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## New to the Ride for Joy Herd!



Sunny is an 18-year-old buckskin quarter horse. She lived on ranches in Texas, Nevada, and Idaho before calling Ride for Joy her home. Quarter horses have gotten their name for their speed and agility in quarter-mile races, but they are also perfect for trail riding, reining, dressage, and jumping. Sunny is very sweet and loves her Ride for Joy friends.



Irish is approximately a 23-year-old roan Pony of America rescue. Before he joined the Ride for Joy team, his home was Ehcapa Bareback Riding. Being a Pony of America means he's perfect for smaller riders. Irish's past is a bit of a mystery, but his kind demeanor and relaxed gait make him a welcome addition to the Ride for Joy team.

# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Bringing the JOY of Horses to Those in Need



## Letter From the Barn

Horses have been used for therapeutic purposes since the time of the ancient Greeks. The Greek physician Hippocrates, known as the "Father of Medicine," wrote about the therapeutic potential of horseback riding in 400 BCE. Today, the Hippocratic Oath is one of the oldest and most widely known codes of ethics. The original text is attributed to Hippocrates, the very same Greek physician who recommended horses as a therapeutic tool and who is also commonly credited with beginning the practice of medicine as a rational science.

Riding became more popular as a therapy tool during the 1950s and 1960s. In 1969, the North American Riding for Handicapped Association was formed, which later became the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) International, of which Ride for Joy holds Premiere accreditation through today.

Ride for Joy provides equine-assisted activities to students of all ages who have a medical diagnosis of some kind. We currently have riders enrolled in our program who are in their 70s and have students as young as 4. Currently, those diagnosed with autism are the No. 1 student population that Ride for Joy serves, with just over 25% of our riders presenting with autism spectrum disorder.

Some of our students experiencing autism or other diagnoses have very limited communication ability. These are individuals for whom our highly intuitive staff and PATH-certified instructors are well matched. Our instructors are competent, professional, and experienced, and I truly believe our students are in the best of hands when being taught in the arena.

We also serve students who have progressive diseases such as Rhett's syndrome, cerebral palsy, hydrocephalus, multiple sclerosis, or Huntington's, which may worsen over time.

Some of our students were born with a congenital disorder such as Down syndrome, spina bifida, or cystic fibrosis. Some students have acquired a crippling injury at some point in their lives, such as a traumatic brain injury or stroke.

Equine therapy can also be a particularly powerful modality for veterans. Ride for Joy offers our services to military veterans and active-duty personnel, which assist in addressing depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

We are proud to work with multiple veterans in our programming and have veterans serving as volunteers at our facility.



Serving these riders remains a core of our mission: to provide professional and compassionate equine-assisted activities and therapies to individuals experiencing special needs, who have a chronic illness diagnosis, or are veterans.

Therapeutic horseback riding has successful outcomes for our students in improving balance, developing concentration, strengthening muscles and motor coordination, and developing confidence, just to name a few benefits. Interacting with our horses provides students an opportunity to master issues that can be a challenge for them, such as balance, dexterity, overcoming anxiety, and sometimes, for our little riders (and big), following directions.

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## Ride for Joy Profit & Loss

Direct public support:	\$62,621
Donated goods and services revenue:	\$16,681
Revenue from nongovernment grants:	\$95,490
Government Payroll Protection Grant:	\$18,525
Program Related Revenue:	\$7,615
Investment Revenue:	\$6,655
Revenue from other sources:	\$647
Special Events Income:	\$49,505
<b>TOTAL INCOME:</b>	<b>\$257,739</b>

Jan. 1, 2020 – Dec. 31, 2020	
Salaries and related expense:	\$104,202
Professional services:	\$1,748
Administrative expenses:	\$6,704
Facilities and equipment:	\$68,122
Business and Other Expenses:	\$12,397
Depreciation:	\$3,710
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES:</b>	<b>\$196,883</b>
<b>NET PROFIT:</b>	<b>\$60,856</b>

# VETERAN TESTIMONY

"After falling off a horse when I was much younger, I never really had the chance to be around horses. What a fantastic opportunity, with Ride for Joy, to connect with such magnificent creatures through their annual veterans retreat, "Ruck Up and Rebuild." Not that I was really afraid of horses, but the step-by-step acclimation process from the awesome volunteers and instructors really helped to ease any apprehension a person might have about being around horses. Getting to actually ride the horse is just icing on the cake! Not only did the veterans retreat provide opportunities for equine therapy, but we also used all aspects of the 270-acre property they lease and got to fish! Many thanks to the fly fishing volunteers from VICE Outdoors, LLC! It's always calming being around water. But to catch fish, more icing on the cake! And what's not to like about throwing sharp things at wooden targets during the Section 37 Axe Throwing portion of the retreat?! Thank you again to the Ride For Joy staff and volunteers for a wonderful day!"

-Tim R., Volunteer Veteran



# PARENT TESTIMONY

"My son (age 6) is autistic. One of his struggles has been core strength. We have been doing OT for years, but he still had a hard time sitting upright in a chair for more than a minute or two before melting over. We started weekly sessions at Ride for Joy in January 2021. Those 45 minutes on a horse once a week may not seem like much, but by the time summer came, my son was sitting upright through an entire meal at the kitchen table for the first time in his life. There's a lot of motivation to engage those muscles when the alternative is to fall off the horse!"

"In addition to the improved core strength, one of my favorite aspects of RFJ is what a positive environment it is for my son. All day he hears "Don't do that," or "Stop," or "No" as we try to help direct him toward appropriate behaviors. At Ride for Joy, my son hears "Yes, you can do that!" and "You're doing great!" and all forms of positive encouragement. It is so vital for his self-esteem and mental health to hear that he's doing something right, that he is succeeding. Not to mention the confidence boost of my little boy being able to steer and direct a massive horse!"

"Ride for Joy doesn't treat my son's autism; they treat my son. They are a happy, safe place where his physical safety, mental well-being, and happiness all rank equally high. He is a whole person to the staff and volunteers at RFJ (rather than just a diagnosis), and I don't have the words to say how much that means to us."

-Shenoah C.



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Ride for Joy makes it possible, despite any physical or mental challenges our students are experiencing, to participate in the joy of horseback riding. Did you know that the movement on a horse with four legs simulates a human being on two legs?

Horses are amazing, intuitive, and empathetic creatures! Particularly, Ride for Joy's horses are distinct, as our Equine Team evaluates the horses we take into our program and puts them through rigorous desensitizing exercises so they are ready for riders of varying abilities.

Ride for Joy has enjoyed a great partnership with the Idaho Youth Ranch, as we lease their state-of-the-art equine facility. The indoor riding arena at the Hands of Promise Campus enables Ride for Joy to offer year-round sessions and larger therapeutic group activities, such as the veterans retreat, the children's "all-abilities" camp, and expanding equine-assisted activities. Since the Treasure Valley broke many heat records this summer, having an indoor riding arena made it possible to conduct lessons all summer long, despite the triple-digit temperatures.

Ride for Joy just completed our largest student session yet, with 53 students enrolled in our summer session. So far in 2021, we have served over 198 riders with 1,200 hours of equine-assisted activities between riding lessons, camps, and veterans retreats.

This feat took 118 volunteers who contributed over 1,850 hours, plus five interns. These volunteers provided an estimated \$52,632.50 in dollar value to our organization. Volunteers and interns are an incredible gift to our students and to our staff.

I have met volunteers who have told me their lives changed because of the joy they witnessed firsthand on the face of a student here. I truly believe people experiencing special needs are making a significant impact on the world simply by being who they are. We need them just as much as they need us.

I've often thought of how much time a student with special needs spends being taught how to interact with non-disabled people. But why don't we spend time teaching those **without** disabilities how to interact with those experiencing disabilities?

Here at the ranch, through the joy of horses, we do just that; our staff is trained and teaches other people and even our horses



how to engage with those experiencing a chronic illness or living with a disability.

When we truly begin to view ALL people with inherent value, we begin to understand the meaning and purpose in every human life. If you have a pulse, you have a purpose. People's differences or perceived limitations are no longer what defines them. They are indeed special, but not in the way the phrase "special needs" so often describes; some of our students are just packaged differently. Our students and their families are champions of the truth that suffering and joy can coexist in your story. We are in the business of disrupting the myth that joy can only come in a pain-free life.

Our team spends time talking during staff meetings about the highlights of the current riding session. The conversation always surrounds our students and the unique gift they each bring to the table. We celebrate when they meet their riding goals, their emotional or physical goals, or when we see them develop more confidence through horsemanship in the arena.

One thing is clear: With every conversation a member of our team has with a veteran, a person with special needs, or a student with a terminal or chronic illness, we walk away having learned a valuable lesson. **What our students teach us time and time again goes so far beyond anything we could ever teach them.** The joy, the steadfastness, the hope they have despite truly challenging circumstances ... that is a gift and a contagious joy they have to offer the world. And in these challenging times, we could use less contagious viruses and more contagious joy!

One equine-assisted activity for a rider at Ride for Joy truly costs \$200. RFJ only charges \$20 per rider to keep equine-assisted activities available and affordable to those in need. Keeping these activities inexpensive is a necessity for individuals with special needs as well as veterans and active-duty personnel, as many are limited financially due to low-income.

As the need for therapeutic riding and equine-assisted activities increases across the Treasure Valley, so too does the RFJ horse herd, participant groups, and staff to meet the growing demand and waiting list of students. The horses, instructors, and volunteers at RFJ have positively transformed countless lives by providing affordable lessons and tuition assistance.

We could not do this honorable work without the support of our wonderful volunteers and donors!

