



May 2021 Issue 9

CHEFF CENTER VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

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VOLUNTEER PROFILE: Lynn Weimeister



Awesome and Lynn, dressed up as a ladybug for Halloween

Lynn has had a connection with the Cheff Center for many years. She and her late husband, Don Gilmer, were long-time friends and supporters of the organization. It was one of the Cheff events they attended that inspired Lynn to consider becoming more involved. She saw a presentation about the center's programs and decided it would be a great place to volunteer once she retired and had some

flexible time. She stayed with that plan and has now been a volunteer for almost nine years.

Like many of us, Lynn has always loved horses. As a kid growing up in Kalamazoo, she tried to convince her father to get a horse for her. It wasn't to be at that point, though she did get some horse time in with a family friend's pony and at a riding place that used to be near Milham Park.

Lynn went to college at Michigan State University and while there she got a job at the Capitol. This was the start of a career in Lansing that included 26 years as the Director of Government Relations for Beaumont Hospital. Horses continued to be one of Lynn's passions, so it was a treat when a friend got her four riding lessons at a stable in East Lansing as a birthday present. The lessons were a great change of pace from a hectic job -- like weekly therapy, Lynn said!

She continued taking lessons after those first four. A couple years later, at age 50, Lynn finally realized her father wasn't going to buy her a horse so she bought her own--a Quarter Horse-POA cross named Cheyenne Gold. When her husband, who was a state representative for 22 years and worked in state government,

took a job in Kalamazoo, Lynn boarded "Chey" in Lansing. With her horse nearby, Lynn could easily visit him and ride in the evening after work.

What stands out to Lynn about volunteering at Cheff? She loves working with the other volunteers and the horses. She also appreciates the positive environment and sense of teamwork that exists because we're all glad to be there and are working together for the same purpose.

Lynn noted that as a retiree, it's interesting to have a chance to work with volunteers of all ages and to meet students, like those in the WMU med and nursing programs, who are getting experience that will be useful in their occupations.

It's especially rewarding to see the value that therapeutic riding provides for so many people, Lynn said. She's worked with clients who made great progress in their first session, something many of us have also experienced. And as a long-time volunteer, she's been able to know clients for months and years and see the difference riding can make over time.

Favorite horses? All of them! Lynn is especially fond of – and has frequently worked with – Tina, Monte, Awesome and Winston. And she often thinks of Shotgun, who was special to all the volunteers who knew him.

Lynn has worked with most of Cheff's different riding groups -- weeknight classes, Read & Ride, veterans, the Silver Saddles senior riders class, and PATH instructor certification sessions. She is also a member of the Shindig Committee. Thank you so much, Lynn, for your valued time, talents and great contributions to Cheff. We can't wait to be back in the barn and arena with you!



Lynn, and a happy Tina



April Showers Bring May Flowers



HORSE OF THE MONTH: MONTE



Monte looking great in purple!

Monte came to the Cheff Center in June 2017. Originally, he was bred to be a ranch/cow horse but he never got the memo on that--he's a little too easy going for ranch work. He was then purchased by a woman who loved his look (who doesn't?), however, she was a dressage rider and Monte didn't quite enjoy that either (again, he missed the memo!).

She kept him as a leisure and trail riding horse but as many of us know, boarding a horse can be quite expensive. She decided that since she couldn't use him doing what she really loved—dressage—she would donate him to us. We are so glad that she did! (Fun fact: Monte and Tina came from the same barn!)

Monte is an APHA (American Paint Horse Association) gelding who stands 15.3 hands and weighs about 1300 pounds. He is a handsome fellow with a very expressive face and beautiful dark brown markings.

If you have worked with Monte, you will know that he doesn't like the mounting procedure or trotting in-hand—he can get a little nippy. If you give him a treat during the mounting procedure, he will stand quietly and won't nip (just make sure you okay that with the instructor).

Monte loves going on trail rides, and he prefers to be out front. He also definitely has his “people”, and if you are one of them you will certainly know it!

Monte gets acupuncture routinely when we are holding classes—he is uneven in his topline, which means his hind end is higher than his front end. Because of this, his shoulders get very tight and sore. Seeing a horse get an acupuncture treatment is quite the sight, and thankfully it seems to help him tremendously. If you would like to help him feel better, he could use a Back on Track shoulder guard to help keep those muscles loose and relaxed.

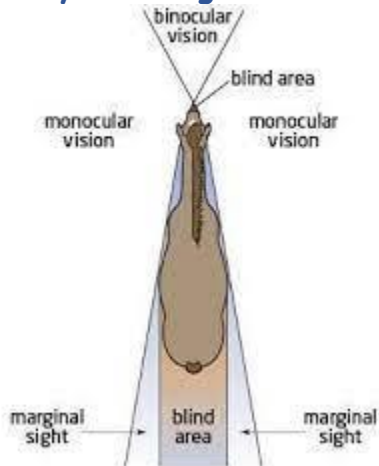
Monte's favorite snacks are pretty much any and all, but he especially loves carrots! Next time you are in the barn make sure to say “Hi” to handsome Monte, and maybe even bring him a carrot!



Monte getting his acupuncture treatment, with Jake

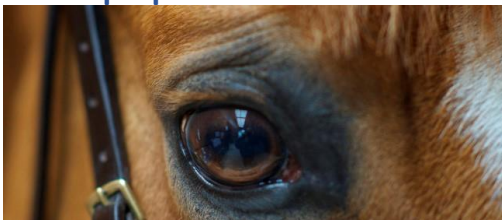
May Fun Fact

The equine eye is one of the largest of any land mammal. Because horses' eyes are on the sides of their head, they can see nearly 360 degrees at one time.



This provides a horse with the best chance to spot predators. The horse's vision has two "blind spots," or areas where the animal cannot see: in front of the face, making a cone that comes to a point at about 3-4 feet in front of the horse, and right behind its head, which extends over the back and behind the tail when standing with the head facing straight forward. Therefore, as a horse jumps an obstacle, it briefly disappears from sight right before the horse takes off.

Horses are not colorblind; they are better at seeing yellows and greens than purples and violets.



*HAPPY
MAY!!*



EDUCATION CORNER: DOWN SYNDROME

Down syndrome is the most commonly occurring chromosomal condition. Approximately one in every 700 babies in the United States is born with Down syndrome – about 6,000 each year. Down syndrome occurs when an individual has a full or partial extra copy of chromosome 21, caused by a random error in cell division. This additional genetic material alters the course of development and causes the characteristics associated with Down syndrome.

The incidence of births of children with Down syndrome increases with the age of the mother, but due to higher fertility rates in younger women, 80% of children with Down syndrome are born to women under 35 years of age. Down syndrome occurs in people of all races and economic levels.

People with Down syndrome have an increased risk for certain medical conditions such as congenital heart defects, respiratory and hearing problems, Alzheimer's disease, childhood leukemia and thyroid conditions. Many of these conditions are now treatable, so most people with Down syndrome lead healthy lives.

A few of the common physical traits of Down syndrome are low muscle tone, small stature, an upward slant to the eyes, and a single deep crease across the center of the palm. In addition, physical development in children with Down syndrome is often slower than development of children without Down syndrome. For example, because of poor muscle tone, a child with Down syndrome may be slow to learn to turn over, sit, stand, and walk.

Despite these delays, children with Down syndrome can learn to participate in physical exercise activities like other children. It may take children with Down syndrome longer than other children to reach developmental milestones, but they will eventually meet many of these milestones. Every person with Down syndrome is a unique individual and may possess these characteristics to different degrees, or not at all.

Cognitive impairment, i.e., problems with thinking and learning, is common in people with Down syndrome and usually ranges from mild to moderate. Only rarely is Down syndrome associated with severe cognitive impairment.

Other common cognitive and behavioral problems may include:

- Short attention span
- Poor judgment
- Impulsive behavior
- Slow learning
- Delayed language and speech development

Most children with Down syndrome develop the communication skills they need, although it might take longer for them to do so compared with other children. Early, ongoing speech and language interventions to encourage expressive language and improve speech are particularly helpful.

Quality educational programs, a stimulating home environment, good health care and positive support from family, friends, and the community, enable people with Down syndrome to lead fulfilling and productive lives.

Equine-assisted services may be one intervention used to help children and adults with Down syndrome who have physical, cognitive, social, and behavioral issues. This may include equine-assisted therapy directed by a physical, occupational or speech therapist, or therapeutic horseback riding led by a certified therapeutic riding instructor.

Before participating in such services, it is important that atlantoaxial instability (AAI) has been ruled out with current x-rays and/or the participant has no signs or symptoms of this condition per their physician. Atlantoaxial instability (AAI) is a condition that affects the bones in the upper spine or neck under the base of the skull. The joint between the upper spine and base of the skull is called the atlantoaxial joint. In people with Down syndrome, the ligaments (connections between muscles) are “lax” or floppy. This can result in AAI where the bones are less stable and can damage the spinal cord.

Multiple benefits can be received in a single session. Horseback riding improves balance, coordination, endurance, and core strength. Sitting astride a horse requires core strength to maintain balance and sit upright. A therapeutic riding lesson can last from 20-60 minutes, requiring endurance and muscle strength to stay on the horse. Riding also requires coordination of muscles and limbs to sit up, hold reins, use legs, cross the mid-line to stretch, turn head, and so much more. The physical aspect of horseback riding can have huge benefits for all clients, particularly clients with Down syndrome with low muscle tone. Therapeutic horseback riding provides a number of cognitive benefits, including spatial awareness, sequencing, and focused attention.

Horses also help with self-regulation, self-control, trust, and building confidence. Horses require certain behaviors around them to feel comfortable. Using the horse as the example, instructors and/or therapists can help show clients how to act at the barn and how to carry that into other aspects of their life. Mastering horseback riding or working around a horse can be a huge confidence boost to riders and build their trust in themselves and others.

Life expectancy for people with Down syndrome has increased dramatically in recent decades – from 25 in 1983 to **60** today. People with Down syndrome attend school, work, participate in decisions that affect them, have meaningful relationships, vote and contribute to society in many wonderful ways.

For more information on Down syndrome, visit NDSS and the websites listed below that were used to gather this information.

National Down Syndrome Society: www.ndss.org
<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/downsyndrome>
[Down Syndrome and Therapeutic Riding](https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/down-syndrome)
<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/down-syndrome>
<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/factsheets/downsyndrome>
<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/down/conditioninfo/symptoms>
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17474591/>
<https://www.pathintl.org/component/content/article/27-resources/general/194-eaat-benefits>



May Birthdays



Marissa A

Alice C

Barb E

Bradley F

Brooklyn J

Barbara L

Sarah B

Thomas D

Dave E

Beth H

Mac K

Dwight P

Emily B

Sarah D

Kristy F

Nancy H

Zac L

HAPPY MOTHERS DAY!!!



CHEFF NOTES

Cheff is working towards re-opening!

As always, Cheff is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for our clients, caregivers, volunteers, and staff. With continued concerns surrounding COVID-19 (Coronavirus) we made the difficult decision to pause client services.

Important Information:

- All program staff has been vaccinated and we have a goal of beginning another phased reopening mid-May.
- We will continue to stay engaged with clients, volunteers and supporters via social media and email updates (follow us @CheffCenter via Facebook and Instagram!)
- Our team will be working hard on new and exciting e-learning projects for clients and volunteers.

Stay healthy and stay tuned. Can't wait to see you back in the saddle!

Cheff's Spring Trail Ride

You are invited to bring your horse and join us for a morning of fresh air and trail riding on May 16th, 2021 – rain or shine. Check in runs from 8 a.m. to 12 noon. There are two trail options, a "short loop" and a "long loop", around 3 and 8 miles respectively.

Riders must pre-register and pay using the form below - \$30/Rider, no refunds will be given.

Click on [REGISTRATION LINK](#)

Funds raised at this event specifically support our herd by financing vet visits, farrier care, feed, supplements, equipment, fly spray, etc. This event is ESPECIALLY critical to Cheff in the era of Covid, as the pandemic has severely limited program income and necessitated canceling all other major fundraisers. Please help us keep our doors open for those in the community who need our services now more than ever...Thank You!

Please note: Unlike our Ride-a-Thon, this is strictly a trail ride - no food, t-shirts, or prizes with this event! For more information: [Cheff Center Spring Ride](#)

Spring Cleaning?

Cheff relies HEAVILY on donations- if you have any gently used horse equipment- saddles, pads, blankets, sheets, (even half bottles of fly spray) we'd love to take them off your hands!

Amazon Smile

Please remember that when you order online from **Amazon.com**, the Cheff Center can receive benefits when you do. Go to 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!

To find out more, visit: <https://smile.amazon.com/gp/chpf/about>

And if you really want to help, ask your friends and family to do the same. We thank you in advance, as every penny counts for us, especially at this time.

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. For more information, click on the link below.

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

Again, we thank you in advance, and please let your friends and family know—every little bit helps!!!

Questions/comments?

Please contact Sara Putney-Smith, Volunteer Administrator, sara@cheffcenter.org

Contributions by: Emily Kalin, Ann Lindsay, Sara Putney-Smith, Marianne Stier, Char Swain

If you have suggestions for future newsletters, or are interested in submitting articles, please contact Sara Putney-Smith.

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