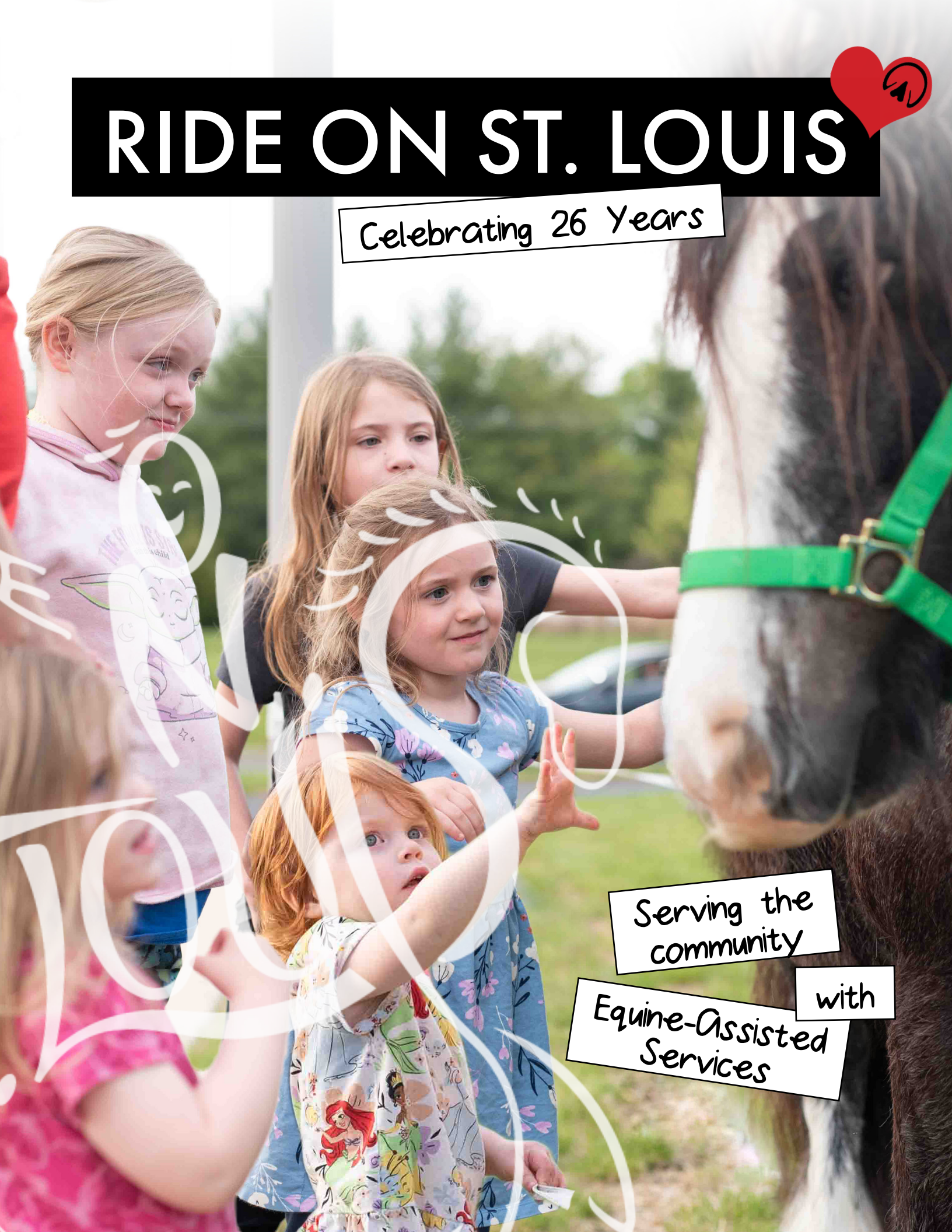


RIDE ON ST. LOUIS



Celebrating 26 Years



Serving the
community

Equine-Assisted
Services

with



DEAR FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Happiest of holidays to you and your loved ones! I hope this time of year provides many opportunities for spending time together, making and sharing meals and memories, and celebrating the perfect goodness of God. If you're anything like me, the time leading up to Thanksgiving and Christmas have me reflecting on what I am thankful for. I am thankful for a safe place to operate Ride On St. Louis while amidst our Forever Home campaign, thankful for each and every person who's benefitted from our services, and our community of supporters who value helping us help others. Having personally witnessed almost 26 years and 2,567 served, I am truly grateful to all who bring the mission to life. I am continually inspired by the incredible journey of transformation that unfolds within our organization, thanks to our friends, family and supporters like you.

Support, solace, and healing is possible for those who need it most, because of you. In 2023, kids and adults have made remarkable strides—from Barn Buddies' extraordinary advancements, revitalization and respite with both full-time residents and day participants from Pony Bird, to outreach initiatives that have woven us deeper into the tapestry of our community—our partnerships in wellness amplify the impact we create together.

As we stride forward, hand in hand, hoof by hoof, and heartbeat resonating with heartbeat, we hold steadfast to our belief in the power of quality equine-assisted services to transform lives. It's not merely a center—it's a purpose, a kaleidoscope of stories, and living proof of what we can do together in charity to triumph over adversity, sorrow and isolation.

To all our volunteers, families who thoughtfully list Ride On St. Louis for memorial gifts, our Wish List granters, monthly Crusader Circle members and recurring donors, and all those who share our stories and pray on our behalf... Thank you for journeying with us, for believing in the power of the horse, and for supporting the beauty that we together create.

May God bless you!

Marita Wassman



Marita Wassman, C/ATRI
CEO & Co-Founder



P.S. Our red “Hearts and Hooves United” icon on the last page of this publication, invites you to learn more about our benefactors and the crucial December 31st 2023 stewardship goal.

EQUINE AMBASSADORS

PARTAKE IN OFF-SITE EXPERIENCES



April
the horse

Two (adorable)
reason's why we exist!

Marita Wassman,
CEO & Co-Founder

Our efforts to provide the community with equine educational opportunities, awareness of equine-assisted services, and professional partnerships with our neighboring organizations and agencies allow us to broaden our footprint, share resources and embrace the positive initiatives of our community members. As part of these activities, our staff and team of equine ambassadors travel by horse trailer to get “up close and personal” with the general public. In spring, we were invited to share our horses, knowledge, and success stories at the St. Louis County Library, Meramec Valley Branch.

In the photo above, taken by photographer Lucas Peterson (as well as our cover photo), smiling faces meet our service horse April, handled by Ride On St. Louis CEO & Co-Founder, Marita Wassman.

In 2023, 250 kids and adults attended this event, and 50 others experienced added community experiences!

LEADING EACH OTHER

KATIE & DIEGO

Horses have always been an animal I've adored, but I never had an opportunity to be around them. After graduating, I thought maybe Ride On St. Louis could help me decide what I wanted to do next with life... Although it did take some persuading from my family!

I'm not a big fan of "first-days." I was very nervous. Anxiety can be overwhelming. I remember pulling into the lot, sitting in my car, worrying. But the anticipation of being around a barn and the welcoming nature of everyone just dissolved everything. For instance, I remember sharing one day that I just felt worthless. I thought I deserved pain, even death, just for merely existing. I wanted to hurt myself in retaliation to every negative emotion. Thoughts of self-harm were a daily struggle. Sometimes I had thoughts or preoccupations with death and suicide. I thought that no one would miss me. I didn't do well trying to deal with these thoughts on my own... I would talk about it to my close friends and journal about it. [Purchase Katie's book at <https://a.co/d/fK8mNI6>] One day at the barn we picked up a daily prayer book and happened upon a meditation on our worth through God's eyes. It still amazes me years later; that was something I desperately needed to know, because I used to believe I was worthless. Without Ride On St. Louis, I wouldn't have a support system.

As I continued as a Barn Buddy, I began to learn basic horse care. Taking (proper) care of a horse, takes more than you think! There's a why behind every task and action at Ride On St. Louis from how, when and what everyone is fed, to the way the turnouts and property is maintained. I went through many hours of caretaker training, side-walker training and leader training to be around and handle the horses safely. There was a lot of information to absorb, but I loved it.

When leading a horse, I learned to concentrate on the horse, regulate my emotions, and always plan ahead. One day, I was just having a really hard time. I was also going to lead a horse in a session for the first time. I remembered everything I was taught, and as



we walked, I felt myself getting calmer. Keeping my attention outwards on the horse helped my anxiety; it brought me peace. That moment was the first time I felt such a drastic change in myself. For the first time, I successfully dealt with my suffocating anxiety. And I learned I could be a confident leader! I like to say that Diego is the horse who trained me. He was comforting to be around because he was so patient and relaxed, and through our time together he taught me to be patient with myself.

I really enjoy being a leader, and I love being a part of the experience others get to have with the horses, too. I feel accomplished in the barn management and handling skills I've learned not only because of the effort and practice it takes, but also because I'm trusted to do some of the care on my own now.

The changes Ride On St. Louis made in my life started by seeing that I had a purpose in a mission that I believed in. I knew I made a difference somewhere and had an impact beyond myself. I found joy in the work I did and applied it to other areas in my life. Ride On St. Louis happened when I needed it the most. And now I know that I can make it through whatever comes my way.

[Top right photo Lynn McNutt, Molly Irwin, Katie Luchtefeld and Lexi Twillman play Leader Training I games at Anheuser Estate in 2018. Center right photo Diego the horse, Renee of Pony Bird, Diane Eagen and Katie Luchtefeld participate in Unmounted Activities at current Cedar Hill site.]

Our Barn Buddies pilot program launched in 2017 and was fully implemented in 2019. The program serves young adults and adults and builds personal goals relevant to skill development, accident/injury recovery and coping, and or emotional, cognitive, physical or behavioral improvements, while producing confident individuals knowledgeable in equine care. Barn Buddies like Katie and Deana learn vocational skills inherent to the equine industry and practice husbandry, handling, sanitation management, first aid, record keeping and team skills in the professional equine setting. Since 2019, Barn Buddies have benefitted from 5,763 training and program hours—at no cost!



Leader Training I



Leading Unmounted Activities 2023



Barn Buddies Katie & Deana

Diego shines as a service horse



Lauren makes a new furry friend

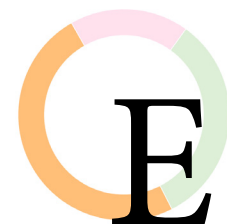
YOU MADE A DIFFERENCE 2022 NUMBERS & FOREVER HOME UPDATE

The next big thing? Our Forever Home plans to relocate to a permanent site with the best offerings for our programs and clients to thrive! To date supporters have contributed \$180,000 in restricted funding for site or parcel purchase, \$334,432 in donated and pledged campaign support, and \$119,400 in granted support. The project continues to forge ahead towards a \$1.8M capital goal and \$1M endowment fund. We're excited to reach these goals to help us get to our Forever Home, and grateful to simultaneously provide the community with programs and activities.

In the 2022 year, we are pleased to have delivered 1,613 program hours. 50% of clients had diagnoses with co-occurring disabilities, 33% included typically developing youth and or adult caregivers, 10% had neurological diagnoses, and 7% of client had psychiatric disorders. Ages served ranged from 14-73 years old with 60% females and 40% males. What these numbers don't illustrate is the complete freedom, happiness, and healing our participants experience because of your support of Ride On St. Louis. We hope our stories and photos impart your importance in our mission and convey your impact. We can't do any of it without you. To learn more about our Forever Home and current programs, or to get involved in our mission please call 636.464.3408 to set up a visit or just to say hello!



2022 REVENUE | \$591,430
 - Grants \$330,650 (56%)
 - Contributions \$156,198 (26%)
 - In-Kind/Other \$65,230 (11%)
 - Fundraising \$39,316 (7%)
 - Program \$63 (<0%)



2022 EXPENSE | \$265,834
 - Program \$240,538 (90%)
 - General \$16,222 (6%)
 - Fundraising \$9,074 (4%)
 2022 Ending Net
 Assets | \$329,596



Together we foster...

love, strength and joy

THAT FIRST-TIME JOY OF PETTING A HORSE

Look closely. Do you see it? Just one finger, touching Diego's side, and Lauren's face instantly came alive with the most pure reaction of joy. There's a little more to the photo though. Minutes before, Lauren did not want to meet Diego. She watched as others came forward to pat Diego and even give him bear hugs. Lauren kept a 12 foot distance from Diego and even recoiled when Diego innocently looked in her direction. We get it. Horses are big, and their behavior is often foreign and difficult to interpret at first. They are very different from dogs and other animals people commonly come in to contact with. Even with the consistent training and conditioning Diego receives to perform his job as a service horse, this little pony is still 830 pounds. But we've seen this many times before. Lauren was unsure, but intrigued by Diego. By repositioning Diego to the side, placing the leader between Lauren and Diego as a buffer, and with the support from another friend, Lauren inched closer at her own pace, and extended one tiny finger. The moment the tip of her finger met his fur, the suspicion lifted and Lauren made a new friend.

TOGETHER WE CAN STRIDE TOWARDS STRENGTH, \$50K CHALLENGE

HEARTS AND HOOVES UNITED

We need to help others. If you're reading this and the Lord is helping you—please be generous.

This community needs Ride On St. Louis and Ride On St. Louis needs you. We have only been able to operate for these 26 years, serving 2,567 families, because of God's grace and your willingness to be generous to children and adults in need. Thank you, truly and genuinely, for opening your hearts and making a difference! We are hopeful for what the future holds and ask you to prayerfully consider supporting Ride On St. Louis this giving season, so that we may continue changing lives. We know you have many options for charitable giving, and we don't take your gifts for granted. Our program cost is the largest expense we face. For five years, our clients haven't had to pay a penny to receive the life-changing opportunities that come from our horses.



TO CONTINUE OFFERING THIS RARE GIFT TO PEOPLE ENCOUNTERING OBSTACLES TO WELLBEING, WE NEED YOUR HELP TO REACH \$50,000 BEFORE DEC. 31ST.

With hearts and hooves united, together we can stride towards strength. www.rideonstl.org/hearts



Ride On St. Louis
PO Box 94
Kimmswick, MO 63053

THE ANGEL SAID TO THEM "DO NOT BE AFRAID;
FOR BEHOLD, I PROCLAIM TO YOU
GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY
THAT WILL BE FOR ALL THE PEOPLE."

2 LUKE 10