

## Connection and Belonging at Camelot

By Hannah Brisso

Principal Riding Instructor, Volunteer Coordinator

How many volunteers are necessary for a single student with a physical disability to ride a horse in a 90-minute lesson? The answer may surprise you.

When I interviewed to become a morning ranch hand volunteer in October of 2010, Michelle Guererro nee Bartlett the Volunteer Coordinator at that time, asked me what I was willing to risk. I was caught off guard by such an unusual interview question. I thought to myself, how risky is picking up manure? What have I gotten myself into?

The question goes much deeper than physical risk, though. As a morning ranch hand volunteer, I would not only be picking up manure (Although that was a big part of the job!), but I would also be interacting with the therapy horses, the other volunteers, the staff, and on occasion, the students.

It turned out that what I had to risk was letting go of preconceived notions and assumptions about what it means to have a disability as well as what it means to truly trust and rely on other people. What I had to risk was letting people see the “real” me—vulnerabilities and all.

I was a morning volunteer ranch hand for three years before I dared to check out the afternoon riding and horsemanship classes. I assumed I would find frustrated students and teary volunteers. To my complete and utter surprise, what I found was the exact opposite. I did see tears, but they were the result of laughter. I saw momentary frustration followed by rejoicing in success! But this level of camaraderie did not come from a superficial connection.

I overheard a conversation between a group of volunteers who had been working with a particular student for quite some time. The bond between them was palpable. There was a discussion taking place about super powers and what each would choose if given the

opportunity. The volunteers gave answers such as, “the ability to fly!” and, “I would love to have x-ray vision!” After a short pause, the student said, “I would like to be able to walk.” The volunteers didn’t make a joke or shrug it off, and they didn’t attempt to hide

their agreement with this sentiment. It was a powerful moment that encapsulated the “right to risk” upon which Camelot is founded. The mission statement is not just a right to risk our physical well-being on the back of a 1,200-pound animal, but also our right to risk sharing vulnerabilities, being seen, and creating lasting connections.

It’s because of these profound connections that Camelot volunteers continue for much longer than mainstream volunteer-

trend data would have you believe. Camelot is a small organization with about 40 active volunteers at any given time. Many of these volunteers have been contributing their time and talents on a weekly basis for 10, 15, even 20+ years.

Being such a small organization, each Camelot volunteer has a high level of responsibility. If a shift is missed, there is not another volunteer waiting to cover it. The horses and the students are depending on the reliability of the volunteers. They are trusting the volunteers to honor their commitment and show up. As a result, volunteer attendance is consistent, and communication is excellent.

365 days each year, even when classes are not in session, the stalls are cleaned and leveled for the students to enter to retrieve their horses. The aisle ways are kept free from debris and loose hay for students to navigate while leading a horse. The tack is kept oiled and in good repair for the students to ride safely. Brush and weeds around the arena are trimmed back so that the horses needn’t become startled by small animals hiding. Each of these jobs is just as important as that of horse leader and side walker, who accompany students during mounted classes.

So how many Camelot volunteers does it take for a single student with a physical disability to ride a horse in a 90-minute lesson?

All of them. Every single one. ∞



*Camelot volunteers gathered in the arena for a silly pre Hooves & Heroes photo shoot.*



## Merlin's Muse

By Mary Hadsall  
Executive Director

The word volunteer has many meanings. It can be used as a noun or a verb, it can be a person's title, and it is also a pledge. Today's edition of *The Camelot Chronicles* is to honor our volunteers! This program is what it is today because of the collective efforts of each and every one of you giving selflessly week in, week out — year after year! You are Camelot's heart and soul: our very lifeblood. Without you, this program would not be the same — not in any way, shape, or form. From the bottom of our hearts, please know we appreciate you, and we give many, many thanks for you. ∞



20+ years

Vicki Baumler - 1985  
Shirley A. Lowman - 1989  
Chuck Johnson - 1997  
Bonnie Trowbridge - 1997  
Cate Campbell - 2001



15+ years

Ray Klein - 2002  
Jeanne Alspaugh - 2004



10+ years

Marsha Lindsey - 2007  
Phil Simpson - 2007  
John Ames - 2008  
Mary Long - 2008  
Leslie Zelisko - 2008  
Ann Ezzell - 2010  
Marsha Horshok - 2010  
Joey Joseph - 2010



5+ years

Leslie Baranzini - 2011  
Peg Mulloy - 2011  
Sasha Graham - 2012  
Rico Francisco - 2013  
Jenny Kominsky - 2013  
Karen Menosky - 2013  
Janene Nielson - 2013  
Karen Bishop - 2015  
Jennifer Nopolus - 2015  
Kim James - 2016  
Janet O'Meara - 2016  
Roslyn Tayne - 2016  
Bill Vale - 2016



## How can YOU make a difference?

**Share Camelot with your friends.** Maybe they would like to become involved as a volunteer or a donor. Becoming a volunteer is easy; simply visit our website at [CamelotAZ.org](http://CamelotAZ.org), click on the "How You Can Help" tab where you will be taken to our volunteer page, see donation opportunities, and learn more about our fundraising events.

Camelot is a qualifying charitable organization under the Arizona Charitable Tax Credit program. Donors can claim a tax credit for monetary donations to charitable organizations on their Arizona state tax return. **Camelot's QCO code is 20137.**

Are you an Amazon shopper? If so have you heard of **AmazonSmile**? AmazonSmile is a program where Amazon donates 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the charitable organization selected by their customers. The next time you are headed to your computer or device to go shopping, visit [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) and choose Camelot Therapeutic Horsemanship as your charity of choice!

Are you a **member of a service group or club** that works hard to raise funding for non-profits? Suggest Camelot at your next monthly meeting! I would be delighted to give a presentation about the program services to your group.

**Organize a Third-Party Event** for Camelot! This is a fundraiser where Camelot is the designated beneficiary. This is a wonderful way for Camelot to cultivate new relationships, increase exposure in the community about our services, and raise funds!

Have you heard of **Matching Gifts**? A matching gift, also known as a matching fund, is a charitable gift made toward a non-profit organization by a matching donor (e.g., employer) under the provision that an original donor (e.g., an employee) first makes a gift toward that organization!

Gifts in kind, also referred to as **in-kind** donations, is a kind of charitable in which, instead of giving money to buy needed goods and services, the goods and services themselves are given.





Rebecca T., Camelot instructor; driving Jim (aka K2) in the covered arena. Seated on Rebecca's left is Bridget K., alumna, Amanda F., student, and Kristina V. volunteer.

Congratulations, Rebecca Thompson, your countless hours of practice and hard work has paid off beautifully! I am very proud to announce to the Camelot family that you are officially a PATH Intl. certified therapeutic driving instructor! Woo-hoo and three cheers to you, Rebecca! ∞

## Heroes' Heroes

Dedicated to all our devoted summer volunteers!



Tammy Bloyer



Cassie Calevert



Carol Chapman



Ally Clark



Sara Esteves



Gretchen Heberling



Laura Holub



Felicia Jackson



Ray Klein



Chris Madsen



Karen Menosky



Joyce Nolan



Leo Nolan



Jennifer Nopolous



Katie Stearns



Roslyn Tayne



Karen Tenney



Cole Turner



Kristina Vahe



Mary Wales-Long

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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Nifty Bits



News from the Ranch

Deepest appreciation to our **2021 major donors**.  
Thank you for your generous support!

**Ames Construction**  
**Judy & Mike Brisso**  
**The Charro Foundation**  
**Robin & Andy Erlich**  
**Heska Corporation**  
**OneAZ Credit Union**  
**Curt & Gerry Pindler**  
**Scottsdale Active 20/30 Foundation**  
**Roslyn & Bret Tayne**  
**Bonnie & John Trowbridge**  
**Verdoorn Foundation**

Camelot welcomes back to the rider schedule **Eliron F.**, and we welcome our new Dragon Slayers, **Margaret B. and Erin R.**

Three cheers to our new volunteers, welcome aboard!

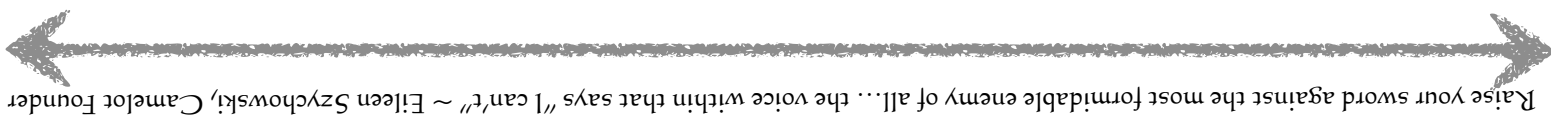
**Carol Chapan, Sara Esteves, and Cole Turner**

Everyone at Camelot wants to wish **Marsha Horshok** and **Sara Larson** a fond farewell. We are going to miss you, but we are excited to hear stories of your new adventures back East!

**Starry Knights** tickets go on sale September 1st. Limited seating this year, so get your tickets before seats sell out! Available at [CamelotAZ.org](http://CamelotAZ.org)!

In Honor of:	All Healthcare	Steve Pike	Oso Stinky	Rosie Parrella
Mocha	Workers	Charlie Gorham	The Szychowski &	Mack
Bandit, Batman &	All Therapy Animals	Lori Dugan	Rooney Family	The Camelot Golf
Robin	Matt & Sara Robison	Rebecca Nolan	Marie Krombholz	Committee
Ray Klein	Jan Miller	All Camelot Heroes	Michael Stone	Cheryl Mearthy
All the volunteers	Eileen Szychowski	John Badalamenti	Lori Edwards	Donna C.
Roslyn Tayne	Andrea Syvrud	Mira & Stella Mueth	Lois Ulatowski	Ted Szychowski
Samantha Tayne &	Gail "Starr" Learner	Hannah Kuhlmann	Rosemary Goldner	Bartok
George Burleson	Robin Erlich	Parker Sutherland	Edna Pindler	Ernest Mulloy
Holly & Ronen	Sharon Goldman	Sasha Graham	Robert Saltz	Kathleen Lynch
Tayne	Patrick Bonner	Camelot Staff	Melissa Weimer Lo	Robert Lynch
Susan Schuster	Crystal Ashley	Camelot Volunteers	Cascio	Madelyn Lynch
Lisa Schuster	Sydney Morrison	Aeron Lee	Roy & Ann C.	Elizabeth Stuttman
Eva Vasbinder	The Nolan Family	Megan Neibauer	Ray & Gregg	Blaine
All the students and	Paolo Contu-Owen	Tallulah & Memphis	Cheeley	Camelot's Guardian
horses	Sir Carramore The	BW	Joan Schiralli	Angels
Chase, Brock and	Bold aka Cliff	Evan & Yale	Charleen Anderson	Paladin
Rylee	Dweller	Debbie Griffith	Father Dell	Bravo
Thea Johnson	Camelot	Vilma Colon	Dean Benigno	Marge Milliman
Farmer	Amanda F.	Bridget Korn	Kyle Kekuhaupio	Candy
Chuck Johnson	Kelly Knodel	Geff & Sheila	Jim Olk	Echo
Dr. Joyce Abbott	Jason Lowman	Graham	Jim Draper	John Marshall
Finishline Fence	Jill Seymour	In Memory of:	Rico	Kramer
Sydney Morrison	Nicole Armstrong-	Tank	Gidget	Colt
Mary Hadsall	Best	Josef Rivers, Teacher	Lucy	Wesley Brown
Michelle Guerrero	Liz Covert	& Gentleman	Grandpa Levi	Curt & Bob
	Annette Duran	Bruce	Galia Sodoma	Archie

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.



Camelot Therapeutic Horsemanship, Inc.  
 23623 N. Scottsdale Road, Ste. D3 - PMB 259  
 Scottsdale, Arizona 85255  
 480-515-1542 ~ CamelotAZ.org

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