

Notes From the Farm

Summer 2017

MISSION FULFILLMENT

Through the strides of a horse a child with autism begins to communicate, families feel a sense of relief, volunteers experience a deeper sense of connection, and donors are able to give a life-changing gift. Whether they are learning to trot or speaking commands for the first time, Three Gaits is not just a place for our students to thrive, it is a supportive community for families, volunteers, and donors to find a deep sense of connection that changes lives and makes dreams come true.

This unique community of volunteers, participants, families, donors, and instructors has created an unconditionally supportive environment for profound accomplishments to happen — an environment that is rooted in stewardship, commitment, compassion and acceptance. What makes this community so rare and important is the shared power and vision of making dreams come true. Babe and Marv Conney understood the power of this community and its mission.

The Conney's were first introduced to Three Gaits almost 30 years ago through their deep friendship with Phyllis Buzogany. An avid horse lover and accomplished rider, Phyllis came to Three Gaits in the late 80's. For nearly a decade, Phyllis was an active volunteer, board member, and board president at Three Gaits.

"She is a very special lady and demonstrates courage above and beyond normalcy," says Marv. "She has always 'been there' for Three Gaits, through thick and thin."

Inspired by their profound relationship with Phyllis and her commitment to Three Gaits, Marv and Babe established a trust for Three Gaits in the early 2000's. The fund was set up by the Conney's with the intention of helping Three Gaits fulfill its mission— to provide equine-assisted activities and therapies that enhance the lives of people with physical, emotional, or intellectual challenges. Thanks to the Conney's fund, which will begin to be disbursed in early 2018, Three Gaits will be able to sustain and grow our legacy of connection, commitment, compassion, and acceptance.

Words seem inadequate to express the sadness we at Three Gaits feel about the recent passing of Babe Conney. To Marv Conney & the entire Conney Family, all of us at Three Gaits wish you peace to bring comfort, courage to face the days ahead and loving memories to forever hold in your hearts.



PARTICIPANT SPOTLIGHT:

Lifting the limitations of disabilities through powerful connections.

Horses are magnificent partners, gentle and intuitive, yet immensely powerful. For many people with disabilities, each day can present new challenges. The “can’ts” overwhelm the “cans”, often stunting the growth of an individual’s confidence and independence in their daily lives. The bond that is formed between horse and human through equine-assisted activities helps to restore this lost sense of ability. This incredibly unique, unspoken connection can be life changing. For Gus, the bond with Emma, a beloved Three Gaits program horse, was immediate.

Only 4 years old, Gus came to Three Gaits in 2012 through a recommendation from his pediatrician. For Gus, like many participants at Three Gaits, Emma provided his first experience riding a horse. “They immediately had a bond,” says Gus’s mom Kathryn. “I think he loved how big and gentle she was.”



*Kathy Van Iten, Gus Rudiger, Caitie Van Sloun,
Program horse Emma*

Before Emma, Gus showed very little interest in animals. Now, he looks forward to their time together. Whether it is riding Emma outside, or giving her some cookies, Gus and Emma’s connection is undeniable.

Participants like Gus, who have never shown any affection for animals before, are able to establish a new kind of connection with these gentle giants; a connection that lifts the limits of disabilities and encourages the “cans”. For Gus, his connection with Emma is different than other relationships in his life. “His relationship with Emma has given him so much confidence that he can accomplish things,” says Kathryn.

At Three Gaits, our vision is to make beneficial partnerships with horses accessible in an environment of respect, safety and responsibility. The relationship between Gus and Emma embodies this vision and inspires us to continue lifting the limitations of

disabilities through powerful equine connections.

*Want to be in the spotlight? To share your story email
CommunityOutreach@3gaits.org.*



THREE GAITS IN THE COMMUNITY

For the past two years, Mary Ann Roth, one of Three Gaits long-time instructors, and five students from her Wednesday night riding class have come together to raise money to sponsor two different Three Gaits horses. In these two years, over the course of a few weekends, the group planted and sold nearly 700 tomato plants.

This year, the group came together again. Dan and Sandy Lothe at Garden Prairie Farms in Sun Prairie generously offered greenhouse space and care for these delicate gifts. The group began planting the tomatoes in early Spring and the plants were ready for purchase in May. Each plant was sold for \$5; the group aimed to raise \$2,400 or the equivalent of one full horse sponsorship. The sponsorship fee will cover hay, grain, farrier, veterinary

care, supplements and the cost of program equipment.

From the initial seed planting, through the selling process, the students learned about responsibility, accountability and teamwork. Before the plants were sold, Mary Ann sat down with each student to work on their “sales pitch”.

For many, the idea of selling something can be intimidating. For this group of students, the “sales pitch” is a time for them to practice some of the skills they have learned in their lessons.

This annual tomato plant sale is a wonderful example of a group of riders



Sabrina, Katie, Grace, Mercedes, Mary Ann, Casey, LeeAnn

translating what they learn in lessons into their community. The project is a way for students to manifest and embody the Three Gaits guiding principles of respect for each other’s contributions and individual strengths, while recognizing the important role that every member plays in creating an environment that promotes growth for all.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Some would say that the work that is done at Three Gaits is magic. To us, the magic lies in the immense generosity and passion that defines the almost 400 volunteers who donate their time and energy. Whether it is leading a horse, or spending a Sunday morning cleaning stalls, Three Gaits could not continue to provide unique experiences without the support of our volunteers. One of these invaluable volunteers is Susan Socher.

A hippotherapy volunteer, Susan first came to Three Gaits in the Spring of 2012. Susan's love for horses came later in life when she was introduced to an influential horse trainer who proved that even "a non-athletic thirty year old could ride a horse".

Susan, like many of our volunteers, came to Three Gaits because she believed in our mission. "It makes me feel warm inside to see a girl without the gift of speech clap and smile as she climbs up on her mount, to see a boy who uses a wheelchair sit a bit straighter in his saddle, to hear a girl call out 'Hello Belle' as she navigates her way into the horse area with her walker," says Susan. "They've learned that they can ride a horse!"

The possibilities that are created at Three Gaits don't just affect the lives of our clients. For Susan, volunteering at Three Gaits not only allows her to support an organization that she believes in, but, as Susan explains, "I look forward to my time at Three Gaits. It's because of the horses, learning new skills from therapists, the camaraderie of fellow volunteers, but most of all, because someone needs a helping hand so that they can ride a horse. I can give a helping hand."

It is volunteers like Susan that help to create the unique community at Three Gaits; one that is built on the values of acceptance and possibility. Susan is one of the many stories that makes the magic of Three Gaits possible and allows us to continue to touch and transform lives.

Write in to CommunityOutreach@3gaits.org to share your volunteer story!



Susan Socher, Payton Gaona, former program horse Marcus



A FOCUS ON CONTINUING EDUCATION

Three Gaits is one of five programs in Wisconsin to be called a Premier Accredited Center with PATH Intl (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International). Our staff have invested thousands of hours and boundless amounts of energy in furthering their experience and credentials in the fields of equine-assisted activities and therapies. Earlier this spring, Three Gaits hosted two different workshops/certifications.

From May 18-21 a faculty member from the American Hippotherapy Association presented a 4 day course that studied principles of hippotherapy. The workshop brought 9 physical, occupational and speech therapists from across the United States (one even from Alaska) who wanted to learn more about using equines and their movement as part of their therapy sessions.

From May 31-June 4 two faculty/evaluators performed a PATH Intl On-Site Registered Level Workshop as well as a Registered and Advanced Instructor Certification. A total of 13 people participated in the workshop, with 11 people in the two certifications. We're proud to share that Three Gaits had two instructors that successfully passed their certifications - Bethany Domoto, an occupational therapist, became certified at the registered level, and Katie Harmelink-Roth became certified at the advanced level.

Congratulations Bethany & Katie!



WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A THREE GAITS PROGRAM HORSE

This year, Three Gaits has welcomed a few new equine partners and said goodbye to some long-time friends. Currently our herd consists of 14 horses. Emma, Beau, Irish, Dillon, Beauty, Belle, Nora, Dusty, Lace, Ode, Aurora, Darren, Mercedes and Willie have all come to call Three Gaits home and play a crucial role in helping us continue to fulfill our mission.

To be a program horse at Three Gaits is no small task — each horse is considered a special gift. They have the ability to do what we cannot — give an individual who cannot walk the feeling of mobility, or give someone who is emotionally challenged the ability to learn control. They can help an adult with autism learn to focus, or give a child with limited muscle control the ability to hold the reins for the first time.



Program Horse Beau

Regardless of the activity and the participant, our equine partners must possess an unwavering tolerance and patience with a keen sense of intelligence, and an undeniable love of people.

Each year Three Gaits staff look at over 150 horses from all over the Midwest. Only a handful of horses

make it through to a trial period at Three Gaits. During the trial period, Three Gaits instructors work with the new addition on desensitization through the introduction of novel sounds and sights. The goal of these exercises is to allow instructors the ability to fully understand how the horse will react to something unfamiliar, and in turn determine if they are fit for all of the unexpected situations that could arise during a lesson.

Of the 20 horses that go through this desensitization and introduction process a year, only two or three horses actually make the cut. It's not easy finding a horse that will become a true partner in our mission's journey.



COMING UP AROUND THE FARM

Brick Garden

- The end of January marked the end of the engraved brick sale. This summer, Three Gaits staff and volunteers will use the personalized bricks to create a warm and welcoming brick garden for families, riders and volunteers to relax between lessons and enjoy the beautiful scenery. The new garden will replace the existing patio area between the office and the indoor arena.

Student Horse Show

- Our annual student horse show will be held on Sunday, August 6th and is a great time for everyone involved. This annual event is a time to celebrate abilities and focus on successes. Riders demonstrate their incredible accomplishments, instructors see session-long goals come to fruition, volunteers see the impact of their commitment and families feel an unbelievable sense of pride.

Fall Celebration on the Farm

- The Three Gaits Fall Celebration, scheduled for Saturday October, 7th, will be a time for members of Three Gaits and the surrounding communities to come out to the farm and join together in support of our organization and its participants with a fun-filled afternoon of live music, food carts, a silent auction and a Three Gaits horse demonstration.

WHAT'S NEXT

Running a therapeutic riding center is challenging — caring for our horses properly, maintaining our facilities and running our programs all involve huge expenses that never seem to stop. As we continue to try to meet the needs of our community, our need to update and expand our facilities becomes more urgent.

The Tractor: This year we have already had to replace our 12 year old tractor. Our new (used) tractor arrived on the farm earlier in March and will undoubtedly make daily chores more efficient and much easier.

The Barn: The harsh Wisconsin winters have taken a toll on aging barn wood. The deteriorating state of the current stall doors makes it difficult for volunteers, clients and staff to use and are becoming unsafe for the horses. Replacing the walls will help insulate the barn during the cold and wet months and will ensure that both horses and people are operating in a fully functional and safe environment.

Storage: The lack of proper storage and the dilapidated wood has made for a very cramped, unorganized and inefficient tack room. We replaced one tack room with 15 individual cabinets, providing boarders with their own cubby and additional storage for Three Gaits' tack. This renovation aims to not only provide boarders with better storage options, but will also help maintain personal equipment and ensure a safe and organized barn for horses and humans.

Pastures: This year several of our horses have suffered injuries because of the muddy and uneven footing in our pastures. With the change of seasons, the poor drainage in our pastures leaves us with incredibly slippery and uneven surfaces. The muddy surface

makes footing very difficult if not dangerous for our equine partners, volunteers, and guests.



Program horse Belle

Our programs depend on the health of our horses. Re-grading our pastures will help to create better drainage and in turn safer outside areas for our horses and all individuals at Three Gaits.

Fencing: Good and sturdy fencing is essential for the safety of the horses and the safety of all humans. Just like the wall of the barn, the life span of this fencing is drastically decreased with the intensity of our winters. Currently, we have a number of places where our fencing no longer works. To ensure the safety of all of our horses we will need to replace several large sections of fencing around the farm.

Pathways: Many of our clients face a variety of physical challenges that require open and accessible pathways. The pathways connecting our barn and arena, as well as the outdoor tracks, pose a constant challenge. The wear and tear on these pathways is a result of both extreme weather conditions and traffic from daily activities and creates uneven surfaces. By updating our pathways to make them more accessible we can safely expand our impact and offer even more unmounted activities.

Ways to Contribute

Facilities and Excavation: Safety is one of our guiding principals at Three Gaits. Donating to the facilities and excavation funds helps us maintain accessible and safe indoor and outdoor areas.

Tractor Fund: Donating to our tractor fund will help cover the cost of the gently used \$15,000 tractor and in turn will help to maintain safe, clean and accessible facilities for all two and four legged friends.

Horses Sponsorship: Our 14 program horses are the foundation of our organization. You can choose to become a full sponsor for \$2,400 or a co-sponsor for \$1,200 annually. The sponsorship covers hay, grain, veterinary and farrier costs for the program horse of your choosing.

Volunteer Sponsorship: We rely heavily on the support of our nearly 400 volunteers. To properly train and educate our volunteers is essential to the success of our programs. Sponsoring a volunteer helps cover the cost of our volunteer trainings and education sessions.

Student Scholarships: Many of our most challenged riders come from underprivileged situations and face a pressing need for financial assistance. Donating directly to student scholarships allows us to help those who otherwise would not be able to participate in our programs.

Operating Funds: Donating to our operating funds covers many miscellaneous expenses that are essential to keeping our programs running. Some examples of expenses covered under operating funds include: computer and software expenses, book keeping and accounting (non-profits are required to have an audit done annually), electricity for barn, arena and office, insurance costs, phone and staff salaries.

For more information about ways to contribute please contact 3gaits@3gaits.org.

Dear Friends of Three Gaits,

The equine-assisted activities at Three Gaits provide extraordinary opportunities — not just for the participant, but for families, volunteers and donors.

But the most extraordinary thing about us is you — because of you, our impact is growing. Together we are building a vibrant future that will change the lives of individuals one lesson at a time.

As we look ahead at the ever growing list of updates and expenses, **we turn to you**. The opportunity to serve our community is growing. In order for us to continue to enhance the lives of individuals and continue to foster this unique community rooted in acceptance, compassion, stewardship and commitment, **we need you**.

You help us give the little girl with Down syndrome the confidence to trot on a horse, the little boy with autism his first words and the woman with multiple sclerosis improved balance and core strength. Your commitment, your gift, your help makes our work possible. **Without you we cannot succeed.**

The gift of giving is a powerful thing and right now, you have the opportunity to make dreams come true. If you have given in the past, we invite you to consider increasing your commitment and help us continue our journey of fulfilling our mission. We can't thank you enough for your support.

The opportunities at Three Gaits are unlimited and powerful — your gift makes these opportunities possible.



YES, I would like to support Three Gaits Therapeutic Horsemanship Center and its mission to provide equine-assisted activities and therapies that enhance the lives of people with physical, emotional or intellectual challenges.

I would like my donation to be put towards:

- Facilities and excavation \$ _____
ex. re-grading pastures
- Tractor Fund \$ _____
- Horse Sponsorship \$ _____
Full Sponsor = \$2,400
Partial Sponsor = \$1,200
- Volunteer Sponsorship \$ _____
- Student Scholarship \$ _____
Rider scholarship for one session of
therapeutic riding = \$300
Rider scholarship for one session of
hippotherapy = \$650
- Operating Funds \$ _____
ex. average electric bill for one month = \$250
- Madison Community Foundation Endowment Fund
\$ _____

Enclosed is my gift of (please check one box):

- Total items from column at left \$ _____
- \$50 \$100 \$250
- \$500 \$1000 Other _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

This gift is in honor or memory of:

if desired, include honorees' contact information so that we may inform them of your gift:

To pay with a credit card or set up recurring payments, see reverse. Please detach form and return to Three Gaits, P.O. Box 153, Oregon, WI 53575. To pay online please visit our website 3gaits.org.



I would like my gift to be recurring

- Monthly
- Bimonthly
- Semiannually
- Annually

Charge my credit card (Visa/MC/Discover/AmEx) in the amount of \$ _____

Credit Card Number _____

Expiration Date _____

Signature _____

Please contact me about volunteering at Three Gaits.

Please add me to the Three Gaits emailing list

Email address _____

Remember to check with your employer regarding a possible matching gift; many local and national companies have Matching Gift Programs that can double the impact of your gift.

My employer will match this gift (include your company's matching gift form)

