

# NEWSLETTER

FALL 2023



*The fall season is a time where we begin to reflect while imagining the things ahead in the year to come. It has taken some time, but we are slowly rebuilding our team (both staff and horses) and are excited to be adding new students. With new children in the equestrian program and more Ready to Work students out in the community working – we have great hope for the future. We remain grateful that the Carousel Ranch community is strong and with you by our sides – the possibilities are endless.*

## Heart of the West

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We are utterly grateful for the overwhelming success of this year's Heart of The West. The outpouring of love and support from our amazing sponsors, lifelong friends, community members, dedicated staff, and talented students has been nothing short of astonishing. Each of you played a pivotal role in making this event a tremendous success for the children and adults we serve at Carousel Ranch. The strength of our community is evident, and we are sincerely thankful for the unity and shared commitment that made this celebration possible. Your support is not just a part of our story; it is the heart of our narrative. Thank you for being an integral part of our journey.





Whether a monetary donation, an in-kind gift, or the donation of your time, each and every act of kindness, means so very much. Each dollar comes together in ways we cannot even begin to explain. Thank you for embracing Carousel Ranch and the work we do. These things would not happen without you and the success of this event. Our students shine like diamonds, because of YOU!

U  
Marie,  
Haley, and  
Wyatt were  
truly  
STARS!



Heart of the West



We hope you will join  
us again next year!

*Save the Date*

28th Annual Heart of the West  
Saturday, August 24th, 2024

*Thank You*

TO EVERYONE WHO HELPED TO  
MAKE OUR EVENT A SUCCESS!

CAROUSEL RANCH'S  
HEART OF THE WEST



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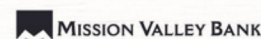
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# EQUESTRIAN THERAPY



The heart of Carousel Ranch has and always will be our equestrian therapy program. We are currently in the process of adding 10+ new students to the program. There is truly no better feeling than seeing our kids on horses each week working to reach new goals and defy the odds.

Carousel Ranch's program design is unique, working to create individualized programs for every student while continuously adapting to their specific needs as they change over time. The program utilizes the sport of vaulting (gymnastics on a moving horse), English, and Western riding. Each child is served individually (no group lessons), with up to four people working with each child. We strive to work on the same things that are being targeted in traditional forms of therapy, taking it out of a clinical setting and creating an atmosphere where therapy is disguised as fun.

The goals and benefits are different for every child, depending on their individual needs. The movement of the horse causes an inherent response from the child,

**"WE RIDE TO FLY. TO  
FEEL. TO LAUGH. TO  
PROVE THEM  
WRONG. TO FEEL  
STRONG. TO LOVE  
AND TO BE  
LOVED BACK.  
WE RIDE TO LIVE."**

– Unknown



relaxing muscles that are tight, increasing tone in muscles that are weak, building balance, coordination and control, increased motor skills, improvements in behavior and sensory processing while building confidence, self-esteem and social interaction. From the big to the small, each achievement reminds us of the amazing effect that horses have on our children.



*"We were on the wait list for a while and it was completely worth the wait because Arrow has excelled and grown as a person in so many ways that's transferred into his whole entire life at school and at home. He's more excited to be engaged with people and I think being here gives him the confidence to do that, which was totally unexpected. Usually quiet and reserved in social environments, Arrow has begun to be more talkative and eager to try new things. Not only at the Ranch but in everyday life."*

*Another positive of being here is his new confidence to try different things. I get excited because he was just so quiet and wouldn't put himself out there. So now when he does, I just think back to how far he's come and obviously we're doing something right now that we weren't doing the past 10 years. That's making me see who he is. He's like a little comedian and I never knew that. I'm learning new things about him all the time and what's again so unexpected is who he is and getting to know him better. I think everybody here has encouraged him to be that person. Carousel Ranch has benefited him in ways I didn't even consider. With every session he grows a little more, which helps my goal as a parent, which is for him to reach his full potential."*

~Cassandra Zirkelbach

# READY TO WORK!

At age 22, young adults with disabilities “age out” of the educational system. This can be a disorienting and disempowering event that alters their routine, isolates them from friends and mentors, and leaves them without a daily purpose and place to be. We strive to meet each student where they are, working to meet their needs while challenging them to try new things, set goals and achieve them. Together, we build on their interest and skills helping each student discover their passions and potential.

To date, RTW has served over 100 participants, completed 29 RTW Level I classes, and supported 47 students in the RTW Level II program and 31 in the Academy program at COC. 66% of those participating in Level II have secured paid employment and/or Paid Internships. Community business partners include Santa Clarita Concrete, Holiday Inn Express, Starbucks, Pet Supplies Plus, Six Flags, Chevron, SCVTV, JT Resources, AMS Fulfillment and Bluemark, etc.

***If you know of anyone you think would be a good fit for the RTW program, please feel free to contact us!***  
***cgelfo@carouselranch.org | 661-268-8010***



## Dom Twigg

*“My son Dominic...excuse me, I mean Dom... has very clear aspirations to work in a movie theater. Not that I don’t believe in my son, but I’m a realist, and after years of behavior training in the school district, he still did not seem ready for the social, emotional and technical challenges of a job. He was ready to complete his years in school and move on, but again my mind was racing with questions and fears. Where next? How to make his dream a reality? Is he ready?”*

*I found Ready To Work at Carousel Ranch and after one phone call with Camryn, I felt hopeful and motivated, so I presented it to Dom. He was skeptical, he had zero intentions or interest in any more “classes”. We visited and he interviewed at Carousel and he was very impressed and more than willing to give it a try. So he started Level One and was excited to learn how to do tasks at work, even mucking the stalls! He was excited and proud of his uniform and his responsibilities with the garden and even the classroom time. He made a new friend in his group. He was well prepared for his first mock job interview and was invited to continue on with Level 2 of Ready To Work.*

*He is now in level 2, and we are both learning valuable lessons for work and life. For example, when Dom is having an issue with a work problem, he has been trained to take that problem to his boss at work, not his Mom. Likewise, I am learning to let him find solutions to his problems in the right places, even if he suffers a consequence.*

*My expectations with Ready To Work at Carousel Ranch have been far exceeded! Dom still has more learning and practice ahead, but I am feeling more than confident that he will have the skills and means to find and keep a job that will give him purpose. I am so grateful to have found this program and Hannah, Alejandra and Camryn have helped Dom to grown and mature as a man with independence.”*

*~ “A very happy parent” ~ Camille Twigg*





## CAROUSEL RANCH COLLABORATION BRINGING EQUESTRIAN THERAPY TO UKRAINE

There are moments in life that are just meant to be...times when things align so perfectly and allow us to reach a new level. For Carousel Ranch and all of us who work here – this was one of those moments. Just days before Heart of the West, we received an email from Nastya Popandopulos who lives in Kyiv, Ukraine. She shared that she and Victoria Kokaleva were in the process of developing an equine therapy program aimed at providing support and healing to Ukrainian war veterans and children who have been directly affected by the frontlines. She shared her vision of creating a program that provides a safe and nurturing environment where participants can interact with horses, fostering a sense of connection, trust, and empowerment. A place where they aim to address various trauma, anxiety, and stress, while promoting emotional resilience and personal growth.

In early September, an initial zoom meeting with Denise formed a true connection. Nastya shared that she herself had been experiencing some mental health issues from the constant daily stress. She explained how Victoria invited her to her ranch and told the story of how that day, being on a horse for the first time – was the first time she had felt calm since the war began. And in that moment, she knew that she wanted to share that feeling with others.

Nastya was coming to the US in mid-September, invited by the US Department of State as the one chosen delegate from Ukraine – where she would be part of the IVLP (International Visitor Leadership Program) Social Entrepreneur program. Though it didn't seem possible at first – they were able to extend her visa so that she could come to Carousel Ranch for two weeks to train.

Nastya quickly became part of the Carousel Ranch family and each member of our team bonded with her in such an immediate and unexpected way. She learned quickly, participated in the programs, worked in lessons and was able to learn so much. She collaborated with all of the Ranch staff, while working closely with Denise, Becky and Taylor to establish Victory Center in Kyiv. This groundbreaking initiative responds to the invasion in Ukraine...literally transforming trauma into triumph.

Though she returned to Ukraine at the end of October, the relationships continue. She and Denise continue to work on her non-profit status, program development and fundraising concepts while Becky continues to be there to provide guidance on working with students. In addition while here, we introduced her to Bob Horrell from Military Animal Project (a long-time friend of Carousel Ranch) who will advise her and offer guidance for working with the veterans. There are also plans for Victoria and Nastya to return for future training, and one day for Becky and Denise to visit their program in Ukraine.

In essence, Victory Center will be an international extension of the work done at Carousel Ranch using equestrian therapy as a core component to address trauma, anxiety and stress. Today, Victory Center is serving two veterans and planning to start their first child in the months to come – similar to how we began with one student and one horse in Becky's backyard. Despite being on two different continents – the connection is strong and we have nothing but confidence in Nastya, Victoria and Victory Center and the great things that will come of this collaboration.

*Nastya was selected for IVLP based on her incredible work with helping to establish the PR Army (an independent, non-profit organization) – dedicated to helping global media tell the accurate story of the war through the perspectives of Ukrainian experts, authorities and witnesses.*





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## WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS!



**BRIANA KOCHEN**



**SHANNON MEE**

## VOLUNTEER AT CAROUSEL RANCH!



Carousel Ranch is always looking for volunteers to assist in the work that we do in the equestrian program, for events and even in the office. As a volunteer, you will become a very important part of the Carousel Ranch team. If you are interested in working with us, please call (661) 268-8010 to schedule a time to visit or check out our website at [www.carouselranch.org/volunteers](http://www.carouselranch.org/volunteers)

### KAREN NOSALA - VOLUNTEER

Karen began volunteering in February after talking to some ladies who were riding in Whitney Canyon. Karen had been hiking that day, and asked them if they knew of anywhere she could volunteer with horses. They recommended Carousel Ranch...and the rest is history. Karen had been a lunch lady for 19 years and since retiring in 2019, she had really been missing the kids. From the first day here at the Ranch, it has been a perfect match for Karen (and us) and we are grateful to have Karen's help every week. Karen shares, "It is wonderful to see the way the instructors work with the students, getting the students excited about learning and how much they enjoy being with the horses. It absolutely touches your heart - Carousel Ranch is a very special place! This is my first experience with horses and I never imagined I would be so lucky to be able to be up close and have a hands on experience.

Karen sums it up perfectly... *"I believe in volunteering. When you are fortunate enough to be able to help others...you should."* In just a short time, Karen has become part of the Carousel Ranch family and we are thankful for the time she gives.





The work that we do is only possible with the help of others -  
Carousel Ranch is proud of its partnerships with individuals, foundations, corporations and organizations who are committed to supporting our mission, enabling us to improve the lives of children and adults with special needs.

Through financial gifts, event and horse sponsorships, and volunteer opportunities, Carousel Ranch's Partners make a direct impact on the children and adults we serve, as well as their families.

*Thank you to our partners!*  
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*Thank you to our sponsors!*

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### HELP HOPE GO ROUND AND ROUND

We invite you to join our monthly donor program and become a part of our Carousel Club.  
Your monthly gift enables us to continue to be a place of horses, healing and hope...  
*today and every day.*



As we approach the end of the year, it is time to look back and reflect on things that we are most grateful for. At Carousel Ranch, we are thankful for you. This year, we have been astounded by the love and support shown for the work that we do. We know that everything we do is part of a bigger picture, only possible through the love and kindness of people like YOU.

## SAVE THE DATE

### 2024 – Carousel Wishes & Valentine Kisses Campaign – Be a Fundraiser!

Join us in celebrating love & kindness by signing up to be a “fundraiser” for the 2024 campaign. This is the time when we ask that you keep our kids close to your heart. It’s easy to get involved...Set a fundraising goal, share with friends and family knowing that every dollar donated adds up to make a big difference in the year to come.