



September 2021 Issue 13

CHEFF CENTER VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

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VOLUNTEER PROFILE: Carla Cook & Ava Enders



Carla, Art and Ava

We all know how fun volunteering can be, but how fun would it be to do it with someone you love?

Here at the Cheff Center we have had several parent/child, married partners and grandparent/grandchild teams. What a great way to spend time together doing an activity that you both enjoy! Carla Cook and Ava Enders started volunteering approximately 5 years ago when Ava was only 9 years old! (Yes, children younger than 13 can volunteer if there is an adult with them).

Carla grew up in Otsego where she had access to horses through friends, but also worked exercising

horses at the (now closed) Bresa Del Rio Ranch. She would ride her bicycle 1.5 miles to get there, ride for most of the day, and ride the 1.5 miles home. Now that's a dedicated horse-lover!

Carla worked at Bronson Critical Care/Cardiology for over 30 years until she retired in 2020. Since retiring, she likes to spend her time gardening or doing anything else outside including kayaking, sledding, and "extreme tubing" at the Treetops Resort in Gaylord. They own a cottage up north in Vanderbilt (near Gaylord) where they love to spend time in and on the water in the summer, and in and on the snow in winter.

When asked about her favorite thing about volunteering with us as well as what she has learned while here, Carla said she loves how she's built, and continues to build, relationships with the other volunteers and clients. She also mentioned how therapeutic the horses are for her. She has learned to not "sweat the small stuff", and always leaves with a deep sense of gratitude. "The horses help take my mind off of everything else—they are a great stress reliever!" Carla's favorite horse at Cheff is Awesome.

Carla has 2 sons and 5 grandchildren, one of which is Ava. Ava just had her 14th birthday in August, and after volunteering with us for 5 years, is still loving every minute of it. She currently attends

Portage Central Middle School where she plays volleyball. At this point, she is thinking she would like to pursue a career in either Photography or Veterinary Medicine, working with animals of all sizes and kinds.

Ava plays with the Hurricanes Fastpitch, a travel softball organization located in SW Michigan. The organization provides girls with a thorough teaching in fundamentals, knowledge of the game, sportsmanship and competitiveness. Her team plays in tournaments throughout the year, playing teams from all over the Midwest. Ava and her family are kept very busy traveling from state to state.

Ava loves working with the horses and loves having conversations with the clients. She has been riding since she was 4, but has learned a lot about tacking horses, and notes that this has helped her a lot with her patience—both with the horses and the clients. She feels she has a special bond with Garth, who is her favorite horse at Cheff.



Hello, September!!



HORSE OF THE MONTH: GUNNY



Gorgeous Gunny!

If you happen to see a lovely gold and white steed around Cheff, it just might be Gunny, a 20-year-old Paint/Haflinger cross. Gunny, weighing 1200 pounds and 15 hands high, is also lovingly known as “Buns” because of his well-muscled rump.

Gunny arrived at Cheff in May of 2015, donated by a very generous client, Denise, who also donated Emma. Denise had owned Gunny since he was 3 yrs old.



Young rider, Gunny and Dave

Gunny has so many talents - he is very tolerant of all types of riders. Gunny absolutely loves trail rides but has a healthy fear of downed trees. Believe it or not Gunny also likes to jump and barrel race! He has also been used in vaulting (gymnastics performed on horseback,) and will go around in a circle (to the left) all day long.



Gunny the Jumper!

One unusual thing about Gunny is that he really likes almonds!

Recently, Gunny was diagnosed with an eye problem and is being treated by his local vet and MSU. They are still working on an exact diagnosis, but his current treatment includes antibiotic ointment a few times daily, using his fly mask outside, and possibly some additional tests. Emily and Ashton report that Gunny is handling things well and has been an angel through all the tests and treatment!

Gunny is hoping for a new fly mask (large size), and any funds towards the treatment of his ocular problem are greatly appreciated!

The next time you're in the barn, make sure to say “Hi” to Gunny (and maybe give him an almond or two)!

*“In riding a horse, we borrow freedom.”
~ Helen Thomson*

September Fun Fact (er...Myth)

Pegasus is the most popular horse creature in Greek mythology, known for his pure white coat and powerful wings. This mythical horse creature is said to be born from Medusa and Poseidon with the power to create streams wherever he struck his hoof.

Pegasus was the noble steed of mortal Bellerophon, who captured Pegasus with the help of Athena's charmed bridle.

After slaying many terrible monsters together, Bellerophon believed that he was worthy to ride to the top of Mount Olympus, earning the disfavor of the gods - but was struck by Zeus on his way up and was thrown to his death.

Pegasus made it to the top of Olympus where he spent several years pulling a thunderbolt chariot for Zeus. After his long, dedicated service, Zeus awarded Pegasus with a constellation which still holds his name today.



EDUCATION CORNER: HORSE COLORS

A horse's coat color is one of its important identifying characteristics, as well as part of its beauty and heritage. Learning about coat colors can be a bit overwhelming because there are so many variations. But it is also a fascinating topic to dig into, where even just a little knowledge can give you some new insight into a horse you work with.



The chart to the left shows many of the coat colors mentioned in this article, which is just part of the full range of colors. You may want to view the [full-size version](#) and keep it handy while reading on.

In early wild herds, well before horses were domesticated, it is believed that the most common coat color was **dun**, a light brown with dark mane, tail and legs. This color is thought to have provided an element of camouflage.

Other colors appeared via gene mutation over many years. Once horses were domesticated and as planned breeding was done, the range of coat colors expanded immensely.

Two Pigments / Three Base Coat Colors

A surprising fact about horse coats is that the numerous colors are based on just two hues: **red and black**. Plus a lot of genetics. Red (actually a reddish brown) and black are the two hair pigment colors a horse can produce.

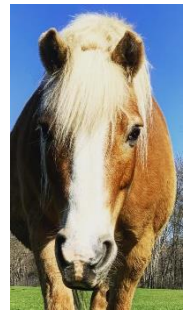
When talking about coat colors, keep in mind that there are two areas of the physical horse that come into play: the color of the horse's main body, and the color of the horse's **points**. Points are the mane, tail, ear rims and lower legs.

The **two pigments**, red and black, create **three base coat colors: bay, chestnut and black**.



Bay has both red and black pigments – some version of red as the body color, with black points -- example: Garth.

Chestnut is fully red, including the points. The mane and tail may be very similar to the body color – example: Winston; or somewhat different, typically lighter – example: Emma.



Black is fully black, including the points. Note that some black coats can fade in the sun and so may appear brown or reddish at times. But genetically they are still black -- example: Awesome.

All other coat colors are variations of these three base coats. The variations are determined by genes that can **dilute** the base color, add **patterns and markings** that are typically white (but not always), or even **mask the base color** to create a gray coat or a rare true white coat.

Background Genetics

The science of coat colors is extensive -- entire books are written on equine color genetics. Without getting too far into the scientific weeds, it's useful to be familiar with some of the genetic activities occurring behind the scenes.

As you likely know, genes are the basic units of inheritance in horses, just as in humans. Genes come in pairs, one from each parent. Each pair of genes controls or influences a particular characteristic or trait, such as whether black pigment will be expressed – in other words, will a horse have any black hair?

There are two genes that are key to the whole coat color picture. They determine whether a horse's base coat color will be bay, chestnut or black, and work as follows:

The **Extension gene** (also known as E or the Red Factor or the more technical name MC1R) controls the production of red and black pigment. The possible expressions of this gene are:

a) both red and black pigment can be produced -- giving either a bay or a black base coat,

OR

b) only red pigment can be produced -- giving a chestnut base coat color.

The **Agouti gene** (or A or ASIP) controls the distribution of black pigment. Its possible expressions are:

a) black is restricted to the horse's points only – giving a bay base coat color,

OR

b) black is distributed everywhere – giving a black base coat color.

Note that if the Extension gene has determined that only red pigment will be produced, then the Agouti gene essentially has no effect, as there is no black pigment for the Agouti gene to control.

Dilution Genes

Now for the part where the three base colors can be transformed into a multitude of variations, thanks to **dilution genes**... These genes, if present, can change the intensity of a horse's base coat color. Some dilution genes affect point color as well as body color.

The **Dun dilution** can occur with any of the three base coat colors. Horses with this dilution may simply be referred to as being a dun color – example: Star (right photo).



Or they may be described by a more precise term. For example: dun dilution on a chestnut base coat is called a **red dun**. On a black base coat, it's called **blue dun** or alternatively **grullo** (male horse) or **grulla** (female horse) (left photo).



The **Cream dilution** can occur with any of the base coat colors. Just to make things interesting, the cream gene has what is called a **dosage effect**. This means that rather than being a factor that is either on or off, its color dilution effect is greater if the cream gene has been passed on from both parents ("double dose"), and less intense if it has been passed on from just one parent ("single dose").



Palomino (left photo) results from a **single dose** cream dilution with a chestnut base coat. The mane and tail will be flaxen or white.

Cremello (right photo) is a **double dose** cream dilution with a chestnut base coat. This lightens the coat so much that it is sometimes confused with white.



The dun and cream dilution genes can create even more color variations than what is listed here. And in addition to dun and cream, there are other dilution genes that themselves can each create a variety of coat colors, depending on their interaction with the base coat. These include **Champagne, Pearl, Silver and Mushroom dilutions**.

You can see how quickly three base colors – bay, chestnut and black – expand to many possible coat color variations!

Gray and White

Most horses that appear white are actually gray. The confusion is understandable because most gray horses become increasingly white over time, so they may look white, at least at first glance.

Gray horses can be born any color. Because they have a dominant gray gene, their coat will start transitioning to white while they are young. Over many years their coats may become fully white or primarily white with some remaining elements of color.

Tina's coat, called Flea-Bitten Gray, retains flecks of color mixed with the white hairs (right photo).



Note that white is not actually a hair color but is in fact the **depigmenting** of the hair – i.e., hair without any color.

White horses are born white. Factors that control how white may be mixed in with base coat colors include **Dominant White / White Spotting Pattern** genes. In some fairly rare cases, these genes create an entirely white coat.

One way to distinguish a true white horse from a gray horse that has transitioned to white is by skin color. Gray horses typically have dark skin, especially visible around their eyes and muzzle (see Tina's photo above), while white horses have pinkish skin because, like their coat, their skin also lacks pigment. White horses will typically have dark or colored eyes, not pink eyes.

Genetic Testing

As with humans, genetic mapping and testing has greatly advanced for horses. Tests are available that will identify a horse's coat color genetics. These tests are often done for breeding purposes – to know in advance the possible coat color traits that a horse could pass on to its offspring.

We hope this article was a useful intro for those of you not already familiar with the world of horse coat colors. We'll look at the related topics of patterns and markings in a future newsletter.

Sources and More Info

[Beyond 50 Shades: The Genetics of Horse Colors](#) (chapter in the book: *Trends and Advances in Veterinary Genetics*, 2017)

[Equine Coat Colors](#) and [Equine Coat Color Genetics](#) (Wikipedia)

[Equine Coat Color Genetics](#) (UC Davis Veterinary Medicine)

[APHA's Guide to Coat Color Genetics](#) (American Paint Horse Assn)

[Horse Coat Color Chart](#) (Horse Breeds Pictures website)

Photo Sources

Grulla [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Grulla_Color_\(6423058413\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Grulla_Color_(6423058413).jpg)

Palomino https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palomino_Horse.jpg

Cremello <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cremello5.jpg>





SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Mariah B

Paige H

Alaina M

Roxanna M

Grace S

Tam T

Callie B

Lilly J

Kari M

Kathleen P

Sarah S

Liz W

Molly G

Charlie L

Sierra M

Raina R

Kim S



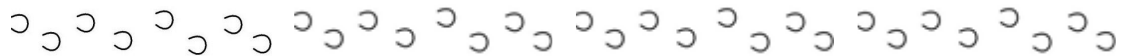
 **Happy Birthday** 

UPCOMING CHEFF EVENTS!

Cheff Center Shindig NON-Event: SEPTEMBER 2021

Although we sure would love to see everyone in person again, unfortunately, we have to wait another year. **But...**you are cordially invited to keep the Shindig spirit (and our programs) alive by participating in Cheff's first ever Shindig Non-Event!

To rsvp by donation or to participate, simply text **SHINDIG21** to **44321**, or you can give us a call at 269-731-4471 (of course, we'll always take in person donations too!). The link is: [Cheff Shindig Non Event 2021](#)



The Cheff Center Ride-a-Thon is coming Saturday, October 2!

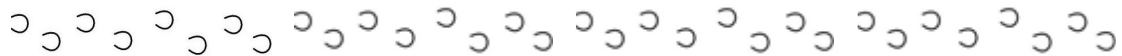
Bring your own horse to ride miles of cleared and marked trails!

There will be door prizes, prizes for top pledge earners, a silent auction, and hot lunch for all participants.

Registration opens at 8 a.m., rain or shine! Riders must start on the trail by Noon.

Find lots more information at: [Cheff Center Ride-a-Thon](#)

Registration Form Link: [Ride-a-Thon Pledge Form](#)



UPCOMING VOLUNTEER ORIENTATIONS:

September 25, 2021 10am-1pm

November 6, 2021 10am-1pm

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!!!

Have any horse-related equipment hanging around?

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!

Do you have any Questions/Comments/Suggestions?

Or, if you would like to write an article, please contact Sara Putney-Smith, Volunteer Administrator, at sara@cheffcenter.org

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