

# NEWSLETTER

FALL 2024



*With summer and Heart of the West behind us, we welcome the fall season and are filled with gratitude. The changing leaves remind us of the incredible transformations we have seen in our students—thanks to your support and dedication to the work that we do. We are grateful to have each of you as part of the Carousel Ranch community, standing along side of us in our efforts to make a difference... one student at a time. We wish you all a season of renewal, reflection and hope.*

## Heart of the West

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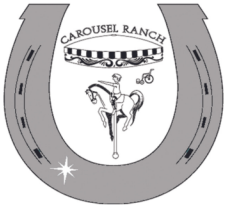
We are truly humbled by the incredible success of this year's Heart of The West. The overwhelming love and support we've received has been remarkable. Heart of the West would not have been possible without the generosity of our incredible sponsors, lifelong friends, the unwavering support of our community, and the dedication of our staff and students. We honestly could not be more grateful. Thank you for being the heart 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 because of YOU!

  
Caleb, Abram  
& Izzy were  
truly STARS!



Heart of the West



We hope you will join  
us again next year!

*Save the Date*

29th Annual Heart of the West  
Saturday, August 23th, 2025

*Thank You*  
TO EVERYONE WHO HELPED TO  
MAKE OUR EVENT A SUCCESS!

CAROUSEL RANCH'S  
HEART OF THE WEST

PRESENTED BY **Logix** smarter banking® 

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# EQUESTRIAN THERAPY

The equestrian program has always been the heart of Carousel Ranch. With the new season upon us, we are excited share that we are busy adding new students to the schedule, bringing joy, not only to the families, but to our team as well.

Each new student brings something new and special to the Ranch and it is an honor to be part of their journey.

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. Every session is tailored to meet them where they are, whether they are working on physical strength, balance, communication, behavior or self-confidence. Our team of dedicated staff brings both expertise and compassion, creating customized goals that bring out each child's potential and help them take meaningful steps toward reaching goals and milestones.

Our therapy horses are heroes who give their all every day — carrying not just their riders, but the hopes and dreams of families looking for ways to support their children's growth. Selected for their gentle natures, each horse is matched to the needs of the rider. The movement of the horse causes an inherent response from the child, 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. The bond they form with each child is transformative, offering comfort, building trust, and fostering growth that extends beyond the arena. Through these sessions, our horses and staff work together to provide opportunities for children to stretch their abilities while growing stronger, building confidence and experiencing the joy of riding.

**“THERE ARE MANY WONDERFUL PLACES IN THE WORLD, BUT ONE OF MY FAVORITE PLACES IS ON THE BACK OF MY HORSE.”**

-ROLF KOPFIE



## Caleb

*His mom's words say it all...  
“Caleb has a rare cardiac defect - HLHS that means that his heart didn't develop separate chambers. Once Caleb was born, we learned that he has a rare genetic syndrome called Coffin-Siris.*

*We weren't able to think about long term implications because most of Caleb's first year, we just focused on survival. But, even as we were living in and out of the hospital, my mom had hope for her grandson and put his name on Carousel's waitlist. She believed that one day Caleb would be able to do things that other little boys could do, and she knew the power of horses to help him start to walk.*

*He was just beginning to take semi-consistent steps when he had his 4th major open heart surgery in January, 2024. Recovery was harder than we expected and Caleb lost the ability to walk because he was bed bound.*

*When Caleb got off the waitlist, we were elated! We knew it would be a critical part of his recovery. And, indeed it was. By his second lesson, it was like he had been riding his whole life.*

*After the first month, we watched him carry himself differently and start to confidently take steps again. When Caleb saw his physical therapist, she just leaned back and said “Who is this boy?!” She explained that it was hard to plan because the amount of growth that he had made since starting at Carousel was exponential.*

*Just 4 months after starting Caleb fully gained the ability to walk. Among all the strength benefits, I delight in how much Caleb loves it. Caleb is nonverbal, so it's often hard to know the things he looks forward to. But, when I wake him up and let him know it's time to go to Carousel, Caleb will let out a “Yay!!” and try to climb out his bed, eager to get in the car and back on the horse.” -Anna Hurst (Caleb's mom)*

# READY TO WORK!

In RTW, 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, Ready to Work has completed 33 Level I cohorts and served over 112 participants. 53 of those students have participated in Level II (which didn't exist in the early years) with 41 or 77% of them securing paid employment. Additionally, 60% of the who have completed the RTW Academy (earning certification in their subject/trade) have secured employment. Carousel Ranch partners with dozens of local businesses to provide internships and employment, including DrinkPAK, Holiday Inn, Embassy Suites, Starbucks, Neotech Products, Santa Clarita Concrete and even Disneyland (to name just a few).

Paid employment represents true upward mobility for the young people we serve and helps businesses to see how differently-abled employees have unique gifts that bring richness, diversity and inclusivity to the workplace. This is a win-win for individuals and the larger economic landscape, elevating an eager and trained workforce to take their place in welcoming work environments.



**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](mailto:cgelfo@carouselranch.org) | 661-268-8010**



*Luke*

Luke is a hard worker with a contagious smile and a love for all things Disney! In February of 2023, Luke went to a job fair where he was able to talk to representatives at Disneyland and get more information on the jobs they had available. In September, at the culmination of his Level 2 course, he got a call back to complete several interviews and ended up securing a job at Disneyland's California Adventure at the Lamplight Lounge as a busser.

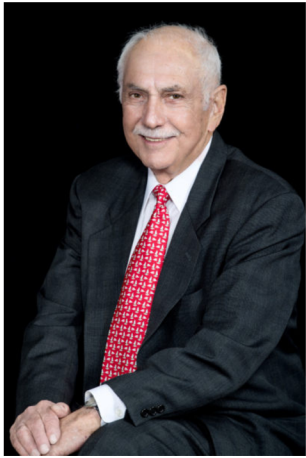
In preparation for his start date with Disney, Luke worked with his Ready to Work instructor Hannah on the skills he would need to be a great team player at his new job. He practiced focus and discipline, as well as the tasks he would be responsible for at work like bussing tables, taking out the trash and setting tables for guests. Disney prides itself on its fifth key of "inclusion", setting Luke up for success by allowing a job coach to be with him while he works.

Luke now works four days a week and enjoys the exciting environment of working at his favorite place on Earth! Luke learns by doing, so having the hands-on experiences from his Level 2 session has prepared him for success in his new career! Keep up the great work Luke!

His dad's words say it all...

*"Luke started two years ago in Level 1 and upon completion of finishing Level 2, Luke got an email from the Disney Company telling him that upon completion of a Disney orientation, he would begin work as a paid employee AND cast member at Disneyland bussing tables at Lamplight Lounge at Pixar Pier in California Adventure – a dream come true! Luke is 100% a Disney fan and has been talking for years to one day work at Disney, and here we are! Thank you Denise, Miss Hannah and Miss Camryn for your guidance and mentorship and God bless RTW"*

*– Mark Spinelli (Luke's dad)*



# THREADS OF CHANGE

## *How The John Gogian Foundation Wove a Legacy of Support for Carousel Ranch*

**"We don't accomplish anything in this world alone... and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one's life and all the weavings of individual threads form one to another that creates something."**

*- Sandra Day O' Connor*

This quote is so true and really resonates in trying to convey what The John Gogian Foundation made possible for Carousel Ranch over the past 17 years. Their never-ending belief in our work and potential was an amazing and powerful example of the true potential of philanthropy in every possible way. While most think of philanthropy in terms of donations – The Gogian Foundation was so much more than that and we will never take their investment and belief in us for granted.

In 2007, we submitted our first grant proposal and we were thrilled when they awarded us \$10,000. The funding meant so much to us, but we could have never imagined the impact that this new partnership would have on our organization. This was the beginning of a long and special relationship - far beyond grantor/grantee and since that time, we have grown and changed in ways we never thought possible.

We were fortunate to receive grants for 16 years in a row – ending in 2024 when the Foundation closed its doors. Through the years – the Foundation contributed an astounding \$1,426,200 to the Ranch. However, their contributions were so much more than financial and to say that Carousel Ranch would not be the organization it is today without them is truly an understatement.

In 2012, we were blessed to have John Gogian visit the Ranch along Lindsay Stammerjohn (then Executive Director) and a couple of board members. On that day, it was very hot. We stood under a tree with John and he asked what our biggest challenge was at that time. Being so hot that day, we shared that during hot weather it was extremely difficult and that often times, it meant we couldn't teach at all. We told him of our dream of a covered arena and right there and then, he committed to giving us \$75,000 toward building a covered arena if we could match it and raise the rest. He put us on a tight timeline and challenged us to make it happen... and we did. Two years later, we had raised the additional funds and secured many in-kind donations and the arena was built offering just what we needed to protect our staff, horses and children from the often grueling elements. That visit changed EVERYTHING... and led to the building of our covered arena – the realization of a long time dream come true.

On that same day, John spent a great deal of time talking to parents on the bench – observing lessons while their children rode. He was extremely moved by one particular child, her mom and their story. He shared that his own brother, David had encephalitis at age 11 and suffered infection and brain damage as a result, struggling with mental and physical disabilities until his death at 28 years old. John had watched his own mother go through so much – remaining dedicated and compassionate in her devotion to David, as well as others who faced hardship.

From there, John and the Foundation's passion for our work grew and so did their support. Throughout the years, we were not only granted with operating funds, but with support for on-going consulting and training (financial, programmatic, leadership, board and succession to name a few) along with the addition of a new modular building...



## THREADS OF CHANGE (CONTINUED)

and an office renovation to allow for space for our growing team. And, as we learned and grew as an organization, the foundation's investment in our work grew as well. In the later years, they were a huge part of our creation of the Ready to Work program and we were blessed to be chosen for a "legacy gift" in 2022 - paying off our mortgage - a gift that we could have never imagined.

This gift was made in honor of John's legacy as he passed away just after his 90th birthday in 2019. At that time, the Foundation began their plans to "sunset", eventually closing its doors in 2024. John was most proud of the support he could offer to assist developmentally disabled adults and children, vulnerable seniors, and vulnerable youth. He understood firsthand the difficulties faced by families with a special needs child, and he was filled with compassion to ease their struggles. He had a huge heart, and the Foundation will continue to fulfill his legacy.

In closing - we can't end this story without expressing the magnitude of the Foundation's two amazing Executive Directors, Lindsey Stammerjohn (through September, 2021) and Sue Cody from that point until the foundation closed in March, 2024.

For so many years, Lindsey worked to not only support programs, but to strengthen organizations. She and the Foundation provided training and capacity building to the Foundation's key partners, convened them and built a networked community of all of us. She encouraged peer learning and mutual support. She was an amazing leader, confidant, mentor and friend and we will never take for granted the many ways she invested her time, talents and treasure in helping us (and so many others) be the very best organization we could be.

Following her retirement in 2021, Sue Cody became the Executive Director and met us right where Lindsey left off without missing a beat. With her guidance, we were gifted with continued funds for coaching, strategic planning and transition planning for succession of the Executive Director role. Sue made sure that as we received the final three years of grants that each was meaningful and targeted toward getting us where we needed to be to remain sustainable beyond their support. We are proud to say, that together with Sue, we did just that.

We cannot begin to express how grateful we are to not only John Gogian, Lindsey and Sue, but to the board members (Dan, Kate, Gary, Becky, Carole, Greg and Tom) who were our champions behind the scenes, always voting to continue the support and betterment of Carousel Ranch. It has been an honor and blessing beyond measure.



*The John Gogian Family Foundation*



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBER!



Darin Seegmiller is a seasoned professional with a strong background in community engagement and public administration, particularly through his work with the City of Santa Clarita. With nearly twenty years of experience in project management and a passion for community service, Darin is eager to bring his insights and skills to Carousel Ranch as a board member.

His role in the city has provided him with valuable experience and cherished relationships, allowing him to effectively foster partnerships that drive meaningful change. With a unique blend of strategic thinking and a heartfelt commitment to service, Darin aims to help the organization implement programs and projects that will sustain its impact well into the future. Darin is excited to join the Carousel Ranch community and contribute to its impactful mission.



## 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)

# THANK YOU!

Kaiser Permanente | Canyon Cowboy Football Team | Church of Christ  
John Murray Plumbing | Jimenez Demolition | Knight Building Systems  
Logix Federal Credit Union | National Charity League | Starbucks

These incredible groups have donated their time to help this year!

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!*  
**MULTI-YEAR PARTNERSHIPS**

**CHAMPION**

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Los Angeles County 5th District Supervisor Kathryn Barger

**PLATINUM**

Inside SCV - Jeanna & Kyle Crawford  
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**GOLD**

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*Thank you to our sponsors!*

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TAFT ELECTRIC  
WASCHAK FAMILY FOUNDATION



## CAROUSEL CLUB

### 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.*

*Special thank you to our Carousel Club members!*

CHERI & WADE BRADFORD | BRITTANY CASE | CYNTHIA HARPER CONMAY  
AL & RUTH FOGEL | JOSE & SANDRA GAMBOA | DEBBIE GOLIN & GARY KAMINSKY  
ROBERT & PATRICIA KENNEDY | JUANITA MEDINA | FRANCES SAOUD | SUE SCOTT



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.

To make a gift TODAY, visit our website at [www.CarouselRanch.org/Donate](http://www.CarouselRanch.org/Donate)

## SAVE THE DATE

**2025 – Carousel Wishes & Valentine Kisses Campaign – Be a Fundraiser!**

Join us in celebrating love & kindness by signing up to be a “fundraiser” for the 2025 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.