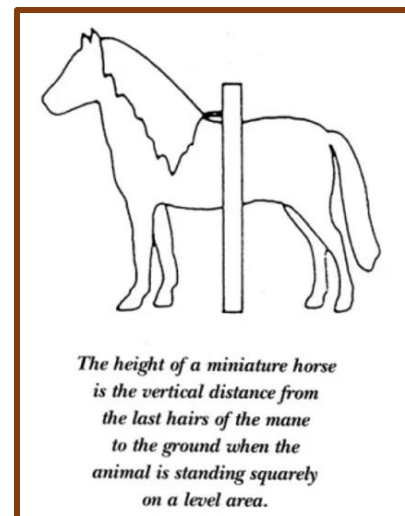
The AMHR is considered the oldest registry for the Miniature Horse in the United States. It was established in the early 1970s, when a group of breeders approached the longstanding American Shetland Pony Club to create a separate registry just for the increasingly popular Minis. Today the AMHR still operates under the auspices of the club, which is based in Morton, IL. In addition to the AMHR, the American Shetland Pony Club is home to [four other registries](#) of small equines.

The AMHR recognizes two sizes of the American Miniature Horse:

- Division "A" includes horses up to 34 inches in height.
- Division "B" is for horses over 34 inches to 38 inches tall.

The AMHA, based in Alvarado, TX, was founded in 1978, with goals of promoting the American Miniature Horse breed and advocating "the use and perpetuation of a standard of equine excellence in miniature." The AMHA has a single registry for horses measuring 34 inches or less. It does not register taller equines.

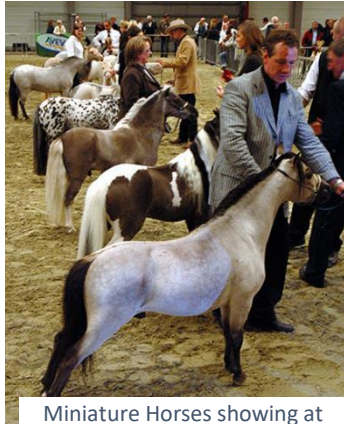
There are a couple practices common to many Mini Horse registries that differ from full-size horse groups. First, for establishing height, the AMHR, AMHA, and other Miniature registries, describe measurement as being from "the last hairs of the mane" rather than "at the withers." In general, inches or centimeters are used instead of hands as the unit of measure.



Source: [AMHA How to Measure a Mini](#)

Another Miniature registry practice is that eligible foals are issued only a temporary registration until their full-grown height is reached. If the adult height remains within the registry's requirements, owners

can apply for permanent registration. The AMHA, for example, offers permanent registration based on a horse's height at age 3.



Miniature Horses showing at AgriFlanders in Belgium

Conformation and temperament are important qualities for Miniature Horses, as with any breed. The AMHA describes its breed objective as “to produce the smallest possible perfect horse.” Minis are typically intelligent, curious, gentle, sensible, willing to cooperate and easy to train.

Desirable physical characteristics include refinement, balance, agility, strength, and alertness. Mini Horses typically have luxurious manes and tails. All coat colors, patterns, markings, and eye colors are acceptable. At horse shows or other gatherings of Minis, the wide variety of colors and patterns is notable and fun to see.

Ideally, a Mini will have the same proportions as a full-size light horse. This distinguishes it from ponies, which typically tend toward shorter legs and stockier bodies. (The newsletter's [Oct 2021](#) Fun Fact has more on the differences between horse and pony. See p. 5.)

What can the modern Miniature Horse do? The answer is: almost anything a larger equine can do and some things *only* a Mini can do.

The main limitation of the Mini is that it is not a riding horse. They can be beginning riding horses for small children, but, obviously, their size means they cannot carry larger kids or adults. Beyond that, however, these horses are wonderful family pets and agile show competitors.

The AMHR, AMHA and other breed organizations sponsor regional, national, and international Miniature Horse shows. They offer numerous categories of competition, including halter, showmanship, obstacle course, jumping (done in-hand), various driving classes, and more.



Pleasure Driving competition



Groundwork with Star

As we know at the Cheff Center, Mini Horses make excellent members of equine-assisted services programs. They are great with clients doing groundwork and grooming. They can be part of equine-assisted education and therapy programs. And they are perfect friendly visitors to nursing homes and other facilities, something not so feasible for their full-size counterparts.

Miniature horses have been trained to be service animals, including guide animals for people with visual impairments. They can be housebroken, which is a requirement for a service animal. This is still a relatively new area for Minis compared to the long history of service dogs. Advocates for Minis as service

animals point out that their life span of 25-35+ years means a person could be matched with a horse for, potentially, a much longer period than with a dog. That would mean fewer transitions to a new service animal and lower overall service animal training costs.

Miniature Horses need the same kinds of care as other equines, including forage, water, a windbreak or other outside shelter, and room to play and graze. Also required are veterinary and dental checks, as well as regular farrier visits.

There are a few health issues to watch for in Minis, including:

- Becoming overweight -- Minis process food efficiently and can tend to eat more than they need. Monitoring their intake and a grazing muzzle can help.
- Hyperlipidemia—Minis store fat easily. If they are off food for period of time, such as 24 hours, or stressed from illness or pregnancy, they can be at risk of fat metabolizing into the bloodstream, which can in turn cause liver damage or life-threatening liver failure. Fast treatment is important.
- Dystocia, or difficult birth – Birthing issues are fairly common in Mini mares because of their small size relative to the fetal head size. Cesarean sections are sometimes needed.
- Dwarfism – This is a genetic condition that can result in minor to very serious difficulties in offspring, such as short legs, twisted limbs, and organ problems. Genetic testing is available to identify dwarfism carriers and make informed breeding decisions.



Star at work

For more on our Star, see the [Oct 2021 volunteer newsletter](#), where Star is featured on p. 3.

An upcoming place to see Minis in action is the [Michigan State 4-H Horse Show](#) at MSU Aug 18-20, 2023. It will include the State 4-H Miniature Horse Show.

Sources and More Info

[American Miniature Horse Registry](#)

[American Miniature Horse Association](#)

[Falabella Miniature Horse Association](#)

[Mighty Miniature Horses](#) Equus Magazine, Jul 2019

[How to Measure a Mini Horse](#) AMHA's very precise instructions

[What's the Difference Between Miniature Horses and Ponies?](#) Horse Illustrated, Mar 2023

[12 Miniature Horse Health Risks](#) American Assn of Equine Practitioners

Photos [Wikimedia Commons](#) / [Share Alike license](#)

[Two horses](#) | [Mini horse show](#) | [Driving](#)

Borderline Personality Disorder

We are occasionally writing about some of the challenges and conditions that Cheff Center clients deal with. In this issue of the newsletter, we'll look at Borderline Personality Disorder.



By definition, personality is "the combination of characteristics or qualities that form an individual's distinctive character." We tend to interact and engage with others in fairly consistent ways which make up our personalities... people may be described as "shy," "outgoing," "meticulous," "aggressive," and so on. These are elements of our personalities.

Borderline personality disorder occurs when a person's reactions and responses are significantly different from the norm. People who suffer from BPD often have unstable emotions, as well as a wavering sense of who they are as a person. They tend to be very sensitive, and once riled up, have a very difficult time self-soothing or calming back down. Their level of sensitivity has been described as "an exposed nerve" when they become upset; they may do or say hurtful things to themselves or others or be impulsive and/or reckless. Their behavior during these episodes can cause turmoil in relationships with others, and afterward, bring a sense of shame and guilt, further affecting their self-esteem.

In order to diagnose BPD, mental health professionals group symptoms into nine main categories. A person must show at least five of the nine symptoms, and they must have been/be long-standing, usually beginning in adolescence. These nine categories are:

Fear of abandonment. People with BPD are often terrified of being left alone or abandoned, even if someone is leaving for a short period of time, or late in returning home. In response, they tend to cling on to that person, start fights, track movements or phone activities, or even physically block the person from leaving.

Unstable relationships. Relationships tend to be intense and short-lived. They seem to be absolutely perfect, or absolutely horrible, with no middle ground. This can feel like emotional whiplash for the other person, not being able to understand the rapid swings from one emotion to another.

Unclear or shifting self-image. A person with BPD may have an unstable sense of self. Sometimes they feel like they are a good person, at other times they may hate themselves or even consider themselves "evil." They often have no idea who they are or what they want in life, and may frequently change jobs, friends, values, partners, goals, etc.

Impulsive, self-destructive behaviors. Engaging in harmful, sensation-seeking behaviors may occur when someone with BPD is upset. They may impulsively spend money, binge eat, drive recklessly, shoplift, engage in risky sexual behaviors, or overdo with drugs and alcohol. They feel better in the moment, but in the long run, this is harmful to themselves and their relationships.

Self-harm. Because impulsivity is a large part of BPD, people may have suicidal behaviors or self-harm when they are feeling upset or anxious. Self-harm occurs when they harm themselves with no intent to take their own life. Examples of self-harm may include cutting, burning, etc. People with BPD have a significantly higher rate of self-harm and suicidal behavior than the general population. For this reason, any suicidal behavior needs to be dealt with immediately.

Extreme emotional swings. Unstable emotions and moods are very common with BPD. Although these may be strong swings in mood or emotions, they tend to pass fairly quickly, usually lasting a few minutes or hours, rather than the days or months that may come with depression or bipolar disorder.

Chronic feelings of emptiness. Feeling as if there is an emptiness inside them, a hole or void inside, is common with BPD. It may cause the person to feel like they are “nothing” or “nobody,” and they may try to fill the void with things like drugs, alcohol, food, sex, risky behavior, etc.

Explosive anger. People with BPD may have trouble controlling their anger once they become upset--yelling, throwing things, or becoming completely consumed by rage. It is not necessarily directed outwards, and they may spend a lot of time being angry at themselves.

Feeling suspicious or out of touch with reality. Paranoia and suspicious thoughts about others’ motives can be a part of BPD. When under stress, they may even lose touch with reality, which is known as dissociation. This causes them to feel foggy, spaced out, or as if they are outside of their own bodies.

Diagnosis most often occurs in late adolescence or early adulthood, although it may be diagnosed earlier than age 18. In those instances, there was often severe childhood trauma such as abuse, severe neglect, or abandonment.

BPD is rarely diagnosed on its own—there are several common co-occurring diagnoses, including but not limited to: depression or bipolar disorder, substance abuse, eating disorders, anxiety disorders, and ADHD. Many of the co-occurring disorders are effectively treatable with medications (and therapy if needed), but there is very little research showing that medication is helpful for BPD. Different types of Psychotherapy (talk therapy) seem to be the most effective way to manage BPD.

Dialectical Behavior Therapy and **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy** are two commonly used methods of therapy that focus on identifying current feelings and emotions occurring in certain situations. Once the client identifies what emotions they are dealing with or what situation has them upset, they can then work on changing their thought and/or behavior pattern, allowing them to move on or move forward. These new patterns will eventually help them form new habits and maintain emotional balance.

It is incredibly important that they are treated by a licensed mental health professional. A person who is not properly trained in dealing with BPD may be ineffective or even dangerous to the patient. It may also be beneficial for family members or loved ones to participate in therapy of their own to understand BPD and how to deal with and care for the patient.

If you would like to learn more about Borderline Personality Disorder, please click on the links below.

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/borderline-personality-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20370237>

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9762-borderline-personality-disorder-bpd>

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-disorders/borderline-personality-disorder.htm>

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/borderline-personality-disorder>

CHEFF UPDATES

HERD UPDATES – This week, we said goodbye to a great horse way too soon. Gunny, aka "The Buns," served on Cheff's staff for 8 years and touched the lives of countless staff, volunteers, and clients. He's left a hole in the barn and will be greatly missed.



If you would like to honor his memory in the form of a donation, we invite you to contribute to our [Emergency Horse Care Fund](#) so that we may continue to provide the best possible care to his herd mates, even in the event of an emergency.

♥ If you or someone you know has a SANE, SOUND, and SAFE horse who's looking for a new career and may be able to help fill some of the void left by Gunny's passing, we want to talk to you! Please give us a call at 269-731-4471.

THE SPRING TRAIL RIDE IS ON SATURDAY, MAY 20, 2023, FROM 8:00AM-3:00PM.

Join us for a day of fun and fresh air. This 'no frills' trail ride will take you on similar routes as our annual Ride-a-Thon, offering a short loop (3-4 miles) as well as a longer option (8-10 miles).

The cost is \$30/rider, and all proceeds go directly to Cheff's programs! Riders must pre-register and pay here: <https://www.cheffcenter.org/spring-ride>

SUMMER CAMP READ & RIDE IS JUNE 19-23. We still need volunteers, so if you would like to help, please contact [Sara Putney-Smith](#).

OUR NEXT VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION IS MAY 20, 2023, FROM 10:00AM-1:00PM.

Please make sure to invite your friends, family, and co-workers to attend!



cheff center's
SHINDIG

SHINDIG IS AUGUST 25TH! Here's how you can help: Volunteer during the week up to Shindig to get the entire facility Shindig-ready (it requires a lot of cleaning, some painting, power-washing, etc.) and on the evening of Shindig for the event itself. Lunches are provided during that week, and dinner is provided on Shindig night. It's a ton of fun!

We also need donations of all types—goods and services to auction off, monetary donations, etc. Know someone with a restaurant or store that would like to help us out? Ask them for a tax-deductible donation! We use donated items to make themed gift baskets for our silent auction, and we get very creative putting all sorts of interesting items together. If you would like to put together and donate a gift basket, we would love it: [Shindig Item Donation Form](#). They just need to be a minimum of \$150 value.

MAY FUN FACT

It's spring, and the horses are coming back to Mackinac Island!

From mid-April through June, the island's horses return from their winter rest, most of them having spent the winter in Pickford, MI, in the UP.

After the season winds down around Labor Day, all but about 16-18 horses take a walk down to the ferry, ride the boat to the mainland, and are trailered to their winter home where they can roam free on a large farm.

At peak season, there are more than 500 horses living on the island. Approximately 350-400 are draft horses that pull carriages and move freight. The remainder are rental or privately owned horses.

In a typical workday, carriage horses work six to eight hours a day; saddle horses range from two to six hours daily.

The horse care team consists of barn staff, certified farriers that focus on horseshoes and hoof care, and five rotating veterinarians that help ensure the horses stay healthy and sound.

For more information: [When horses return in spring – Mackinac Island](#)



MAY BIRTHDAYS

Kelly B
Judi C
Barb E
Kristi R

Reagan B
Betsie C
Dave E
Lanie S

Emily B
Charley D
Michael N
Patricia S



2022 Client Statistics

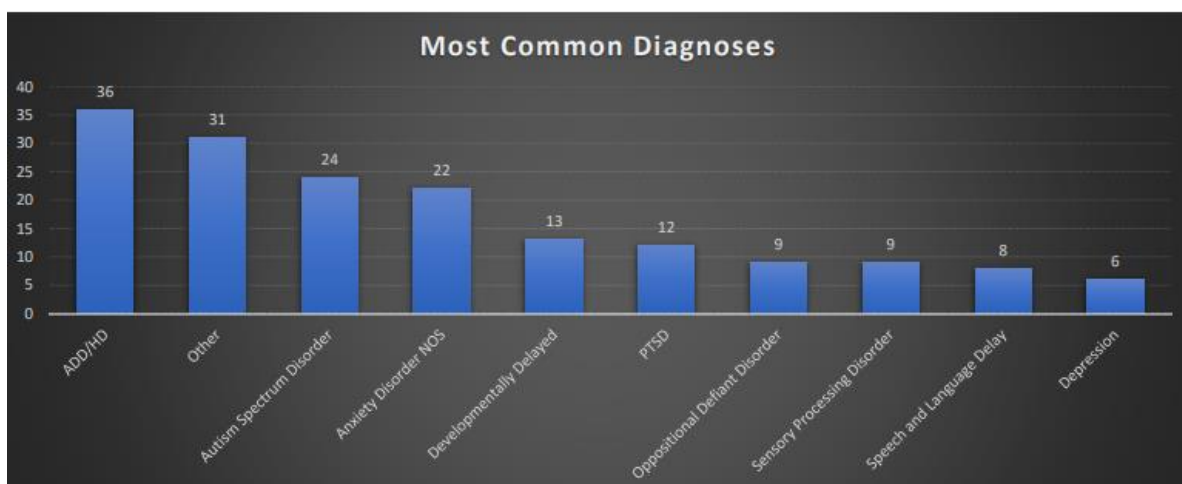
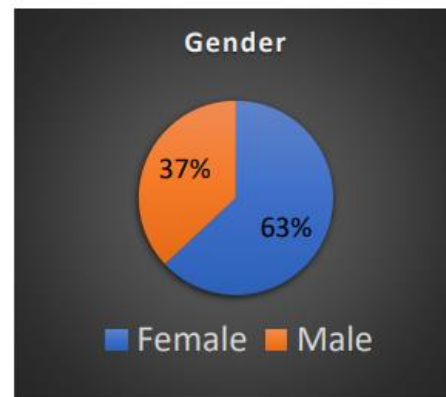
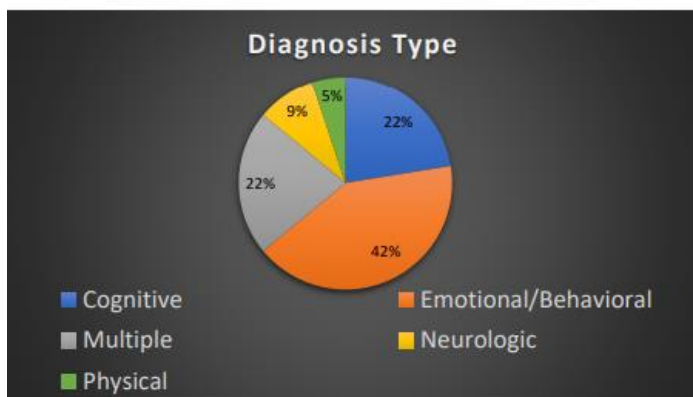
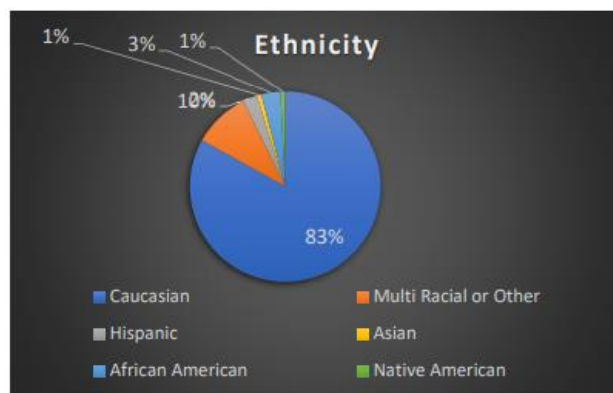
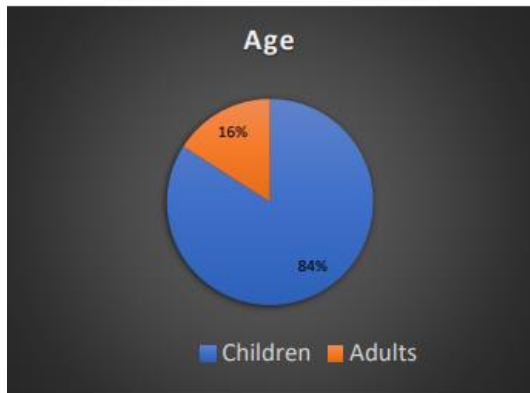
(As of 12/31/2022)

Total Clients: 504

- 309 Addiction/Recovery Clients
- 33 U.S. Veteran Clients
- 84 Therapeutic Riding Clients
- 15 Hippotherapy Clients
- 48 Read and Ride Riders
- 8 Ground Program Clients
- 7 Pegasus Project Clients

Chart Information

The following charts include information derived from Therapeutic Riding and Read and Ride clients and does not take into account our Veteran, Hippotherapy, and Addiction/Recovery programs which fluctuate



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

Any Questions/Comments/Suggestions?

If so, you can contact Sara Putney-Smith, Volunteer Administrator, at sara@cheffcenter.org

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

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