



Quarterly  
Newsletter

# Making Strides

January 2017

## IN THIS ISSUE

A Word from Betty Gray  
Celebrations  
New Staff  
In the Community  
Show Time  
Dream Team  
Program Development  
Training and Education  
From the Board  
Upcoming Events

### *A Word from Betty Gray, Executive Director*



I hope 2017 is off to a good start for everyone! We at Stirrups n' Strides are excited about our programs and looking forward to many good things coming to fruition this year!

I can't begin to sufficiently thank our wonderful, faithful, hard-working volunteers! You are the "heart and soul" of our program! You have shown your dedication time and time again, rain or shine, heat or cold, you are there from early hours in the morning until evening hours for some.

Remembering that each and every volunteer brings with them their own unique set of experience and expertise to Stirrups 'n Strides and each contribution is as valuable as the next. From "oldie Goldie to Newbie" and volunteers at all levels of horsemanship, you bring a broad range of knowledge to our cause. Stirrups 'n Strides volunteers have made a great amount of progress in learning new horsemanship skills this year in order to better serve those in the program. Thank you so very much!!

Last October we held our **Annual Yard Sale** raising over \$2,500.00! Our appreciation goes out to so many who donated items, to our shoppers and volunteers who participated in this effort.

What a fun time **Jammin' at Jumbolair** was!! We opened the night's activities with the video produced by Wells Fargo telling the story of how it all began for us. If

you have not seen it (and even if you have) I encourage you to view it once in a while to be reminded why we do what we do and what is being accomplished! A "Big Thank You" to Frank Merschman, owner of Jumbolair, Champion Sponsor and special guest for the evening. We are fortunate to have such a lovely facility for this event. Another "Big Thanks" to all our table sponsors, those who sold and bought tickets, gave amazing theme basket donations and yummy desserts! And a Huge "Thank You" to the many volunteers who worked so diligently with organizing, setting up and cleaning up. It was a great evening and all of you helped raise over \$26,000 to benefit our cause!

Our annual Christmas Party was fun for all! Everyone brought delightful dishes to share and Santa arrived by cart pulled by Lazer with Laney McGivern as Santa's elf driver. "Thanks" to Beth Joens for helping Santa again with gifts for everyone adding to the Christmas cheer!

Our horses also had a wonderful Christmas! Volunteers and donors gave gifts of new halters, lead ropes, fly masks, carrots, supplies and horse care donations. They certainly thrive from the love and attention you give them! A big heartfelt thanks from all of them to all of you!! They are looking great for the New Year!

We are so very fortunate to have many organizations, generous donors, sponsors and volunteers supporting the Stirrups 'n Strides mission. Because of you, our riders continue to grow physically, emotionally and mentally.

A BIG "Thank You" to everyone!! *Betty*

## Celebrations at Stirrups 'n Strides



### Awards & Recognition

Congratulations to Us! Stirrups 'n Strides was voted **Best of the Best** in the Best Animal Charity category, **Reader's Choice Award 2016**, Ocala Star Banner! A great example of how our hard work and dedication is being recognized in the community!

Congratulations!! YOU DO make a difference!!

### Lordy, Lordy, Look who Turned 40!!

Hard to believe, but Kathy Gray turned FORTY in December. We had a fun birthday celebration in her honor deeming her "princess" for a day! Kathy continues to spread her own special "sunshine" each and every day at Stirrups 'n Strides reminding us of how much our riders thrive from the benefits of therapeutic riding. Thank you Kathy, you truly are an inspiration to us all.



### Welcome Aboard! New Staff

As we continue to grow our programs, we also need to grow our staff. We are pleased to welcome Gail McDaniel, Program Assistant and Debbie Parker, Barn Manager.

Gail moved to the area and found us as soon as she got here and we are fortunate to have her!! She brings with her a wealth of experience and knowledge as she studied Graphic Design/Multimedia at State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota and has a background in communications in higher education and healthcare along with a dedication to equine assisted therapy.

She is at the forefront of developing our community awareness and community workshops and maintaining community partnerships and sustainability strategies. She is also in the process of becoming a PATH Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning.

Debbie has been with Stirrups 'n Strides for five years, starting out as a volunteer. As a volunteer, she was recognized at the end of the last riding season with an award for over 500 hours of volunteer service for 1 year. She also serves as a PATH certified instructor. Now she

is our barn manager and keeps us all on track, volunteers and horses alike!

Both Gail and Debbie are a huge asset to the program with not only their capabilities, but their kind, sweet way of working with all of us and making it a delight to come to the farm! They are never too busy to help in any way! As a PATH member facility, they make sure we follow PATH horsemanship guidelines, knowing that when we all function the same way, we provide a much safer environment for our riders, horses, volunteers and visitors. Thank you both Gail and Debbie!!

### Community Awareness & Partnerships

We are developing a new public awareness campaign for volunteer recruitment, program development and fundraising to extend our reach into the community via social media, print and online communications. Our theme is *The "Magic" of Horses Helping People*.



You can help build our Stirrups 'n Strides Facebook presence by actively participating with LIKES, SHARES to friends and

COMMENTS. Social Media is an important part of community outreach that helps us on many levels.

### Community Partnerships

We continue to develop community partnerships and cultivate those we already have. The sponsors and support of our community, as you know, are a main component of gaining momentum and continuing to make progress toward achieving our goals. Some of our regularly attended community groups include: **Gala of the Royal Horses** Volunteers enjoy helping at this event on Sundays and also get to see these amazing horses perform!

**Sportsability:** Thank you to the 20 volunteers who helped make it possible for disabled people to have the opportunity to enjoy our horses!

**CEP – Chamber and Economic Partnerships:** Being a part of this enables us to spread our wings in our community meeting many new people and increasing our visibility.

**Ocala Rotary Club:** Betty and Kathy have attended functions weekly for the past 10 years. Another great way to meet people, sustain relationships and get our mission out there.

**Stirrups ‘n Strides Community Partners:**

- Marion County Non-Profit Council
- Children’s Alliance
- Marion County Health Alliance
- Phoenix House
- Arnett House
- University of Florida
- College of Central Florida
- B-C Foundation Station

**Show Time!**

**Kansas City UPHA Exceptional Challenge Cup:**

Betty, Kathy and two of our riders, Daniel Cruz and Tori Smalt attended this show and had a wonderful time. Our riders placed in the top 10 finalists. Congratulations for a job well-done!

**Challenge Show 2017 at Grand Oaks:** Thank you to the many volunteers, riders and parents for making this Challenge Show a HUGE success! You proved how tough and dedicated you are, braving the freezing temperatures and rain! The show certainly lived up to its reputation of lousy weather! There were 70 riders in all along with families and spectators! We so appreciate our judges, John Rannenberg and Judy Whaley for their support and time!

Thank you to the Grand Oaks for letting us use their beautiful facility!



NOW...no time to breath!! NEXT is.....

**Special Olympics Area Games – February 11th**  
Stirrups ‘n Strides is hosting area games for the region on site and we’ll need lots of volunteers. We are expecting 60 riders and a great turnout! We’ll be having a bake sale to raise \$ and need lots of goodie contributions. Food will also be available for purchase (free for riders).

**Stirrups ‘n Strides Horses - Our Dream Team!**

Let’s give a round of applause to our wonderful therapy horses! **Amigo, Beanie, Ben, Feliz, Fritz, Lazer, Lilly, Nick, Poncho, Regis, Stewart, Signey, Tara, Tex and Tucker!** Most of them are former show horses, but all of them are stars!! They are making dreams come true and



enhancing the lives of many people. They have a special mission for this time in their lives and they are

doing it with grace, love and fun, fun, fun!! We LOVE our Dream Team!

**Program Development**

**Phoenix House and Arnett House**

In the Fall we implemented a new mental health component to the programs we offer by partnering with The Phoenix House and Arnett House. Part of their “treatment” for clients, both male and female is now done with equine assisted therapy. Our staff and volunteers are playing an active role in working with Phoenix House and Arnett House staff and interacting with the riders. We are seeing great results and are thrilled to be partnering with them! Once again, the power of Horse “Magic” in motion!

**Stirrups ‘n Stripes Veterans Program**

**Vets Helping Vets**

Our parallel program for veterans works in collaboration with The Marion County Veterans Helping Veterans and the endorsement of Equine Services for Heroes and Wounded Warrior Programs through our mother organization PATH International. Our goals are connected to the Equine Services for Heroes and we are looking forward to growing this extraordinary program through “Stirrups ‘n Stripes” this year.

### ***Special Projects Program***

Gail is developing a volunteer base for special projects with the University of Florida student clubs. We are excited to have UF students at Stirrups 'n Strides! You'll be seeing them on the farm doing a variety of activities. First job accomplished, the new arena fence is painted! Nice job! Welcome, students and many thanks!

### ***New Arena – Making Strides***

- Fence is painted!
- Gates are up!
- Footing is in!
- Arena is ready for riding!
- Walking Into the Future – 53 bricks purchased!
- Need: 9 stalls & Community room built!
- Need: Electricity & water put in!!

Our goal is to move classes to the covered arena by summer. Dreams ARE coming true!

### ***Walking Into the Future, Brick by Brick***

Our new arena community walk project is progressing and we have 53 engraved bricks to date. Our goal is 200. Remember, you can purchase a brick to engrave in memory or in honor of someone, as a special gift or to promote a business. (Purchase bricks online at [stirrupsnstrides.com](http://stirrupsnstrides.com).)

### ***Training and Education***

#### **B-C Foundation Station, Chris Cook Natural Horsemanship 101 Training**

Staff and volunteers enjoyed 2 training days with Chris Cook at B-C Foundation Station last fall. Chris taught natural horsemanship techniques such as greeting and catching tips for easy haltering, horse psychology, horsenalties, connecting, the power of positive energy, leading techniques, listening to your horse and, at the end of the day, releasing back to the “herd”. Thanks to Chris, Jake and the great folks at B-C for a great day! The excitement is contagious and we are putting what we learned to good use. This foundation offers horse development programs to equine therapy centers to help their staff, volunteers and horses be more equipped in helping people live a better life.

#### **Community Development Workshop**

Saint Leo University

Betty and Gail are attending a series of classes for grant development, establishing and maintaining community partnerships and sustainability strategies.

### **PATH Certifications in Process**

Anne Blue, Riding Instructor, Gail McDaniel, Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning. These ladies add so much to our program!

### ***From the Board***

#### ★ BOARD MEMBERS ★

Stacey Spence, President  
Rebecca Moore, Comptroller  
Sandy Donaldson, Secretary  
Elaine Richter, Treasurer  
Laney McGivern, Director  
Jim McGivern, Director

Anyone interested in joining our Board? We are looking for 1 or 2 qualified people to join our board and help Stirrups 'n Strides “Walk Into the Future”. Please let us know if you or someone you know is interested.

### ***Upcoming Events***

**February 11th** – Special Olympics Area Games – hosted by Stirrups 'n Strides

**March 24th-25th** – State Special Olympics – Grand Oaks, Weirsdale

**Saturday, April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017** Volunteer Appreciation Day at Stirrups 'n Strides. Volunteers, save the date...April 29<sup>th</sup> for a special day of fun planned just for you!



Thank you for all you do Stirrups 'n Strides Volunteers!