



*Our mission is to enhance the lives of children and young adults facing extraordinary cognitive, emotional, social and physical challenges through the therapeutic benefits of horseback riding and unmounted activities.*

## In this Issue

**Founder's Letter**  
2

**SOMA photos**  
3

**Hooves, Paws & Claws**  
4

**Student Spotlight**  
5

**Bentley Partnership**  
6

**Ride for Strides**  
7

## Special Olympics Massachusetts (SOMA) Fall Equestrian Tournament

by Lucy Cornish

October means Special Olympics Massachusetts (SOMA) Fall Equestrian Tournament for our interested students who are at least eight years old. Windrush Farm in North Andover was once again our host on Saturday, October 5th. The weather was perfect, and the ring was ready to go with half configured as a trail course and the other half set up for the equitation class. Diane, Allie, Janice and I welcomed 14 riders along with their family and friends. This year we had eight first time Olympians: Grace, Kayla, Maddie, Esther, Elliot, Hanna, Adam and Amadi joining our veteran athletes Christian, Jessica, Dylan, Eleanor, Neil and Tyler. There were three therapeutic riding programs represented, with a total of 36 competitors.

As they do every year, all riders compete in two classes. First was the Trail Class in which they were required to carefully maneuver around an obstacle course with five elements such as turning around barrels, walking over cavalletti poles and weaving through cones. All maneuvers were designed to demonstrate the skills of the riders in steering, position, balance, focus and planning. Next, they rode as a small group in the Equitation Class where they were judged on their control of the horse as well as their position and ability to stay focused and follow the directions of the judge. We had seven riders compete in walk-only with support, six riders competed in walk-trot with support, and one student rode in

the independent walk-trot classes ... go Dylan! We are so proud of all our students and the way they handled the unfamiliar horses, leaders, equipment, the large crowd and responding to a judge. It is hard for us to imagine what they feel as we sit comfortably ring-side, but I can tell you, they all shined! Terri, a Friends For Tomorrow volunteer said, "I am so proud of everyone I could burst. I particularly liked that everyone patted and thanked their horse."



Friends For Tomorrow parent Kathi shared her thoughts about the improvement she saw in the riders and in her daughter Jess. "It was exciting to see Jessica really show us the growth she has made as a rider in this past year; she did a full circle of posting trot as I'd never seen her do before! I was really proud of her and thankful to Lucy and the staff for all of their work that got Jessica to this level. What a long way she has come! I also really enjoyed seeing all the Friends For Tomorrow riders dressed up in their horse show attire. It seemed that with their jackets and numbers on and their boots buffed, they all sat up a bit taller and straighter, pushed their heels a bit lower and maneuvered their reins a bit more confidently."

At the end of the day, Team FFT returned home tired but victorious, sporting 6 gold medals, 10 silver medals, 4 bronze medals and a total of 28 ribbons! A special shout-out to Kayla and Maddie for winning gold medals in their first

*continued on page 3*



**BOARD OF OVERSEERS**

Diane Lesneski Auger, *Chair*  
 Karen Badia  
 Roberta Berry  
 Nicholas Chigas, *Treasurer*  
 Fritz Ferbert  
 Lisa Freed  
 Leslie Goldberg

**HONORARY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Bud Allen, DVM  
 Michael Badia  
 Marie Louise Barrett  
 Harley Freedman  
 John B. French  
 J. Merriam, DVM  
 The Reverend Roger Paine  
 Byron E. Woodman, Jr.

**STAFF**

**Diane Lesneski Auger**  
*Founder & Instructor*  
**Allie Dingman**  
*Director of Programming,  
 Instructor & Volunteer  
 Coordinator*  
**Janice Gilman**  
*Director of Administration  
 and Marketing*  
**Lucy Cornish**  
*Program Coordinator and  
 Head Instructor*

A non-profit, 501 (c)(3)  
 tax-exempt organization

A PATH International  
 Member

Dear Friends,



Marking time, marking passages. Special stories and benchmarks throughout the year remind us of how our lives constantly evolve and change. All involved with Friends For Tomorrow have our own way of marking time and passages. Participants and their families, staff, our amazing and indispensable volunteers, and our dependable horses all weave these special stories together.

Riders and their families embrace time and share encouraging stories of accomplishment, growth and intention through continued time with treasured friends in both the horses and the loving team of friends who lead them towards each upcoming "mark" of achievement. The Special Olympics Massachusetts Equestrian Fall Tournament is just one of the many passages we share with our riders. Our riders excitedly look forward to finally reaching the age they can participate, and we watch proudly as many of them say goodbye to their time with such an amazing experience with Friends For Tomorrow – because their abilities grow beyond participation, because they move on to different schools and schedules, or because they are beginning a life path they have carefully chosen.

Riders faced with physical challenges become stronger, more balanced and gain certitude in their physical abilities. Riders whose challenges seem invisible to us, because they are intellectual or emotional, make friends, courageously open themselves with true vulnerability, learn to trust and gain confidence in themselves. In every story of every rider, each accomplishment is a pearl in a strand that will someday be complete and become a part of every participant's circle of marking time through important benchmarks.

Friends For Tomorrow lovingly reflects on events to mark our time. Programming Director and Instructor Allie grew up with Friends For Tomorrow as part of her life – as a little girl, I was one of the team of instructors who taught her and watched her keen love of horses and sparkling smile grow every year. When she reached the age she could finally take on an "outside project" at school, she returned as a young, eager and gifted volunteer with

the program. Her life moved on... and when she realized her calling, returned, and once again found Friends For Tomorrow – and you all know the story from there! We share in a true celebration in Allie's life, her marriage to Pete Richardson on September 22. I know you all join me in wishing them a life of friendship, love and devotion, and deep respect for each other in the years to come.

I myself find Friends For Tomorrow has given a unique perspective on important milestones in my life. The creation of this program is one of my proudest accomplishments, aside from my family. Special Olympics Massachusetts Fall Equestrian Tournament shows hold most fond memories for me, as I have spent 18 years glowing with pride and emotion watching our students participate. It also marks 18 years at Berryfield Farm, blessed by the generosity of George and Roberta Berry, who allow us the use of their beautiful facilities and grounds to sustain this important program. My husband Kris and I had our first date during a Special Olympics weekend 15 years ago, and since then have married, been blessed with Emilie and our three older beautiful children, Sam, Jessica and Erika, all of whom have spent time supporting our riders and their families with love and pride.

I am eager to see what the upcoming years bring for all of us, particularly in the stories of our riders. Please know that every letter I sign in gratitude for your support is a benchmark in my life, especially to many of you who have generously contributed year after year. I invite and encourage you to continue with us on this journey, for the fabulous stories that enrich our lives, and most importantly, because only through your support and generosity can we continue to mark these most important passages in the lives of every participant in the Friends For Tomorrow family. Thank you for helping to create these vital milestones for each rider, giving us all belief in the limitless world of possibility.

Warmest wishes,

*Diane*

[www.friendsfortomorrow.org](http://www.friendsfortomorrow.org)



## SPECIAL OLYMPICS - THE DAY IN PICTURES



### Special Olympics *continued from page 1*

Special Olympics, competing in walk-trot classes, and to Adam for his gold medal as a first time Olympian in his walk class.

The welcoming ceremonies were held at noon during which many of our students, volunteers and staff walked with the Friends For Tomorrow banner in the Parade of Athletes. Dylan had the honor of carrying one of the ceremonial flags as we marched into the ring.

We want to thank Windrush Farm for all their efforts hosting this fabulous event and also our wonderful

volunteers: Fritz, Terri, Jane, Marjorie, Hailey and Carol, who donated much of their Saturday to help make this event happen for our students. Thanks as well goes to Nick DePasquale for capturing the day with his indoor photography. Lastly, we say "Thank You!" to our families who entrust us with their children each week. Allie and I and the entire staff feel that we gain as much as we give in their presence. One student was overheard exclaiming, "I can do this. I was born for this!" We feel honored to be part of the journey for each and every one of the riders of the Friends For Tomorrow family.



photographs by Janice Gilman

## Hooves, Paws & Claws - Winter 2014

**H**ooves, Paws & Claws (HPC) is an around-the-farm social skills program for boys ages 8-10 with high-functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This six-week class is designed to engage the students in social interactions while using the animals as teaching models. Each week a topic is introduced, demonstrated and practiced with the animals, for example: being a good listener, how to be a social detective through recognizing body language, and engaging with others and maintaining conversation. We use a cognitive-behavioral approach which involves teaching students about the thinking process itself and how it affects behavior. By using animals to introduce social skills, we are reducing the pressure and making social interaction more engaging and rewarding. By practicing these animal-assisted learning concepts at the farm, our students strengthen their skills for other social interactions in their lives.

Enjoying life on our working farm, participants explore the wonderful world of animals and their care. During every class, students have a variety of animals with whom to work: horses, dogs, rabbits, cats and



turtles. All activities are designed to help the students learn more about their animal friends and peers through hands-on educational fun. Each class is led by a certified therapeutic horseback riding instructor and assisted by volunteers, rounding out a one-to-one student/mentor ratio. This six week program will be held on Mondays beginning on February 17th, 2014 and continuing through March 24th. Each class runs for 90 minutes and begins at 4pm. The cost for the HPC program is \$200; limited scholarship is available.

If you have any questions or would like to learn more, email Allie Dingman at [friendsfortomorrow@gmail.com](mailto:friendsfortomorrow@gmail.com), or call 617-823-5271.



### A Special Thank You to iVideo Boston



**W**e wish to extend our deep gratitude to Emmy Award winning Deb Dorsey and her husband Bob Burns of iVideo Boston, for their unique and valuable contribution to our program. For our annual event, the *Run for Our Roses Fundraiser and Derby Reception*, Deb produced, with Bob's editing assistance, several short films which capture the essence of both the work we strive to achieve and the effects our time and efforts have on our students, their families, and indeed, on all of us. We invite you to watch these inspiring vignettes on our website, [www.friendsfortomorrow.org/program](http://www.friendsfortomorrow.org/program) and [www.friendsfortomorrow.org/fundraiser](http://www.friendsfortomorrow.org/fundraiser). We know they will bring you a very personal and immersive view of how our students and the friends they cherish both in our horses, and their teams, touch lives in a very special way.

*Friends For Tomorrow* succeeds because of the number of dedicated and compassionate volunteers who generously give of their time to support our riders.



- |                |                  |
|----------------|------------------|
| Carol Bailey   | Terri Karpel     |
| Sarah Bennett  | Avery MacLean    |
| Eve Corning    | Tatiana Ovesian  |
| Anne DeFilippo | Kate Payne       |
| Julia Goding   | Marjorie Smith   |
| Stephie Goguen | Carolyn Sullivan |
| Jane Jenkins   | Hailey Sullivan  |
| Kathy Johnson  |                  |

### Student Spotlight: Hanna Bryn

Hanna was born on March 1, 2005 at 12:01 AM at Riddle Memorial Hospital in Glen Mills, PA. She was born at the same weight and length as her older sister Ayden. She scored a nine on the American Pediatric Gross Assessment Record (APGAR). By all standards, she was a born a healthy and curious baby girl. No one in the hospital but her family and doctors knew that she had been diagnosed, in-utero, with Down syndrome. In addition, her family found out through sonogram that Hanna also had a large hole in her heart that would require open heart surgery within months of birth. At six weeks old, Hanna had her first major surgery performed at Al DuPont Children's Hospital in Wilmington, DE. Handing their six-week-old infant over to the arms of a doctor for open heart surgery was their first experience as parents putting complete and absolute faith in another human being. They have since experienced this many times.

Hanna started receiving early intervention services as soon as she had recovered from her surgery. Both parents were new to the field of special needs, and at times felt very lost in a system of extreme paperwork and hidden services, and overwhelmed by the number of medical specialists, doctor's appointments, therapists and the constant supervision so needed to raise a child who has special needs.

In addition, finding extra-curricular activities for a child with special needs can be particularly challenging. Hopes of participating in mainstream activities are often dashed by coaches who have no experience teaching a child with special needs, or who are unwilling to teach team sports to a child that is not aligned with the principals of competition, discipline of body or whom might have a certain lack of focus. Michelle shares her experience, "Hanna has tried to participate in activities such as soccer, karate and ice skating but has not been able to match the skills and control of her peers. As parents we were advised that 'maybe she just doesn't want to participate'."

It is times like these when a kind, generous or understanding soul is most appreciated. Hanna's parents have found that they can usually spot them a mile away. "These souls are color

*I couldn't be more thrilled for Hanna, and I couldn't be more grateful for the Friends For Tomorrow program.*

blind and deficiency blind, and have the ability to acknowledge the heart, spirit, intellect and needs of the child with special needs. In their presence, children with special needs are respected and allowed to be themselves." says Hanna's mother Michelle.

In 2010, their family relocated to Newton, MA. 2010 was a year for many transitions for their family; new job, new home, new doctors, new therapists, new routines, new school, and new friends. In 2011, a friend introduced them to Friends For Tomorrow, inviting their family to a holiday party at Berryfield Farm. Hanna had been on the Friends For Tomorrow wait list for over a year before they were offered a spot that would fit their schedule. In the winter of 2012, Hanna participated in her first therapeutic riding lesson. Her mother Michelle speaks of how that initial meeting went, "I was completely awed by both the professionalism and the expertise of the staff at Friends For Tomorrow. Allie, her instructor, was particularly adept at getting Hanna from saying 'NO' to exclaiming 'Sure!'"

In the spring of 2013, Hanna continued her lessons, and on October 5, participated in her first Special Olympics Massachusetts Fall Equestrian Tournament at Windrush Farm. "I am so grateful that so many folks at Friends For Tomorrow cared so much to involve Hanna in Special Olympics. Hanna has so much spirit and I couldn't wait to see her performance!" said Hanna's father Jae. Hanna now walks into the horse barn, participates in grooming Samwise (Sam), and confidently leads him through the barn for her riding lesson. Michelle says, "I couldn't be more thrilled for Hanna, and I couldn't be more grateful for the Friends For Tomorrow program. Allie, Lucy and Janice and all the volunteers at Friends For Tomorrow are like the surgeon I trusted so many years ago. They are the people you pick out from a mile away, they are Hanna's community of support that demonstrates to Hanna with every interaction that she is perfect just the way she is."



## Did you know?

### Friends For Tomorrow's program family includes:

- ✓ 5 PATH International and Massachusetts licensed Instructors
- ✓ 6 affectionate, curious and trusting specially chosen therapy horses
- ✓ More than 40 volunteers throughout the course of a year **AND – more than 50 students and their families who join in our program activities each year**

### Your gifts provide and sustain our ability to reach out to and connect with our families.

#### A gift of:

- ♥ \$3,050 allows one student to participate in a full year of riding lessons
- ♥ \$500 allows one student to participate in one seasonal session of riding lessons
- ♥ \$500 allows one student to participate fully in our Pony Partners Program
- ♥ \$250 allows one student to participate fully in our Hooves, Paws and Claws Program
- ♥ \$75 covers the cost of a helmet for one student
- ♥ \$1,000 helps us purchase program supplies for one year
- ♥ \$1000 helps us cover continuing education costs for our exceptional staff
- ♥ \$500 helps us train our indispensable and dedicated volunteers
- ♥ \$5,000 covers yearly basic veterinary care and therapies for one of our hard-working horses
- ♥ \$4,000 supplies yearly hay, grain and supplements for our one of equine friends
- ♥ \$2,500 covers yearly farrier services to keep our horses' feet in great condition
- ♥ \$2,000 allows us to buy a specially fitted saddle for one of our deserving horses
- ♥ \$350 covers yearly basic dental care for one horse
- ♥ \$200 covers the cost of a warm, waterproof blanket for one of our horses
- ♥ \$100 outfits a complete grooming kit for one horse
- ♥ \$50 supplies sugar-free treats for one month for one horse, all of whom have special dietary needs

## Bentley University Service-Learning Community Partnership

This fall we continue our relationship as a community partner with Bentley University's Service-Learning program. We were once again fortunate to work with a group of students from the Writing and Design for Multimedia, Internet Marketing and Social Media classes. Bentley University believes that community involvement outside of the classroom contributes significantly to what students learn in class, and helps students develop into socially-responsible professionals and informed, caring citizens. Students involved in service-learning apply their academic learning to real-life settings and situations by being active in meaningful community-based service.

The Bentley service-learning experience encompasses two activities service projects that help fulfill a community need and academic assignments relating to the project to promote self-knowledge and insight into the experience. In addition, it promotes awareness and deeper understanding of the social and civic issues addressed by the assigned service organization.

Randy Nichols, Assistant Professor of Writing and Design for Multimedia says, "Having Friends For Tomorrow as our service learning partner is wonderful on a number of levels. The obvious benefit is providing students with real world experience, but more importantly, it is the kind of experience they're getting that matters to me. Working with Friends For Tomorrow lets the students think about a particular set of needs that they might not get elsewhere. Students can be so fixated on developing business skills that they forget the importance of services. Friends For Tomorrow forces them to reconsider that; my students have already noted the emphasis on community - on a sense of family and connection - that they didn't find when they examined similar organizations. They're working to emphasize that connection in the content they're developing. It is my hope that as they do this, the experience, will help them not just in terms of experience, but also in thinking about the kind of mark they want to make in the world."

"Friends For Tomorrow also benefits greatly from this partnership. As a small non-profit organization with limited resources, having the collaborative work of our organization and the students allows us to capture feedback from a fresh perspective and complete projects that otherwise might take a back seat because of our shortage of manpower," agrees Janice Gilman, Director of Administration and Marketing at Friends For Tomorrow.

Friends For Tomorrow is thrilled to partner with Bentley University, and further community connections.

### 3rd Annual Ride for Strides

Early in September, more than 50 motorcycle enthusiasts and their passengers put their "horsepower" to work and joined us for our 3rd Annual Ride for Strides Motorcycle Ride and Cookout fundraiser. Following two years of less than ideal weather, the third time proved to be the charm! Mother Nature blessed us with a beautiful fall day bright with sunshine and 70 degree temperatures.



Led by volunteer motorcycle and vehicle officers of the Middlesex Sherriff Department, our ride once again departed the Maynard Rod and Gun Club in the morning, continuing on for a sixty mile, no-foot-down journey through the green pastures and rolling hills of Stow, Bolton and Lancaster. Riders and our Sheriff's Department friends enjoyed a brief rest stop at Sterling Ice Cream. The ride continued on through Princeton, Clinton, and Hudson, returning to the Maynard Rod and Gun Club for the Ride for Strides Cookout. Upon their return, guests and riders were entertained by professional stunt motorcycle rider Dan Duest of *Riding to Raise Money* ([www.ridingtoraisemoney.com](http://www.ridingtoraisemoney.com)). Dan says, "The drive to build awareness and support this cause was motivated by my daughter being born with Down syndrome. Since the start of *Riding to Raise Money*, we have grown and have gone on to support many different causes that I find need the attention and support of the community and the organization."

The cookout was attended by ride participants as well as Friends For

Tomorrow students, their families and friends. All enjoyed live music performed by rock/country band *Coming Up Roses*. Food and beverages were donated by Donelan's Supermarkets, Polar Beverages, Pepperidge Farm, Frito-Lay, Marie Louise Barrett, Kate Payne, and Friends For Tomorrow staff and volunteers. Other donations which made this day so special include:

artists Marissa Meyzen and Markus Haala decorating many happy faces with beautifully painted designs, balloons designating the raffle tables from Terri Karpel, caricature drawings of children and adults by Jackson Richardson Caricatures, and a bouncy house for the enjoyment of all of our young guests (and some of our older!) by Busy Bee Jumpers. Raffle items were graciously donated by Sheldon's Harley-Davidson, American Harley-Davidson and New Balance.

The generous support of our riders and their passengers, friends and families of our Friends For Tomorrow students, raffle donors and other sponsors helped us raise more than \$2,000 for our program. The top fundraiser award went to Nick Chigas. A special thank you to our event supporters HomePride, Inc. and the Middlesex Sheriff's Department, who donated their time to escort the motorcycle ride to ensure a safe, no-foot-down ride. We deeply appreciate everyone's support and participation.

Join us next year on Sunday, September 14 at the Maynard Rod and Gun Club for our 4th Annual Ride for Strides fundraiser.

## SAVE THE DATES!

### 5th Annual *Run for Our Roses*



Kentucky Derby and  
a Live and Silent Auction  
Concord Country Club  
**MAY 3, 2014**

### *Ride for Strides*

**Motorcycle Ride & Cookout**



Maynard Rod and Gun Club  
**SEPTEMBER 14, 2014**



Leah proudly wears the Ride for Strides brand.

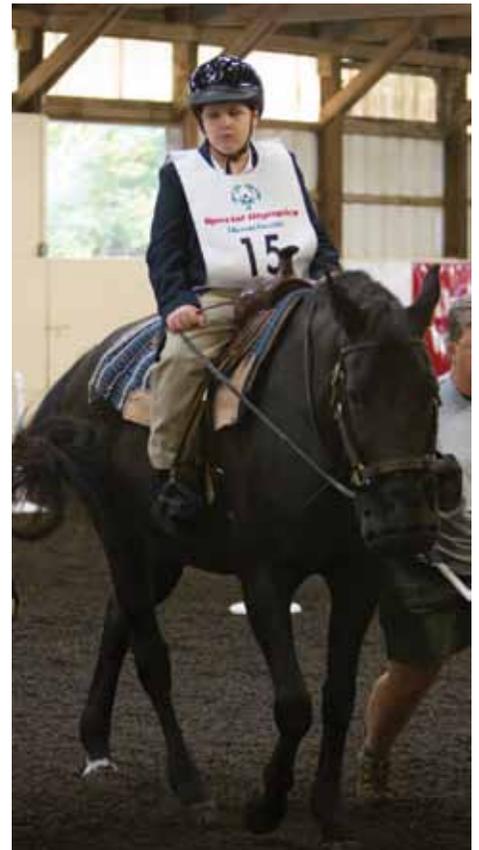
*Friends For Tomorrow, Inc.*



PO Box 213  
Lincoln, Massachusetts 01773  
phone: 781.259.8909

*Bringing Children & Horses Together*

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
LINCOLN, MA  
PERMIT NO 19



Photographs by Nick DePasquale

*Moments from our annual trip to Special Olympics Massachusetts*