

Ride On St. Louis

RIDEONSTL.ORG

EQUINE-ASSISTED SERVICES

SINCE 1998

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF SERVICE!



From 1998, volunteer instructor and OT/A Jane O'Connell demonstrates an exercise for client Libby, riding Diego led by cofounder Marita Wassman.

Together we have forged a fellowship of generosity, love and support at Ride On St. Louis to uplift and inspire one another. One of the most splendid things about our Ride On St. Louis community is that it enables us to welcome and help each other in ways we could not achieve alone. Prayers, families, clients, donors, dedicated staff, and volunteers give life and meaning to Ride On St. Louis, and are the reason why we have existed for a quarter of a century now. You are the beating heart of Ride On St. Louis! I could write indefinitely about the power of a touch, a smile, a caring word, listening ears, an honest compliment, or the simplest act of caring that helps transform lives through Ride On St. Louis.

My husband Rick and I founded Ride
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A great big thank you and great big news

Each year Ride On St. Louis clients make meaningful improvements that support their whole health. "Thanks to Ride On St. Louis, I no longer think about suicide," says a young adult. "I no longer walk with a cane," says another. "My son now wears hats and mittens," a parent of a child with autism reports. "Ride On St. Louis helps me feel like I have control. It helps me sort through all the stuff that makes autism tough to deal with," says one child. These testimonies are just a window into

how Ride On St. Louis is changing lives every moment. Thank you for choosing to support our mission!

Ride On St. Louis celebrates our quarter-century birthday, a 25-year milestone that proves our utmost commitment to service. We have big plans ahead to ensure that Ride On St. Louis continues as a resource that our loved ones can count on for exceptional health programs.

Ride On St. Louis is fulfilling strategic



Guests at the June 2022 Forever Home Gala champion the campaign to secure a forever property.

plans to acquire our own property to compliment and enhance the center's distinct offerings and qualities.

Ride On St. Louis Forever Home Campaign spans an 18+ month course that lays critical foundation to accomplish our \$2.9M target in a 5-year period. Our project plan measures success in meeting

an existing \$1M operations goal, new \$1.7M capital goal and new \$1M endowment goal. To date, we have achieved all 2021 and 2022 campaign milestones prepared in our comprehensive advancement calendar. 2023 project implementation is underway. Our multi-phase Forever Home campaign will position Ride On St. Louis



Ride On St. Louis supporters including Lt. Gen. William G. "Jerry" Boykin, featured Gala speaker, dine as emcee Stefanie Stark introduces the campaign.

to continue as the community organization that St. Louis and our surrounding neighbors count on for the increased health and well-being of children, adults and veterans.

Our Forever Home is vital for our community loved-ones who need healing, hope and love.

With the offerings of a permanent location, Ride On St. Louis will be better equipped to make a bigger impact, lower service fees, increase

collaborations, and address our expanding waiting list with new and increased opportunities of community enrichment and health services. This facility will be the only accredited equine-assisted service center in the area to provide officially recognized, authorized and sanctioned services incorporating equine movement, interaction and or environment with a professionally licensed and credentialed staff.

New to Ride On St. Louis?

At Ride On St. Louis we promote health and enrich lives through love, joy and holistic healing. The center promotes the willing spirit of service, the offering of good works, the duty of caring and the giving of love with an open heart to God's Peace and Joy. We are a comprehensive non-profit serving veterans, youth, and children and adults with health complications, as well as, the retired equine-assisted service horses who partner in our programs. Ride On St. Louis offers services that incorporate the equine environment and horse-human interaction, to provide substantial and sustaining quality of life improvements.

Explore our website at rideonstl.org to learn more about our mission to promote health and enrich lives, and how you can get involved as a client, volunteer, donor or sponsor.

CHANGING LIVES

We work tirelessly to provide quality long-term improvements for each person that comes through our barn doors. Our services are designed to reach each person individually to achieve the greatest results. Our approach better activities of daily living and functional challenges.

CONTACT US

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On St. Louis at our home in South St. Louis County, with a handful of caring people, who all volunteered their creative and professional talents. Our first bank account was opened from funds donated at an impromptu lemonade stand; our bylaws were made, we held our first fundraising event, and outlined a six-week pilot program. Later that year our first grant award arrived August 25th, the feast day of our namesake King Saint Louis IX. Our prayers were being heard and answered. As word spread, demand increased and we needed to expand our herd. A week later, we received a phone call from a family looking to donate the ideal program horse, Golden “Nugget.”

That opening year our equine-assisted services delivered un-duplicated programs that achieved successful and meaningful health and quality of life improvements for children and adults with disabilities. 25 years later, we have served more than 2,500 families through God’s guidance and you, our community of faithful friends and family. But it’s more than just clients and families who have made improvements—like speaking first words, improving core strength to control incontinency, repairing relationships, rewiring gait patterns to become more mobile, tackling

depression, improving mental capacity, or bettering job skills. I have witnessed, and been told on numerous accounts about the sprawling benefits radiating from new friendships, health opportunities, education, and values shared with those who have involved themselves as donors, volunteers, and supportive family members of benefactors.

Over the years, our clients have made life-changing gains as a result of our programs. These advancements, our organizational accomplishments, accolades, and added certifications fill us with drive and vision for the current programs and the future goals for the Ride On St. Louis Forever Home campaign. I hope you enjoy reading the articles included in this edition, as they reflect the life changing transformations and joy you help deliver. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for your prayers, contributions and continued interest in improving lives with equine-assisted services.

Blessings,

Marita Wassman



I would not be alive without Ride On St. Louis



Josh, who has been involved with Ride On St. Louis since 2011, smiles as he tacks up his “heart horse” Remington in this photo taken in 2012. Josh shares his story of healing through horses, below.

MY STORY AND HOW I FOUND RIDE ON ST. LOUIS

I dropped out of school in 8th grade; that same year my mom, who had been dealing with MS since her pregnancy with me, had a stroke. I was home all day taking care of my mom... I was struggling with depression and anxiety really bad and needed to find something to do. My aunt, who lived with us and helped take care of my mom, saw an ad for equine-assisted services and called Ride On St. Louis for me. At the time, I didn’t know what that was, but I wanted to be around horses. I was 17 and was just looking for work (more so than wanting to receive services).



In 2011 a few weeks after Josh's first day, he's seen here driving the "mule" and tackling morning chores.



Josh (left) and team assist in a physical therapy session in 2014.



Josh and Sue working together with a client participant from Pony Bird in a 2016 Unmounted Activities session.

MY FIRST DAY I WAS TERRIFIED

My anxiety was through the roof. I was quiet, didn't talk much and just didn't like to be around people. I had never had a job and didn't know what to expect. I was a fish out of water. I remember helping pick up sticks after the river flooded a turnout. I was on overload—I couldn't even comprehend what to do with the sticks even though we were just tossing them over the fence line.

It took me a long time to feel comfortable enough to actually start talking to the people there and open up a bit.

DAY TO DAY LIFE

I had a lot of trauma from abuse. My dad made me feel like I had to be perfect, everything I did was supposed to be perfect, and he was never satisfied. Sometimes he'd yell for hours. This made other relationships and communicating difficult because I would just shut down. I took any

criticism or direction the wrong way; it would just flood me with emotion that I couldn't control or handle.

My depression and anxiety has been hard to control and treat. I've been admitted to hospitals, residential places, outpatient, counseling, and even resorted to electric shock treatments. My trauma still affects me to this day, but one thing I was able to realize and change was recognizing that not every comment was an attack on me or was pointing out that I did something "wrong."

I used to have this inner dialogue that always told me that I was worthless—a mistake in the world that shouldn't exist.

Early on there were times I felt like I did tasks poorly when learning my job, and I would just go hide away in a stall, crying uncontrollably. I'll never forget Sue [a core Ride On St. Louis volunteer], who during one of these times, had told me that "not everyone in this world is out to punish you and put you down." And that I didn't always have to be on defense.

There are still times that I deal with these thoughts, but I can still hear Sue's voice and I know now to question that inner dialogue.

RIDE ON ST. LOUIS TRULY CHANGED MY LIFE

Ride On St. Louis is made up of such a strong community. I really experienced that community working with others through good times and bad. Without Ride On St. Louis I would have never met Sue, who I think of as my adopted mom. She has done so many things for me that I wouldn't be able to list them all. Sue [who passed away in 2021] was always there for me. She bought me a car, made sure that I was taken care of mentally, spiritually, and in every other way I needed.

I don't know what I would have done without Marita [Ride On St. Louis's CEO]. Especially during recent years, Marita always makes sure God is with me. She knows when I am struggling, even when I say I'm fine she always sees deeper.

I would have never been able to learn how to have a job without Ride On St. Louis. And after a few years of learning and working at the barn, I got hired to work at Walmart. Without everything I had experienced and learned through my time at the barn, I wouldn't have even lasted a day at Walmart. I was able to take all of the skills I learned at Ride On St. Louis and apply them.

A HORSE TO BOND WITH

I loved all the horses at Ride On St. Louis, but something drew me to Remington over the rest of the herd. He was taller, a brown warmblood and so gentle and caring. He was an old soul. I could let go of everything I was holding in; I could yell, scream, and cry when he was around. Remi did something different for me. Remi had a silent way of teaching me what I needed to learn.

Remi was the first horse that I started doing ground work with [which refers to exercises performed without being on horseback]. He knew how the routine went so he pretty much just did it himself, but that helped to build my confidence. And he was the first horse that I rode by myself and that made me feel so accomplished.

We would ride in the arena or we would go out for a trail ride around the property. He was the horse that was the best teacher for me.

In 2013 Ride On St. Louis was flooded pretty bad. It was chaos. That same year, Remi died. It wasn't the first time I had dealt with loss and death. The summer before I lost both my mom and my aunt, two months apart, and Remi was my support during that year.

as her own and was so instrumental in my life. One day during my first summer she was sharing a bible study with a couple other people at the barn. Before that moment, I didn't know much about Jesus or God. Sue knew a little about my childhood and the abuse from my dad. She told me that God is my Father and that He loves me. And since that moment, I invited God into my life and have had Christ in my life.

WHAT I'M MOST PROUD OF

When I first started learning to drive the horse trailer I felt so accomplished in myself and accomplished because Marita trusted me. Because I was able to learn how to drive it, I was able to help a friend drive a horse to

WHEN I REACHED A TURNING POINT

Through all the volunteers, staff, and clients, I have built up such a network of people that I didn't have before, especially Sue. She always treated me



April and Josh getting ready for their lesson in 2018.

LOVE STRENGTH & JOY

25 years, a quarter of a century, and counting! We reflect on all the blessings, challenges and relationships that have allowed us to serve others through a variety of supports and collaborations.

We couldn't possibly fit all our celebrations and milestones into this timeline... but these moments and many more can be explored right now on our 25TH ANNIVERSARY TIMELINE at www.rideonstl.org/timeline

1998

Establishment and launch of program.



2002

At home on the Anheuser Estate.



2005

New service partner, Variety Children's.



Kentucky and back.

Another achievement is my work to help train April [a large pony, Haflinger mare]. When April came to Ride On St. Louis she was trained to ride, but needed to build strength, balance, and rhythm. One of the trainers, Nancy, worked with us every week and I learned to ride April during that time. After months of foundation work with a lot of walking and some trotting, we were able to start working on her canter. Even though I fell off the first time we cantered, we both got better as time went on. From there we continued and eventually I was able to ride April independently.

I am most proud of these achievements because I was trusted to be able to do them. Instead of feeling like a failure, I felt empowered by the knowledge and abilities to do these things on my own.

WHAT I WANT YOU TO KNOW ABOUT RIDE ON ST. LOUIS

I would not be alive without Ride On St. Louis. I tried to take my life multiple times, but the community of people at Ride On St. Louis is the reason I'm alive today. I'm lucky I have their support and the friends

I've met there. I'm alive to tell my story and further God's Kingdom.

Even though I have all the support from Ride On St. Louis, I keep up with most of them through Facebook or texting, since Ride On St. Louis doesn't have an office or the activities it used to during their relocation. It will be so great to have a Forever Home where we can all be together more often again. I just think about all the people that Ride On St. Louis

can help at their Forever Home. I really hope and pray for their Forever Home, so every staff, volunteer, and client will have the opportunity for the same impact and experience that I had through Ride On St. Louis. So many people don't know about all those special moments that extend beyond the barn. Ride On St. Louis has benefits for everyone that gets involved. My hope for me and Ride On St. Louis is for a wonderful Forever Home.



In 2022 we welcomed our friends from Pony Bird to the barn! Josh assists Valarie from the bus to the paddock where our equine lessons take place.

2006

Performance Award,
WASHU research.



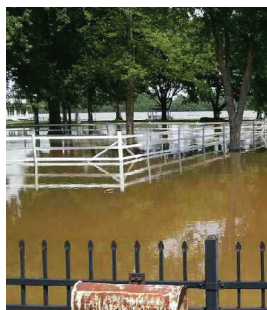
2010

Program hours
exceed 5,000!



2013

Overcomes first
major flood event.



2014

Children's Hospital &
DASA collab begins.



2015

Pony Bird, Inc. collab,
more major flooding.





Left to right: Marita Wassman, Ride On St. Louis CEO, Style (horse), PAL McKayla, PAL Haley, Ashley Meyer OFC, Diego (horse), and PALs Elijah and Jackson wrap up the inaugural six-week summer program collaboration.

'22 Police Department Collab Inspires Youth



Youth with the Police Athletic League practice their horse grooming skills while learning the importance of equine skin and coat care.

Story By Officer Ashley Meyer

Each Saturday morning my alarm went off early, and I'd get dressed and driven to the barn by my mom. When my mom returned to get me, sometimes I'd be covered in sweat, dirt, hay, and even manure (it's just an occasional, minor side effect). Ride On St. Louis was brand new, at the time, and I was still a kid at 12 years old. But I loved walking into the barn those Saturday mornings.

2016

Record flood halts service for 6 months.



2017

Yet again, emergency evac. due to floods.



2018

MIZZOU veterans research begins.



2019

Barn Buddies start. Exit Anheuser Estate.



2020

Interim site occupied in Jefferson County.



The sun was starting to peak through the dawn and the soft sounds of eager horses met me at my arrival. Everything about being at the barn was like nothing else I'd ever experienced. I can still smell the grain and fresh hay. It was hard work. However each Saturday afternoon, I'd leave knowing that I accomplished something that many kids my age didn't get to experience.

That was many years ago. I've worked as a Police Officer in St. Louis County for 12 years now working in patrol and responding to emergency calls. I have been on the riot lines in Ferguson, and I've been shot at. Currently, I work with children in the St. Louis County schools to strengthen and sometimes restore the connection we so desperately need between our police and the community.

I get to walk into schools wearing gym shorts and a t-shirt, but build a connection with kids as "Officer Ashley." We play dodgeball, basketball or whatever is scheduled in gym that day and we get to know each other as individuals. Because I'm a police officer, some kids are still hesitant in approaching me, even in gym shorts and a t-shirt. I was tutoring a group of PAL members one day after school and an 8th grade student walked into the classroom and said, "Oh no! It's the 5-0. I hate the police because they will shoot me!" and ran out of the classroom. I was really surprised by that. But two years after that happened, that same kid happened to be on a PAL hike with me. It turns out that he joined the PAL club a few months after that incident. We all had a good laugh at the coincidence and I asked him if he still felt that way, if he still has hatred towards police officers. He dropped his head and said, "No." He went on to say that he didn't mean what he had said and that he felt influenced by others. He further shared how he really enjoys spending time with me, our PAL group, and the other officers that are in the unit. Making a positive difference in my PAL members' lives is what I try to accomplish every day, even if the difference seems small, it's a step in the right direction.

Overall, I work with hundreds of kids everyday. My goal is to always establish a positive relationship between the police and our children in our community. If I can do that, I feel like I have successfully done my job.

I chose to bring my PAL members to Ride On St. Louis because I remember

About the PAL Program

The St. Louis County Police Athletic League (PAL) is an organization in which members of the police department coach young boys and girls in sports, help with homework and other school-related activities. The purpose is to enrich youth, build character, help strengthen police-community relations, and deter children from becoming involved in criminal activity.

For more information about the PAL program visit www.stlouiscopal.com



PAL members work together to navigate a drainage issue in the field.

2020

Innovative Distanced Service launches.



2021

Distanced Service expands with Variety.



2022

PAL partnership start, Pony Bird resumes!



2023

We look forward to continuing service to others through God's guidance and grace.



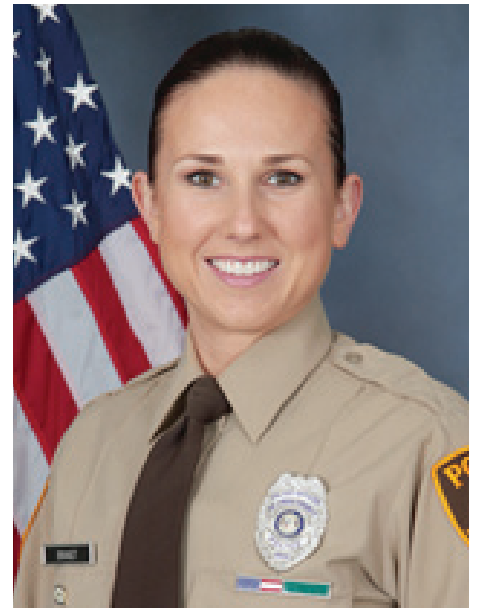
the impact it had on me at their age. Ride On St. Louis introduced me to a new type of responsibility and at the same time was a healthy outlet. I wanted to bring my PAL members out to have this opportunity, to learn responsibility, to get away from electronics, and enjoy being outside, working together.

When we visited Ride On St. Louis this summer, my kids felt a tremendous responsibility bestowed upon them. They were the ones that helped to keep the barn moving, that the horses relied on that day. We took care of their pasture, the tools we used to get the jobs done, and we learned how to give back. I was so impressed that my PAL members were up to this challenge and they were really inspired to give while they

were there. Working alongside the kids while cleaning and taking care of the barn is something I know we'll all remember. And watching them interact with the horses, learning about their care, asking questions and even getting to pick out and clean horse hooves, is a great experience not everyone their age gets to have. It was a great summer, working side by side with them, having wonderful discussions about life, and just enjoying each other's company.

Ride On St. Louis is truly an amazing program. The hard work and dedication it takes for Ride On St. Louis to function day to day is impressive. The community is really benefitting from Ride On St. Louis... one kid at a time, and I hope these kids can continue with the center.

Our experience was very therapeutic, and a wonderful stress relief from everyday life.



Officer Ashley Meyer was selected to join the PAL unit in 2019.

Your support enriches lives



Pony Bird resident Thomas explores tactile sensations with the assistance of volunteer Kami Kimes, April (horse) and CEO Marita Wassman. Groups of up to six residents and four caregivers made visits to the barn this summer.

After Unmounted Activities with Pony Bird, Inc. went online during the height of the pandemic, we were ecstatic to resume in-person services this past year! Outcomes include increased levels of happiness, hopefulness/motivation, self-awareness, relaxation, and exercise; and decreased levels of isolation, loneliness, boredom, and anxiety. Secondary outcomes include: increased functionality that may transfer to activities such as eating, bathing, toileting and/or transferring; and improvements in caregiver morale and attitude (to feel valued and appreciated for what they do and enhance connectedness).

Because of our commitment to serve the most vulnerable regardless of their financial abilities, this program and all 2022 services are offered at no-cost and is entirely supported through individual donations, foundation grant investments, and fundraising efforts of Ride On St. Louis.



Your gift today matched up to \$25k

Giving isn't just about making a donation—it's about making a difference. Your gift this season of giving can have twice the impact thanks to an anonymous supporter!

Gifts up to \$25,000 will be matched (and could even be tripled). Many employers offer matching gift funds to current and even retired employees. Will you please ask your business if your gift is eligible? Thank you for your support. It means so much to us.

We know you have many options when it comes to giving; we don't take your support for granted. Please know that your gift really makes a huge impact on the programs offered at Ride On St. Louis and the children,

adults and people in need who benefit from our services.

If your values, hopes and heart resonate with our mission to serve, we ask you to consider making your year-end gift now.

If you've already given, thank you from the bottom of our hearts, and thank you for helping us take full advantage of this special 25th Anniversary match opportunity!

Check out our live goal meter and contribute at rideonstl.org/match

Make a difference by year's end

UNLOCK A \$25K MATCH WITH YOUR DONATION

Today is your chance to make a difference this year. If you're able to be generous this season of giving, your gift of any amount will be matched up to \$25,000. We don't take your support for granted, so thank you for choosing to help keep us in the community.

CREATE YOUR OWN FACEBOOK FUNDRAISER AND SHARE IT WITH YOUR FRIENDS!

Creating a fundraiser is easy and we welcome fundraisers with any goal amount at facebook.com/fundraisers. Remember, all gifts will be matched!

SHARE OUR MISSION

Our programs are made possible through the kindness and generosity of people in the community we serve. Sharing this newsletter, forwarding our emails, and talking to friends helps spread our mission and efforts to make life changing advancements possible.

FOR OUR CLIENTS & THE INTENTIONS OF RIDE ON ST. LOUIS, SAY A SPECIAL PRAYER

During this joyous Christmas season and throughout the year, please pray for all those we serve and for the intentions of Ride On St. Louis.

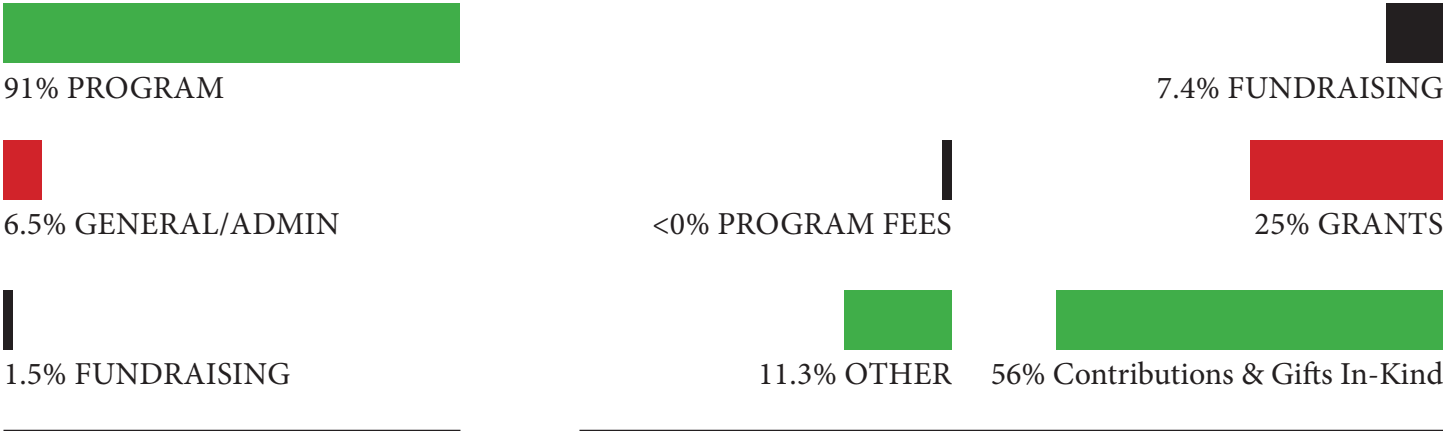
Annual Report to the Community, 2021

Financials

MISSION To promote health and enrich lives through love, joy and holistic healing.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS Kati Bishop, Dominic Lampasi, Keith O’Connell, Kim Sebaugh, Marita Wassman

The quality of our organization is always a priority. Ride On St. Louis provides community volunteers, advocates, and investors the credible, quality outlet they are seeking to provide children and adults with health challenges the resources they need to live joyful fulfilling lives. Our elected practices ensure top-level function and integrity in governance and programming, and translate to our supporters and 1,220 services hours for 84 beneficiaries in 2021.



\$248,040 TOTAL EXPENSE*

\$239,803 TOTAL REVENUE | ENDING NET ASSETS \$57,562



Students and alumni from Maryville University offer their volunteer service through 2022 Maryville Reaches Out. On average, volunteers provide almost 7,000 hours yearly, saving Ride On St. Louis nearly \$300,000 in annual staff costs.

**Financial method follows full accrual accounting practices, opposed to cash accounting or modified accounting. Revenue and expenses (including non cash transactions, nonfunctional and depreciation etc.) are recognized in the same period and recorded when a transaction occurs vs. when payment is received or made. Ride On St. Louis’s 2021 cash flow remains positive. Ride On St. Louis is a Better Business Bureau Accredited Charity Seal Holder and recipient of the Platinum Seal of Transparency from GuideStar by Candid ensuring you can invest in confidence. Please call us at 636.464.3408 for any questions, or just to say hello!*



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