



April 2022 Issue 19

# CHEFF CENTER VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

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## APRIL VOLUNTEER PROFILE: MARIANNE STIER



Tess and Marianne

Marianne has been a Cheff Center volunteer since August 2018. She had just moved to Battle Creek from the Detroit area and was interested in getting involved in her new community when she read about Cheff in a local newspaper. She signed up for an orientation and started volunteering the next month.

She's been "horse crazy" ever since she was young. As a kid in Metro Detroit, Marianne tried to convince her parents to get her a horse: it could live in the garage and graze in the back yard. Simple! Alas, it wasn't to be, but her interest continued.

In her early twenties, Marianne did get a horse of her own -- an Appaloosa-Paint mare that she boarded at her sister's farm, about two hours away. A few years later, she got a Palomino mare that she was able to keep just around the corner from where she lived.

When she no longer had a horse, Marianne kept up with trail riding in different places, including the Double J Ranch north of Muskegon and weekend riding/camping outings in SE Michigan. She also took an adventurous trip to a Colorado cattle ranch that included some work on horseback plus several day-long rides through the mountains.

Marianne worked for many years in project management for Trinity Health, a large health care system based in Livonia. Since retiring and moving to Calhoun County, she and her husband David have enjoyed building their vegetable garden and flower beds each year. They recently decided to try out electric bicycles. They have a sweet rescue dog, a cantankerous old cat, and keep busy with two grown children, their spouses, and four grandkids.

When living on the east side of the state, Marianne volunteered as a mentor at a home for at-risk youth. Her work focused on helping the kids get into college. Throughout her life, Marianne has had personal experience with people with disabilities. Some of her siblings have learning disabilities. Her

mother and younger sister suffered long-term disabilities from a serious car crash.

What are some of Marianne’s favorite things about volunteering at Cheff? She “loves working with the horses, the kids, the Silver Saddles group, Read & Ride, and special camps.” And she really enjoys meeting the other volunteers, with their varied and interesting backgrounds and stories.

Regarding the herd, “There are so many wonderful horses at Cheff!” Marianne said. She has often worked with Tess, who is one of her favorites. She has a special connection with Winston, too. “I loved watching him bond with a young girl during the Pegasus program. She went from being ‘a little scared of him’ to riding independently and tackling jumps in a very short time,” Marianne described. (Pegasus is a Cheff camp for tween and teen girls.)

She noted that it’s special to get to see the horse-human bond take place in different ways at Cheff. “Sometimes you see that a restless horse will settle down and be very gentle when their rider appears, even if the rider is excited and jumping around. The Cheff horses know what their job is and they’re very good at it.”

In addition to volunteering in classes, Marianne has helped with Cheff special events and the orientation team. She was on the horse-care team that was just starting when COVID-19 arrived; she’s hoping it will return at some point.

Finally, Marianne is a big part of the volunteer newsletter team. She writes several items each month and could be described as the “art and production manager”, as she designed the newsletter layout and puts the pieces together to create each month’s issue. Her past life as a project manager comes in handy for work on the newsletter, too.

Thank you, Marianne, for all your great work and dedication to Cheff!



# HORSE BREED OF THE MONTH: THE MORGAN HORSE

This month, we continue exploring the breeds in the Cheff herd with the Morgan horse!



The beautiful Morgan in action

One of the most popular horse breeds is the congenial and versatile Morgan horse. Sometimes known as "the horse that chooses you," it's an exceptionally cooperative breed with an eagerness to please its humans. Adaptable to virtually any situation and use, the Morgan is generally easy to keep. Equestrians of all levels, including children, are typically able to handle a Morgan horse.

Smaller than many other full-size horse breeds, Morgan horses average from 14 hands (56 inches) to 15 hands (60 inches) tall and tend to weigh between 900 and 1,000 pounds. It has large, expressive eyes, high head and tail carriage, and a thick mane and tail. The Morgan's strong, compact body and refined features, as well as its regal posture, are all distinctive breed traits. Proud and alert, these horses tend to carry their heads and tails higher than many other breeds. Life expectancy averages 30 years.



Typical Morgan Horse 1887

The Morgan horse was one of the first horse breeds to be developed in the United States and is known as an American breed. All Morgans trace back to a single foundation sire, a stallion named Figure, who was born in West Springfield, Massachusetts in 1789. In 1792, Figure was given to a man named Justin Morgan, a Vermont music teacher, composer and farmer as a debt payment. The horse later came to be identified by the name of this particular owner, and "the Justin Morgan horse" evolved into the name of the breed.

No one knows for certain what Figure's pedigree was, but it's generally accepted that it was the offspring of horses with Arabian, Thoroughbred, and perhaps Welsh cob or Friesian bloodlines. Figure was known for his [prepotency](#), passing on his distinctive looks, conformation, temperament, versatility, and athleticism, regardless of the mare he was bred to. He became a greatly desired stud. In 1821, Figure was kicked by another horse and later died of his injuries.

Since the beginning, the Morgan has been an all-purpose horse with a long resume of abilities and applications. Before industrialization changed the landscape of agriculture and transportation, the Morgan was valued as much for plowing the fields as it was for pulling the family buggy. Morgans were used as trotting horses on the racetrack and cavalry mounts in wartime. They also were hitched to wagons or ridden by pioneers who were traveling to the American West. Today, Morgans can be found competing in almost every equestrian sport. Morgan horse shows often feature sidesaddle classes, trotting races under saddle, driving classes, dressage, jumping, and more—all showcasing the outstanding versatility of the breed.



Morgans come in all equine colors. They are usually dark, solid colors, such as bay, black, and chestnut. However, some breeders specialize in producing Morgans with palomino, pinto, gray, dun, roan, and another less common coloring. There is no official breed standard for this aspect of the Morgan's appearance.

At Cheff, Harvey epitomizes the versatility and congeniality of the Morgan. Harvey won the 2015 SmartPak Horse of the Month after this entry was submitted:



*"He is one of the few horses that works in every aspect of our programming. He's a stellar Therapeutic Riding horse-solid as a rock. We often use him for difficult riders that tend to make other horses nervous. The screamers, the "jumpers" (kids who just might jump off their horse at any given time,) the wiggle worms, clients who are terrified to ride, and first time independent riders. He's great in the Hippotherapy program, tolerating clients sitting backwards, sideways, kneeling, standing, etc., and is just as easy to ground drive as to lead. He will stand for hours being groomed, bathed, decorated, painted, and fussed with in our ground program and camps. He is a great choice for 'parts of the horse' labeling game, because he'll stand forever with notecards taped everywhere. He's also a favorite for our veteran ground program because he's easy to ground drive and they get a*

*kick out of him when he steals their doughnuts and cookies! If we could clone him, we most certainly would have a barn full of Harveys!"*

For more information on this wonderful breed: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morgan\\_horse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morgan_horse)  
<https://www.morganhorse.com>



Harvey, outstanding in his field!

## The World of Saddle Pads

### Part Two: Focus on English and Western Saddle Pads

Last month, we looked at saddle pads in general, noting their many functions such as cushioning, cooling and keeping the saddle clean. This month, we'll look more closely at features of common English and Western pads, with a focus on those we use at the Cheff Center.

### English Saddle Pads

Three types of English saddle pads that we use at Cheff are featured below, along with a fourth type not used at Cheff, but which you are likely to see elsewhere in English riding.

#### 1. All-Purpose English Saddle Pad – used with an [all-purpose English saddle](#).

Material: All-purpose pads are often made of quilted cotton, polyester or a blend on top and bottom with a layer of cushioning in between. The cushion layer may be additional fabric or a more high-tech material such as foam or gel.

Straps: Many all-purpose pads have two straps on each side, typically made of nylon.



All-purpose English saddle pad

At the top is the **billet strap**, which gets looped around one of the billets under the saddle's flap and secured with the Velcro that's on the strap. This connection keeps the pad from slipping out of place.

The lower strap is the **girth loop**. The girth goes through the loop, helping to keep saddle pad, saddle and girth aligned properly.

Sizing and shape: All-purpose pads are sized in terms of **spine length** (measured from front to back along the center fold) and **drop length** (measured from the center fold to the lower edge). An example size would be: 23" spine x 19" drop. In general, saddle pads should extend past the saddle by at least an inch on all edges.

All-purpose pads often have a **contoured shape**, meaning the top line of the pad is curved rather than straight, following the horse's natural line and providing wither relief.

## 2. Dressage Saddle Pad – used with a [dressage saddle](#).

Dressage pads are similar to all-purpose pads in terms of materials used, components like billet straps, method of sizing, and contoured top line.

What distinguishes dressage pads from all-purpose pads is their shape. As you can see in the pictures at right and above, dressage pads have a square look, with a relatively straight front edge, while all-purpose pads curve out along the front edge.



Dressage saddle pad

This shape difference parallels the difference between dressage and all-purpose saddles. The saddles are shaped differently because dressage requires a different sitting position and different saddle support compared to general English riding.

## 3. English Half Pad – can be used with all-purpose and dressage saddles.

Half Pads are typically used as an additional pad on top of a full-size pad to add cushioning or to fix a minor saddle fit problem. They are much shorter on the sides than a regular pad, hence the name half pad.



English half pad with cotton top, sheepskin lining and rolled front edge

**Material:** Half pads are available in many different materials, such as sheepskin, cotton quilting with a fleece backing, various types of foam and gel. Some include pockets where foam **shims** can be inserted as needed to improve saddle fit.

**Straps:** Many **half pads include billet straps**. They **do not have girth loops** because half pads do not extend down far enough on the sides to reach the girth.

**Sizing and shape:** Half pads are sized by spine length. Drop length is sometimes used as well.

Many half pads include a **rolled edge** of wool or synthetic fleece, which helps keep the saddle in place (and also adds an elegant look).

## 4. English Fitted Saddle Pad -- can be used with all-purpose and dressage saddles.

We do not use fitted saddle pads at Cheff, but they are often seen in shows and elsewhere in English riding. As you can see in the photo at right, they are [shaped so only the edges](#) of the pad are visible around the saddle.



English fitted saddle pad

**A little more on straps** -- The photos below show billet straps and girth loops in use.



### **Western Saddle Pads**

The most common Western pads, including those we use at Cheff, are nearly square in shape when laid out flat. Like English pads, they can be made from a variety of materials.

Material: Two common designs for Western pads are:

1) Pad is made from sturdy **felt**, with a wool covering. The felt itself is made of compressed wool or a compressed wool/synthetic blend.

2) Pad is a combination of a cloth **blanket top** over felt or fleece. The blanket top usually incorporates a colorful design out of woven wool or a synthetic fabric.

Western saddle pads also come in versions with a grippy bottom layer to keep the saddle in place. Some incorporate various types of foam or gel for added cushioning.

Sizing and shape: Western pads are sized by **length, width and thickness**. An example size would be: 30" x 30" x ¾".

Western pads can have a **contoured top line** to avoid pressure on the withers or a straight top line. Over time, a straight top will break in and conform to a horse's shape.

Other features: Western pads may have a **withers cutout** (see picture 1 above), a **withers cutback** (see picture 2 above), or neither of these.

Most Western pads have a protective strip near the bottom edge on each side called the **wear leather**, which prevents the saddle and rider's boots from rubbing directly on the cloth part of the pad.



1) Wool/felt Western pad with contoured top line, withers cutout, and wear leather



2) Blanket top Western pad with straight top line, withers cutback, and wear leather



### Special Pads – ThinLine, Back on Track, and non-slip pads

The **ThinLine** company describes its material as “a unique, open-cell foam technology that distributes shock, weight and heat laterally along the saddle pad without compressing. The result is 95% shock absorption.” This has benefits for the spines (and other parts) of both horse and rider.



ThinLine half pad

**ThinLine pads are placed directly under the saddle** and on top of another English or Western pad.

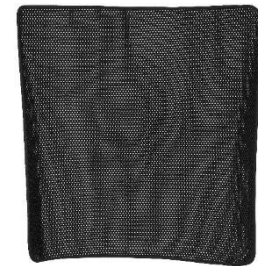
**Back on Track** pads are made of a fabric the company calls Weltex. Weltex is made from polyester and polypropylene fibers into which ceramic particles are fused. The ceramic absorbs the body’s energy radiation and then reflects the energy back as a far-infrared wavelength. This heat radiation increases blood circulation and helps tissue health and pain reduction



Back on Track all-purpose English saddle pad

At Cheff, we use both English and Western Back on Track saddle pads. These **pads are used as the bottom layer, directly on the horse’s back.**

**Non-slip pads** are thin layers of a kind of grippy mesh that help keep the saddle and other saddle pads in place.



Non-slip “grippy” pad

### Cleaning

It is essential to clean saddle pads regularly. Built-up dirt, horse hair, and sweat can become irritating to the horse and cause pads to deteriorate.

Cotton and poly all-purpose pads can typically be tossed in a washing machine. Foam and gel pads can be wiped off with water or gentle cleanser. Other types of pads may need hand washing or hosing down with a spray nozzle.

Proper drying is also critical so pads retain their shape. A nice overview of cleaning and drying methods is [here](#).

### Some Cheff Examples

We’re lucky at Cheff that our staff experts have figured out the right tack for each of our horses and we have a variety of English and Western saddle pads in our own tack room.



You may have found that when you arrive for a volunteer shift, many times tack has been pulled and is waiting at each horse's stall, so all you need to do is groom the horse and tack up for class.

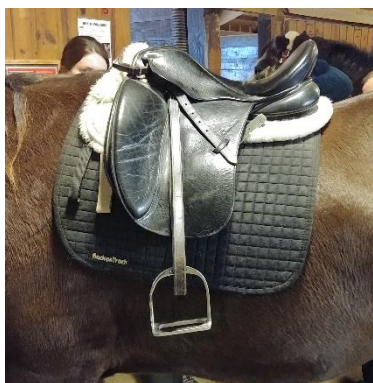
Sometimes, however, you might need to grab an additional item or even gather all the tack for a particular horse. To help with this, **there is a list of English and Western tack assigned to each horse.** The list can be found on a clipboard hanging near the whiteboard in the barn and also on the wall just inside the tack room.

Here are two examples from the list:

### Awesome's English Tack

Awesome *polo wraps on front	7, EBOT, ½ pad	His girth
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English half pad  
English Back on Track pad  
Saddle #7



### Monte's English Tack

Monte	26, EBOT, thinline	His girth
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ThinLine pad  
English Back on Track pad  
Saddle #26 (not shown in photo)



As with all volunteer activities at Cheff, **please don't hesitate to ask questions!** Things change with saddle pads and all the other tack, so don't worry if you can't find an item or aren't sure about something. Our instructors, other staff and fellow volunteers are always ready to help.

### Sources / More Info

It's educational (and fun) to browse tack vendor saddle pad sections and read the descriptions!

Dover Saddlery [English & Western](#) Stateline Tack [English](#) | [Western](#)

SmartPak Equine [English & Western](#) [Back on Track](#) [ThinLine](#)

[The Science of Saddle Pads](#) -- USDF Connection Oct 2016

[How to Pick the Best Saddle Pad for Your Horse's Needs](#) -- Stable Management Mar 2017

Photo sources: Vendor sites; [billet strap](#); [billet strap/girth loop](#)



*A Thank You from Cheff Executive Director, Tara East*

*There are three things I am most grateful for at the Cheff Therapeutic Riding Center: First is our mission—it is wonderful that we are set up to help those that really need it. Second, our wonderful staff and horses. Third, and perhaps most importantly, our volunteers. I am so grateful that we have such committed, well-trained, and kind volunteers. The Cheff Center would be at a great loss if we didn't have such dedicated people supporting us.*

*There is no way that we can thank our volunteers enough! They come on cold days, snowy days, rainy days, and in the heat of the summer, always wearing a smile on their faces. I just want to make a formal thank you to our volunteers for making a difference in our clients' lives—you are kind, giving and compassionate. We at the Cheff are very thankful and appreciative to have you!*



*“Volunteers are the only human beings on the face of the earth who reflect this nation’s compassion, unselfish caring, patience, and just plain loving one another.” –  
Erma Bombeck*

## CHEFF UPDATES

### **Spring Trail Ride – May 21st, 2022 - RAIN OR SHINE**

Bring your horse and join us for a morning of fresh air and trail riding!

There are two trail options - a "short loop" (3 miles) and a "long loop" (8 miles).

Check in opens at 8 a.m., and riders must start on the trail by Noon. Pre-register online and find more information at: <https://www.cheffcenter.org/spring-ride>

**Shindig News** – The Shindig is happening this August 26th, and volunteer help with preparation and during the actual event is needed to make it successful.

If you can help by donating any items or services such as gift certificates to restaurants, activities, etc., we can put them together in themed gift baskets with a value between \$150-\$200. Contact [Sara Putney-Smith](#) for any questions.

Donations are tax-deductible!

**VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION REMINDER:** The next orientations are scheduled for May 14<sup>th</sup>, and June 25<sup>th</sup> from 10am-1pm.

**As always, if you know anyone that would be a great volunteer, please encourage them to fill out the [VOLUNTEER APPLICATION](#) on our website and come to the orientation!!**

**GLCS Read & Ride Camp is June 20-24** – Volunteers are needed to make this successful! Let Sara Putney-Smith know if you'd like to be part of this rewarding week of learning and fun!

**The Tack Sale** on March 26<sup>th</sup> had a great turnout...thanks for your support!



## April Fun Fact

Every autumn, Jane Dotchin, along with her dog and pony, make a 1000 km (600 miles) round trip from their home in Hexham, Northumberland in Great Britain, to the north of Scotland. At 80 years old, Jane has missed only one year, in 2001, due to the foot and mouth disease outbreak among livestock in England; she just made the trip on a bike instead, tucking her dog companion into a pannier and pedaling north.

Her companions the last few years were a terrier named Dinky, and Diamond, her 13-year-old Irish cob, a draft horse breed known for their feisty personalities. The ride takes approximately 7 weeks, since Jane stops along the way to visit friends she sees only on these rides.

She carries a tent, her food - mostly oatcakes, porridge, and hard cheese - and a simple cell phone for emergencies. Jane doesn't need a map since she knows the backroads and trails so well.

Jane has only 2 complaints: the increasing litter on the road, and the increasing number of RVs on the road, especially those that don't seem to realize just how much space they take up. Overall though, Jane enjoys meeting wonderful people wherever she goes.

Jane Dotchin has written books about her journeys, including *Journeys Through England with a Pack Pony*. She has a new book coming out in 2022.

For more information and videos of Jane and her companions:

[Jane Dotchin's Journey](#)

[Jane's 2021 trip with Dinky and Diamond](#)

[Jane, Dinky and](#)

[Diamond's Journey](#)



Jane Dotchin, Dinky the terrier and Diamond, the Irish cob

April is Global Volunteer Month!!



April 17-23, 2022

Happy National Volunteer week!

## APRIL BIRTHDAYS

**Deb B**

**Mark J**

**Rebecca LF**

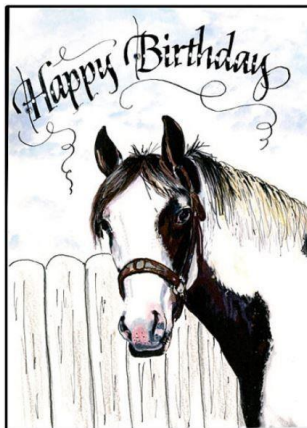
**Kassidy S**

**Linda I**

**Morgan K**

**Rachel M**

**Hannah S**



## 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!

## Amazon Smile

Anytime you order online from **Amazon.com**, the Cheff Center can receive benefits. Go to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) and register—we are one of the 1000s of charities that you can choose from, and we will get 0.5% of your qualified purchases with no cost to you! To find out more, visit: <https://smile.amazon.com/gp/chpf/about>

## Harding's

For those of you who shop at Harding's, if you join their Community Rewards program and select the Cheff Center as your organization of choice, we will receive a rebate based on your purchase amounts. Please let your friends and family know—every little bit helps!!!  
For more information, click on the link below.

<https://www.hardings.com/savings-and-rewards/community-rewards/>

## Rite Aid

For the last few years, Rite Aid has partnered with Cheff, and now has generously extended their shopper rewards program to Cheff! Please consider signing up as a Cheff Supporter, it's just one quick form: [RXfundraising.com - Support Your Cause!](https://www.rxfundraising.com)

## Do you have any Questions/Comments/Suggestions?

If so, you can contact Sara Putney-Smith, Volunteer Administrator, at [sara@cheffcenter.org](mailto:sara@cheffcenter.org)  
Contributions by: Emily Kalin, Ann Lindsay, Ashton Maguire, Morgan Meulman, Sara Putney-Smith, Marianne Stier

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