

Merlin's Muse

By Mary Hadsall
Executive Director

Our wheels may turn slowly, but turn they do indeed! I am proud to share that last February Camelot received a \$13,278 grant through the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation Quality of Life Grants Program. The funding received was for the acquisition of a very specific piece of equipment for the program, a custom built, four-wheeled Wagonette carriage that is wheelchair accessible!

Camelot's mission is aligned with the Quality of Life Grant Program; both strive to empower individuals with disabilities. This carriage will take Camelot's driving program to the next level providing an invaluable opportunity for independence. Until now, students who use

wheelchairs had to leave their wheels behind before picking up the reins for their driving lessons. Now, they won't have to. The large carriage will provide seating for passengers, as well as the driver and the instructor, allowing for a group driving experience. It will be pulled by K2 aka Jim, Camelot's large Percheron-Belgian draft horse.

"Camelot's driving program is expanding and thriving with the addition of a large draft horse, intensive driving training for staff and this generous gift from the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation," said Hannah Brisso, Camelot's principal riding instructor and volunteer coordinator.

Brisso is certified in both driving and riding instruction. Camelot is the only therapeutic riding center in Arizona to offer therapeutic driving under the guidance of a PATH Intl. Certified Driving Instructor.

The Wagonette has oak panels, smooth vinyl upholstery, wooden wheels, black painted metal work and hub caps. It is equipped with safety tie downs to keep the wheelchair in place and front and rear disc brakes to assist in holding the carriage steady while passengers get on and off. There's a fold down ramp to allow a driver who uses a wheelchair to be assisted into the driving position.

"We've offered driving as part of the horsemanship curriculum for many years, but until three years ago, the driving equines were small. We had a mini horse and a draft pony, who pulled carts that could carry at most two participants," said Brisso. "This new carriage changes everything." ∞



Jim hitched to carriage with Rebecca driving, Mary seated in the passenger seat and Kristina heading.

A few words about carriage driving from Eileen Szychowski, Camelot's founder:

We all know that learning to drive a car is a rite of passage for any kid growing up in America. That experience is denied to teens who are blind or visually impaired or have other conditions that affect the ability to drive a car. But, a well-trained horse, an accessible carriage and an experienced driving instructor will provide those students with an experience of power and control that comes as close to driving a car as you can get. As students become more proficient at driving a horse, they grow in independence and self-confidence, for it is a special skill that few, if any, of their able-bodied peers can claim.

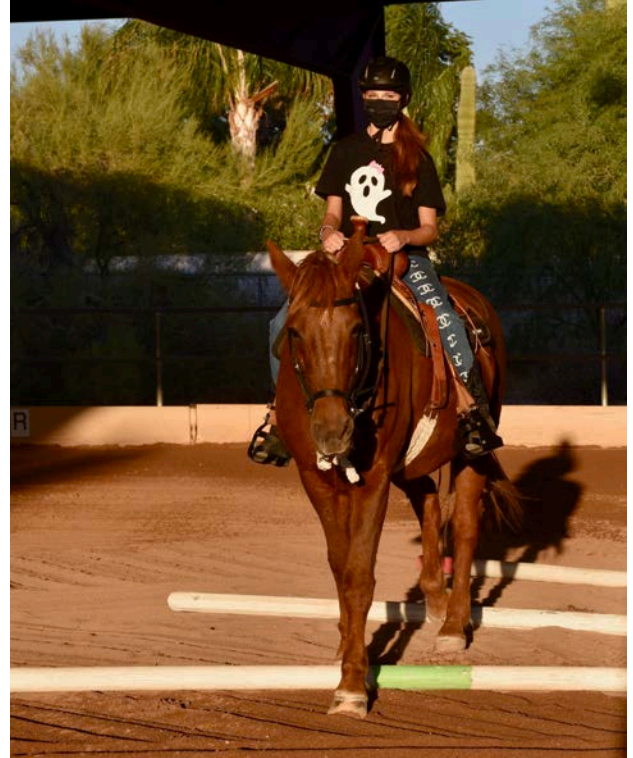
Some of my most unforgettable and rewarding experiences as an instructor came when teaching blind students to drive. Sitting in the cart next to them and handing over the reins was akin to handing them the car keys — a rite of passage, an expression of trust and supreme confidence for both parties. It made my spirit soar every time! And then there's that beautiful clippety-clop sound that adds to the beauty of the moment like nothing else. Every therapeutic horsemanship program should have driving as a part of their curriculum! ∞

Six years and counting!

By Sydney Morrison
Camelot student

I have been a student at Camelot for almost six years. The volunteers are amazing. I am so thankful for them. They give up their time to help such a wonderful program. All of the horses are so gentle and easy to ride. I have been featured in *Starry Nights* one time. That was a very fun night to hang out with my family and bid on all the cool stuff they have at the silent auction. They also have a very fun halloween party at the ranch down the road from Camelot. The Halloween party is usually on my birthday, so it is a fun way to celebrate. They have a petting zoo, a magician and a pumpkin patch.

I've been around horses for most of my life, so I was not nervous to start riding at Camelot. I have come a long way as far as skill level in riding. I have learned how to trot, trot in a circle, and learned a few dressage positions with the help of Stuffie, the life-sized toy horse Hannah hides in the bathroom shower to creep people out. The most difficult thing for me currently is mounting and dismounting on my own. Camelot brings me the most joy when we do fun lessons like games or trail rides. The trail rides are my favorite lessons. I like being out in the open and looking at the scenery. I appreciate how much attention to detail they put in with Covid-19 safety procedures. They always check your temperature and make sure you have your mask on at all times. Although this past year has been tough, my six years at Camelot have been great. ∞



Sydney riding Frisco over ground poles in the covered arena.



By Hannah Brisso
Volunteer Coordinator &
Principal Riding Instructor

Heroes' Hero ~ Leo & Joyce Nolan

Joyce and Leo came to Camelot in September of 2020. They joined the volunteer team at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic; their help proved invaluable. Both Leo and Joyce have transformed the property by thoroughly landscaping and removing weeds and brush making the facility even more accessible and safe for students. Joyce has also joined the afternoon volunteer crew, working side by side with students and staff.

Although retired from full-time careers, both Joyce and Leo keep extremely busy schedules, and are involved in many aspects of the community. We are fortunate to have their assistance here at Camelot!

Memorial gifts in any amount are a beautiful way to honor a beloved friend or family member, be they human or otherwise. We also welcome gifts in honor of birthdays or other special occasions. All such donations are acknowledged with a special card or email and a mention in our newsletter.

When sending in your gift, please include a brief note designating whom it is memorializing, and in which category you are submitting it. If you would like an acknowledgment card sent, please include the recipient's address.

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Bridget picking up the reins at the start of her lesson on Nutmeg. Pictured with Bridget is Rebecca, a Camelot instructor.

Nutmeg, named appropriately for her coloring, may be small, but she has a big heart! At about 13.2 hands tall, she is an ideal size for many of Camelot's young riders. When you first meet Nutmeg, you will notice her social nature and her striking blue eye. Nutmeg carries the "silver gene" which causes unusual and beautiful coloring. Even though she's considered a bay, her mane and tail have lighter hairs, creating a "taffy" appearance.

Nutmeg is not only a riding pony, but she also pulls a cart! DNA testing shows that Nutmeg is a cross between a Quarter Horse, Hanoverian and Missouri Fox Trotter. She was born in 2012 in New Mexico, then traveled to Colorado before making her way to Arizona. While some of her early history is unknown, we do know that this little mare has a bright future at Camelot! ∞



Nutmeg, enjoying quality time with Becca, a Camelot student. Alicia, Camelot instructor, pictured in the background.

Nifty Bits

News from the Ranch

Where would we be without our community standing behind our hard work as we serve our mission. It is my pleasure to acknowledge our major donors, with deepest gratitude and heartfelt thanks:

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Roslyn & Brett Tayne

Bonnie & John Trowbridge

The Verdoorn Foundation

Mary Beth Walker

Saying thanks is just not enough to express our sincerest appreciation. But here I go, **THANK YOU Vicki Baumler DVM and Jamie Foley DVM** for your continued dedication to the health and well being of the Camelot therapy animals!

Thank you **Dave Hahn** for your electrical work on our front gate and barn! Our lights are magnificent! We all wish you and Bonnie the best in your Flagstaff endeavors. **Bonnie** we will miss you on Wednesdays!

Camelot welcomes new Dragon Slayers to our rider schedule, **Makenzie and Amelia K., Becca L., Max M., Jaz P., and Anabel R.**

Three cheers to our new volunteers, welcome aboard!

**Brad Bloyer
Tammy Bloyer
Chad Butche
Cassie Calvert
Kerry Fisher
Gretchen Heberling
Emily Jespersen
Judy Martin
Joyce Nolan
Leo Nolan
Haley Rodriguez
Karen Tenney
Julie Wechsler
Emily Williams**



"A society grows great when old men plant trees in whose shade they know they shall never sit"

~
anonymous Greek proverb

In Memory Of

Margery Knodel
Blaine Lowman
Kelly Hurley
Gidget
Edna Pindler
Curt Simpson
Cayanna
Van Williams
Diane Beckett
Christen Dembinski
Janik
Mikey Karam
Bear
Bob & Connie Abbott
Molly, Russel, Raphe', &
Buck
Bill Edwards
Gucci & Willow Szychowski
Beth
Courtney Xilove
Oz
Vi & Bill Casalegno
Dr. Stanley Vitello
Oetti
"For the loved one's we've
lost."
Billy Puckett

Richard Brennan
Mary Lou Hadsall
Rosie
Missy LoCascio Weimer
Shea
Sir Guy & Spot
Jim Draper
Paladin
Levi
Faith & Georgia Duffy
Aunt Ethel
Dodger
Linda Campbell
Bob Thomas
Galia
Olivia
Parker Sutherland
Beverly Morris Eisenberg
Ted & Loretta Szychowski
Bob Lindsey
Theo
Confederate Cat
Daniel
Cooper
Grandpa Levi
Joa Schiralli
Anthony Szychowski
Aeron Lee
Joellen "Inky" Weiss
Marie Krombholz

Kramer Erlich
Michael Brisso
Reeky & Smartie Brisso
Evey & Leon Blumberg

In Honor of

Eileen Szychowski
Lynn Wright's birthday
The Graham Family
Andy Erlich
Jim & Rose Neibauer
The Leadership Through
Horsemanship Class
All the Students of Camelot
Roselyn Tayne
Family, friends and first
responders
Chuck Johnson
Beth Hagler
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Jim Howard
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Camelot wishes to acknowledge all of the special people and cherished animals who were honored with hearts before and during the spring fundraising campaign. Best efforts were made to acknowledge everyone; sincere apologies if your loved one is not mentioned.

Raise your sword against the most formidable enemy of all... the voice within that says "I can't" ~ Eileen Szychowski, Camelot Founder

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