

REINS OF LIFE, INC.

changing lives one stride at a time



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Reins of Life is not just a barn but a palace of possibilities; filled with loving hearts, helping hands, and of course horses. Its mission is to improve the quality of life for children and adults with disabilities through equine-assisted therapy. Reins provides a wide range of equine-related activities and has options for individuals with any diagnosed disability. Addi Nowicki has been with Reins of Life since 2018 after just turning 12. Reins was introduced to Addi and her family by her therapist to help with low muscle tone and anxiety disorder.

Addi began with the Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP) program in Michigan City. She started working with a pony named 'Snickerdoodle', and a miniature Mediterranean donkey, 'Domino'. She learned new methods and tools to cope with her anxiety by taking cues from her equine partners. "The way horses process their fear is to step away from what seems scary until they are ready to face it in their own time; but they always do face it", Addi explains.

After almost a year in EFP, Addi attended her first therapeutic riding lesson; she was "terrified". Horses are very sensitive to their rider's weight distribution and pick up on every look we give them, but Addi had a new opportunity to practice her coping skills and took the challenge with stride. Addi says, "While riding is definitely tiring and hard work, it's also relaxing and it makes me happy". She enjoys meeting new people and learning different riding skills such as trotting and completing different courses.

Addi was hooked and wanted to be involved even more at the barn. When she turned 13, she became an official Reins

volunteer. She began to volunteer in lessons with other riders and at events; like the Carriage Driving Fun Show. She loves socializing and visiting with other volunteers and staff; people she has gotten to know well over the years. Addi explains, "It's nice to be able to sit and talk with people. One of my favorite things about volunteering and riding is learning about the different personalities of the humans and horses that I get to work with. 'Truffle', the horse, does this silly thing whenever he gets to eat something that he likes; we joke and say he has a big smile on his face."

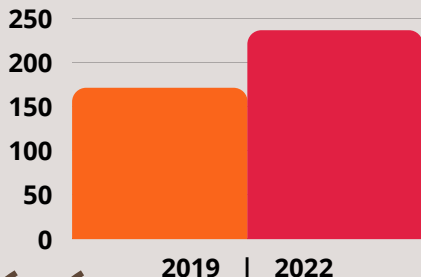
Addi recommends that others get involved at Reins. "If you like horses and humans you are going to have a good time. If I ever come to the barn in a bad mood, I never leave in a bad mood." She's not sure what exactly it is, but coming to Reins of Life always improves her perspective and gets her in a good mindset. "I'm gaining more confidence and improving in my riding skills", Addi shares. She is much better at using assertive communication and body language with the horses. Her newly acquired coping mechanisms have helped with her own emotional struggles. Addi's current horse Bonbon (pictured above) is even more sensitive to a rider's position and cues; so Addi continues to progress and gain awareness of how she uses her body and emotions to direct and communicate with her new equine-partner.

We can learn so much about ourselves as we learn the needs, language and personalities of our horses. They teach us patience, acceptance of our own journeys, empathy for others, and how we can trust and communicate with one-another without uttering a single word.



Fall session - bouncing back

The number of participants in weekly on-site programming during 2022 Fall session increased by 38% as compared to 2019 Fall session.



A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Building & Bridging DAILY Life through BARN Life.

Successful learning and emotional growth are possible only when a person is engaged in the process. At ROL we are uniquely equipped to provide multiple means of engagement to help create a purposeful, motivated learner. At Reins students are working with their equine-partners, not only building horsemanship skills but practical skills for living and leading healthy lives. Programs are uniquely tailored to meet the needs of an individual student. We work on creating an environment that enables us to form a more comprehensive approach, with input from medical professionals; like physical and occupational therapists, speech pathologists to name the few, to address challenges and goals of participants. Sessions focus on positive attributes and recognizing individual strengths, inclusiveness, and integrating students into the community.

Our goals are simple, yet so impactful:

- To develop and nurture the full potential of all people involved in Reins of Life
- To offer programs that maximize the potential of equine-assisted services to benefit the communities we serve
- To educate the community about the benefits of equine-assisted services (EAS).

In the majority of students, we observed improvement in at least one area. Students with physical disabilities demonstrated better core strength, balance, coordination and endurance which translated into increased confidence and social skills. Students with an emotional and behavioral diagnosis were more engaged, advocated for needs, developed deeper awareness and self-regulation of their emotions. The long term scope of impact is even greater as participants become stronger, improve their decision-making abilities, practice and implement new coping mechanisms learned at the barn into their daily life.

-Dorota Janik, Ph D

"Reins of Life has been a blessing for our family. David has sensory processing disorder, cognitive delay, and speech delay. He has been on his journey to find his voice for a few years now. (...) David was so regulated after the session. He sang it's bitty spider by himself and even verbalized "I'm scared" while we were at a public event instead of melting down or trying to run away. Later he spontaneously said "hi Momma!". These are all HUGE. I didn't know if or when I would get to hear him say "hi Momma" or sing a full song."

- Elated Mom

EMOTIONAL HEALING & HORSES

Fall 2022 Intern: Connecting EAS with Social Work Competencies
Written by: Aaron Buechley | Purdue University-Northwest | Social Work

I have read about the connections between horses and humans before. However, looking into the science behind why that connection exists has been very educational. As humans have been riding horses for over 5000 years we have created connections and ways to communicate beyond spoken word and into a sense of pure feeling.

In an article published by Animals (international, peer-reviewed, open access journal devoted entirely to animals, including zoology and veterinary sciences, published semimonthly online by MDPI)(Scopa et al., 2019), researchers describe these therapeutic interactions as Equine-Assisted Intervention (EAI). "Authors hypothesized(...) the bond has been promoted from sharing a common non-verbal language, confirming the effect of oxytocin also on the animal side of the couple."(Scopa et al., 2019) When a human and horse meet, their emotional states begin to merge in a transfer, which researchers describe as a mutual coordination of emotional states. As the horse and human continue to connect with each other, there is a fine tuning of emotions on both ends to stabilize not only the emotional connection but a physical one as well. The article talks about more research needing to be done to understand what is best for the well-being of both subjects. Through a mutual connection there is no doubt that horses and humans have great impact on each other's emotional senses and this is where growth and healing can begin for both horses and humans.

Scopa, C., Contalbrigo, L., Greco, A., Lanatà, A., Scilingo, E. P., & Baragli, P. (2019). Emotional Transfer in Human-Horse Interaction: New Perspectives on Equine Assisted Interventions. *Animals*, 9(12), 1030.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: GINGER HELLWARTH

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NEWEST ESMHL INSTRUCTOR!



Ginger started at Reins of Life, Inc. as a volunteer within therapeutic riding lessons, as well as, a Horse Buddy in a equine training program. Her love for equine-assisted programs started years ago. Ginger worked with at-risk youth and their equine-partners at another center while living in a Chicago neighborhood.

Through Ginger's experience and passion, obtaining a certification as an Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning (ESMHL) was a natural progression. Her love for the ROL herd, and her big guy 'Finn' (pictured above) aids to Ginger's detailed and practical hands-on approach to horsemanship instruction. She has volunteered within the Oaklawn partnership program at ROL since the first cohort started in Fall 2019. Ginger is now taking the reins and leading the youth, during their weekly visits working towards social and emotional goals as they bridge connections, gain confidence and learn new skills.

Attn: March 31 - April 3, 2023 Equine Specialist in Mental Health & Learning Workshop at Reins of Life, Inc.

Contact us at **574-232-0853** or email at **staff@reinsoflife.org** to inquire how to enroll in our trainings, programs or become a volunteer today!

The short version of Sarah's story is that she has been involved at Reins for YEARS. She initially started in our riding program and while she LOVED the horses (she even laughed about taking Gunny, who she rode for quite a bit, home to sleep in her bed) she didn't really enjoy riding. She was very anxious while mounted, likely due to some proprioceptive difficulties and the height of sitting on a horse. A goal for a lesson was commonly to tell her horse whoa 3 times, which was often a struggle. In her first driving lesson she told Dozer "walk-on" and "whoa" 12 times in the first 15 minutes! That was also the first time ever that she said yes to doing more when asked by her driving instructor, Amanda Bubb. She is now using multiple words together "walk-on Dozer" which she never did before and has also started talking more with her volunteers to tell them what we are doing, etc.

Previously Sarah never wanted to go outside. She always wanted to stay in the arena due to anxiety. This Spring and Summer she has happily been going outside, exploring the Michigan City property, almost every lesson and last week when I asked her if she wanted to stick to places we usually drive or go on an adventure to a new trail in the woods she immediately replied "Adventure!" and giggled.

INSTRUCTORS WALK THE WALK AND TALK THE TALK AT PATH INTL.

Two of Reins of Life, Inc. 's PATH Intl Certified Instructors were selected to present on their submitted abstracts during the 2022 PATH Intl. Conference. Amanda Bubb and Daniele Charriere, in total, are covering three important and interactive talks; "The Benefits of Offering Diverse Programming at your Center", "Creating and Implementing an Effective Driving Lesson", and "Lesson Planning for Interactive Vaulting". Daniele and Amanda are certified instructors in therapeutic Riding and Interactive Vaulting; additionally Amanda holds certifications in Therapeutic Carriage Driving and Equine-Specialist in Mental Health & Learning.

The PATH Intl. Regional and International Conferences are a fantastic opportunity for center staff, medical professionals and volunteers to learn and grow together in support of the thriving Equine-Assisted Services industry. The ROL Family is so proud of our instructors and the trails we are blazing and leading together! With multiple qualification, staff at Reins of Life, Inc. and the instructors team has a lot to offer.



SERVICE GROUP SPOTLIGHT

Whether in lessons or feeding horses, through heat, cold and everything in between our volunteers keep us rolling! Behind those scenes, we have an additional reason to commend Awesomeness.... It is found in the hard-working groups that volunteer to lend a helping hand outside of our weekly volunteer realm. Be it projects like barn work (cleaning stalls and barns, cleaning the paddocks, etc..) and clearing trails; setting up and taking down event props/equipment; labeling our newsletters and other information and invitations - prepping for mailing; painting walls and arena equipment and building shelves, cabinets and supplies for lessons - the help was there.

The magnificent groups we have been blessed by this year at the South Bend and Michigan City barns:

- Granger Comm. Church
- The Vineyard Church
- The Pilots Club
- Beacon Health - Therapy Dept.
- Liberty Mutual
- St. Joe Co Re-Entry Center
- La Lumiere High School
- Renaissance Academy
- Marquette High School
- South Bend Kiwanis
- Lydick, South Bend and Clay-Granger Lions
- Indiana Trust
- Bethel University
- Anthony Travel
- Trinity Church
- Westville Correctional Facility Employees
- United Way of NW IN
- BW3's of Portage
- Valparaiso University
- Northwest Health
- Press Ganey
- Transcend Orthotics & Prosthetics
- Tealium & Parkdale

Sometimes their numbers are small, but their accomplishments are HUGE!! Reins of Life's staff cannot thank all of these groups enough for getting the jobs done!

Contact staff@reinsoflife.org to get involved today.

2022 BROUGHT LOTS OF SMILES! WE ARE SO GRATEFUL TO HAVE YOU WITH US



DID YOU KNOW?

Reins of Life is a 501c3 non-profit organization you can gift your **Required Minimum Distribution (RMD)** tax-free.

The RMD must be taken out from some types of IRA accounts every year when you reach age 72 (or 70.5 if reached before Jan 1, 2020). Speak with your financial advisor to learn more.

Visit www.reinsoflife.org/give for more simple and confident ways to help change a life at Reins of Life.

THE BEACHER'S FEATURE: THE CARRIAGE DRIVING FUN SHOW

Instructor Amanda Bubb and the ROL Team hosted the Carriage Driving Fun Show this past summer. Competitors from around the region, along with ROL drivers and volunteers, took part in the fun. Thank you to all the sponsors, competitors and supporters that came out for this year's show!

Check out the full article here!





Reins of Life, Inc.

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Thank you to our sponsors, golfers and supporters for the record breaking 2022 ROL Golf Outing!



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& Auction
Jan 28th
Jubilee Sponsor: **TIRE RACK**.com
We want you there!



www.reinsoflife.org



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**The 2023
Golf Outing is
July 31st!**