



# RIVER VALLEY RIDERS REVIEW



WINTER 2019-2020



20 YEARS ANNIVERSARY

**RIVER VALLEY RIDERS**  
EQUINE ASSISTED ACTIVITIES & THERAPIES

## Rider Spotlight: Marco

Marco has been riding with River Valley Riders since 2012. Here are his parents' words regarding Marco and River Valley Riders:

*Our son sustained a traumatic brain injury and remained in a coma for a year. He was not expected to live, but with constant care and his strong will, he endured.*

*He was very frightened the first day of riding. He didn't know the volunteers and was not familiar with horses. After being helped onto his first horse using a bareback pad, his balance was so compromised that it was decided he needed a western saddle. His first goal was to stay on the horse. Since recovering from his initial injury, his goal has been balance. He works diligently toward that goal. The rhythm of riding has helped to relax him and improve balance and coordination. Riding stretches and strengthens his muscle tone.*



Photography by Devyn Lempe

*He has a caring attitude toward his horse and worries the horse works too hard. Marco always thanks his horse when finished riding. Not always having control over his movement, he has developed confidence through controlling his horse.*

*We are thrilled to see him sitting straight, using reining skills and sometimes raising his hands in the air with joy while riding. We feel truly blessed that therapeutic horseback riding is helping him on this journey.*

## Congratulations to Haley and Nancy!

In September 2019, Haley Konsela and Nancy Mammel completed the challenging examinations to become PATH Intl. Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructors! Haley and Nancy are important members of the Afton team on Thursdays. We are very proud of you both!

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### 2020 IMPORTANT DATES

April 4:  
**Volunteer Training**

September 12:  
**Walk-Wheel & Ride-A-Thon**

November 14:  
**Round-Up Dinner & Auction**

To get updates on these & other events, visit our website & follow us on Facebook!



## River Valley Riders

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Woodbury, MN 55125  
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E-mail: [info@rivervalleyriders.org](mailto:info@rivervalleyriders.org)  
Web: [www.rivervalleyriders.org](http://www.rivervalleyriders.org)

### Lesson Sites

2007 Neal Avenue South  
Afton

Rick-A-Shay Ranch  
Scandia/Chisago City

### Board of Directors

Gail Olsen, Chair  
Melissa Bayne, Vice-Chair  
Linda Knutson, Treasurer  
Tom Conboy  
Sally DelGiudice  
Yvonne Ecklund  
Jenny Elholm  
Mike McLaughlin  
Theresa Milligan  
Kathleen Miner  
Jill Steeves

### Staff

Cheryl Holt, Executive Director  
Kathy Jo Hanson, Development  
Director/CFO

Joan Berg, Executive Director  
1999-2019

## About River Valley Riders

*The mission of River Valley Riders is to enrich the lives of children and adults with special needs by providing equine assisted activities and therapies.*

*Lessons are conducted in accordance with the safety, training and instructional guidelines of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International.*



## Letter from Joan Berg



*What an amazing ride I have had with River Valley Riders! As I reflect back on 20 years, I have seen over 300 children and adults learn about riding or driving horses and what they themselves as individuals are capable of accomplishing. I have more exceptional stories of these years than I can count! I thank many of you for being a part of these special memories!*

*“Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality.” —Warren Bennis*

*I am proud to be passing the role of Executive Director of this remarkable organization to Cheryl Holt! I am confident Cheryl will lead River Valley Riders to excel in our mission and achieve our vision of a year-round facility dedicated to equine assisted activities and therapies. Her 20 years of service to River Valley Riders and strong business background have uniquely prepared her for this responsibility. Cheryl has earned the full support and respect of our dedicated Board of Directors and staff. As further proof of her integrity and commitment, Cheryl received the prestigious award from PATH Intl. in 2018 of International Certified Professional.*

*In closing, I give my whole-hearted appreciation to our donors, volunteers, and families. It is because of your support that people with special needs and challenges of all ages are accomplishing more than they ever imagined through the healing power of our horses. To these special horses, I offer my deepest gratitude.*

*Sincerely,  
Joan Dorle Berg*

*P.S. This is the beginning of the next chapter where I will continue to serve River Valley Riders!*

*“Retirement is not the end of the road. It is the beginning of the open highway.” —Unknown*

## Attention Horse Owners

We are looking for additional volunteer horses for the Afton site on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings. We need people who are willing to share their calm and quiet horse(s) with River Valley Riders. This includes trailering them to and from the site on the evening they choose to volunteer.

If you have a horse that you think could work for the program (or know of a horse), please email [info@rivervalleyriders.org](mailto:info@rivervalleyriders.org) or call to leave a message: 651-439-2558. You and your horse could give more riders the opportunity to participate and receive the benefits of therapeutic riding!



## Letter from Cheryl Holt

*First, I would like to thank Joan Berg for her service to River Valley Riders for the past twenty years! She is an inspiring person! Her in-depth knowledge of disabilities has been an excellent source of information and advice for all of us in the program.*



*Secondly, I would like to introduce myself. I am Cheryl Holt and I have the privilege of taking on the role of Executive Director for River Valley Riders as of November 1, 2019. However, River Valley Riders is not new to me. I was one of the small group of like-minded individuals who founded River Valley Riders in the fall of 1999. We saw the growing need for this type of therapy and wanted to expand the offering.*

*I have volunteered with River Valley Riders these past twenty years in many roles: Board Officer (20 years), PATH Intl. Certified Instructor (12 years), committee leader for several teams, including Programming, Facility, Horse Evaluations, and the Ride-A-Thon fundraiser. Most recently I was River Valley Riders' Operations Director. I have degrees in Accounting and Business Management. My most recent job before retiring from the corporate world in April 2018, was Group Vice President, Global Product Development at Ergotron, Inc. located in Eagan.*

*River Valley Riders will continue with our same mission and vision that we developed from the beginning. I will lead the organization onward to attaining our vision of a fully operational facility, properly staffed, with horses on-site and year-round programming. That has been Joan's dream and mine from the beginning. I am very excited to guide River Valley Riders to the next steps that will take us closer to that vision. We have a very exciting and bright future!*

*With best regards,  
Cheryl A. Holt*



## Thank You to Our Corporate Sponsors



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Dean Victorson



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## 2020 Volunteer Training

**April 4, 2020 8:00am - 4:00pm**  
**Mandatory for New Volunteers**  
**Returning Volunteers - Strongly Recommended**  
**Please call 651-439-2558 to RSVP**

Our season-starting training day, for new and returning volunteers from all lesson sites, will be offered Saturday, April 4th in Afton. Plan to spend a full-day introduction to the fun and responsibility of volunteering.

The day will begin at St. Peter Lutheran Church (880 Neal Avenue South) in Afton at 8:00am for a light breakfast. Indoor training will begin at 8:30am and continue until mid-day, when lunch will be provided. After lunch we will go 1 mile down the road to River Valley Riders' property for hands-on training, until 4:00pm. You'll learn about therapeutic riding, the children and adults we serve, and the horses that help us. Training will occur rain or shine with our indoor arena for the afternoon.

Current volunteers are encouraged to attend this continuing education opportunity, especially those who started in mid-year 2019 and had not attended 2019's spring training day.

We will be starting lessons at Afton the week of April 13th. Lessons will start on April 28th at Rick-A-Shay Ranch. We have therapeutic riding on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings and carriage driving on Monday and Thursday afternoons and evenings. We are partnering with schools and senior citizen organizations, so there are some daytime volunteer opportunities too.



There are lots of opportunities to volunteer! So please talk to your friends, relatives, and co-workers about River Valley Riders and hopefully they will want to come out to enjoy this great experience.

## In Memory of Orphy Beattie

We are so sad to share the news of the passing of Orphy Beattie. Her memorial was on Thursday, September 26th at First Presbyterian Church in Stillwater.



Orphy lived a beautiful life of serving others, including her career in nursing, at her church and with River Valley Riders as a therapeutic carriage driving instructor for 15 years. Her students experienced her loving nature and learned from her expertise of horses and driving.

Orphy's husband John volunteered with her during all therapeutic driving lessons. Orphy's other partner was her Norwegian Fjord, Olaf. The Beatties also shared their home, MacBeth Farm as the therapeutic driving lesson site two days per week.

Orphy received the PATH Intl. Sis Gould Driving Recognition Award and the Lion's Club Melvin-Jones Award, shared with her husband John.



Orphy was a blessing to those who were privileged to know and love her. We miss her deeply!



## 20th Annual Walk-Wheel & Ride-A-Thon

September 7th turned out to be a great day for the 20th Annual Walk-Wheel and Ride-A-Thon at Lake Elmo Park Reserve! Thanks to the generosity of donors and participants, we exceeded our fundraising goal by raising over \$35,000 to support program expenses, benefiting the families we serve!

The temperature was in the mid-60's and thankfully the rain held off until the event was over. We started the day by enjoying coffee donated by Caribou, and delicious homemade muffins and pastries donated by volunteers. Over 50 people were in attendance. Those who rode did an eight-mile loop on the beautiful trails in and around the woods of Lake Elmo Park Reserve, while walkers and wheelers followed a three-mile path.



Everyone arrived back to the campsite after their adventure ready to enjoy lunch. Grilled hotdogs and hamburgers from Hagberg's, along with side items provided by volunteers rounded out the meal.

Two prizes were awarded, one for the individual who raised the most pledges and one for the family that raised the most. Our very dedicated volunteer Sandy Ward led the individual fundraisers, and the family of one of our longtime carriage drivers, Minu, was the top in the family category.

Long sleeved t-shirts supported by the Minnesota Horse Council, baseball caps supported by 4imprint and personalized sweatshirts were awarded to those who donated to or raised enough pledges for the event.

In addition to the Lake Elmo Park Reserve event, River Valley Riders' clients participated in a trail ride during their lesson the following week at their lesson sites in Afton and Scandia.



We are so grateful to all who contributed in making this event a success!

We look forward to seeing you at the 2020 Walk-Wheel and Ride-A-Thon on Saturday, September 12th, returning again to Lake Elmo Park Reserve. We encourage you to invite your family and friends for a beautiful fall walk, wheel or ride! It will be a perfect time to catch up with old friends and to meet new ones. Plan for a fun-filled day of outdoor activities topped off by a delicious lunch! All the more important because you will be supporting the riders and drivers we serve!

To volunteer, participate or donate, please visit [www.rivervalleyriders.org](http://www.rivervalleyriders.org) or our Facebook page or call 651-439-2558 and leave a message.

## From the Heart – Donor Advised Funds

We know you donate to River Valley Riders from your heart to support programs, but you may also appreciate being able to deduct those donations. You may want to ask your financial advisor about Donor Advised Funds (DAF). Instead of donating directly to a charity, you would deposit your annual charitable contributions into your DAF. The brokerage firm will give you the tax deduction donation receipts, not the individual charities.

Once funds, including appreciated assets, are deposited into the DAF, you may opt to evenly distribute donations to your favored charities over a two-year time frame. *River Valley Riders is not endorsing any brokerage firm nor giving tax advice to you.* Please speak with your own tax expert to determine the best method for you to continue filling your heart through your generous support of River Valley Riders.



## 2019 is River Valley Riders' 20th Year Anniversary!

**We have had a wonderful 20-year journey and our future is even brighter!**

River Valley Riders was established in 1999 by a small group of motivated individuals with a shared vision to expand therapeutic riding and carriage driving. We began lessons in the spring of 2000 at a rented Washington County Fairgrounds arena with 18 clients, 35 volunteers and one instructor. Today, we have over 100 clients, over 200 volunteers and ten PATH Intl. Certified Instructors.

2019 was an epic year, as we realized our dream of the indoor arena. Our corporate sponsor RAM General Contracting, Inc. broke ground on October 1, 2018, finishing the building in December 2018. It was open for business for our spring volunteer training as well as the start of lessons in mid-April!



The indoor arena benefited our clients by eliminating rain cancelations. If not for the indoor arena, between 25% to 33% of our riding and driving lessons in 2019 would have been canceled. The beautiful insulated arena provided a quiet place during rainstorms, a cooler place during hot summer days and a warm place to have the program during the cool spring and fall evenings! This building also allowed programming to be extended by four weeks.

The next phase for fundraising is the office shell, with finished bathrooms and observation area, plus an annex for a separate mounting area. This will be a multi-year fundraising effort, just like we did for the indoor arena, which we successfully achieved!

We look forward with growing excitement to year-round lessons with horses living at Afton and staff to support expanded programming for 240 clients. We are dedicated to creating more opportunities for people with special needs to strengthen their abilities and improve their self-confidence.



In summary, the complete facility dedicated to equine assisted activities and therapies will help us serve more people. Lessons will be full-time and year-round, with increased partnerships within the community (schools, therapists, hospitals), and expanded services to other populations (military, senior citizens, kids at risk, academic enhancement programs). It is amazing to think of all the lives that will be impacted by River Valley Riders!

Thank you for your past gifts! We hope you will continue to join us in supporting the future for the benefit of those we serve!





## 20th Anniversary Gala

Our 20th Anniversary Gala was held Saturday, November 16, 2019 at Inwood Oaks in Oakdale. Over 270 guests attended the event raising almost \$100,000 to help support and expand River Valley Riders' programs.

The cocktail hour featured an extensive silent auction with 173 unique items, delicious appetizers, cash bar, and musical entertainment by Tom Burnevik. Following dinner, generous donations to "Fund-the-Vision" will help support the development of the Afton lesson site for the benefit of the families we serve. The live auction featured a Las Vegas vacation, Chef's Dinner in Your Home, a Strukturoc shed, FROZEN the Musical VIP tickets, an authentic Peruvian dinner, and a St. Paul Get-Away! The beautiful video created by Dan Chinander and his team captured Marco, Delaney, William, and Manny's smiles and self-confidence!

Special thanks to the generous donors, loyal guests and team of dedicated volunteers who supported this successful and memorable event!



*Our gratitude to Master of Ceremonies Jay Olstad for returning again to host the Gala!*

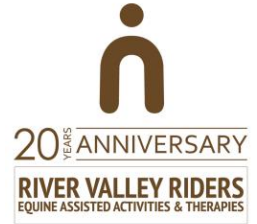
We hope to see you at the 2020 Round-Up Dinner and Auction on Saturday, November 14th!

**We would like to thank the auction item donors, event volunteers, and others who contributed in a special way:**

- |                               |                         |                        |  |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|--|
| A Butchery Shoppe             | Nancy Allen             | Peggy Anderson         | American Cruises and Tours             |
| Anonymous                     | Assurant Foundation     | Ryan Bearth            | Joan Berg                              |
| Bjorn Timeless Portraits      | Brave New Workshop      | Tom Burnevik           | Shelley Carr                           |
| Café Latte                    | Candyland - St. Paul    | Canterbury Park        | Charlsen Trucking Service              |
| Dan Chinander                 | Chick-fil-A - Maplewood | Chuck & Don's          | Andrew Colligan                        |
| Tom and Kim Conboy            | Como Friends            | Cowgirl Tuff Co.       | Cotroneo's Wine & Spirits              |
| Crayola Experience            | Sally Reif DelGiudice   | Ann Delmont            | Details Salon                          |
| Donatelli's                   | Peggy Doyle             | Jenny Elholm           | Yvonne and Kent Ecklund                |
| Imagine Theatre               | Mary Franco             | Rebecca Franco         | Fair State Brewing Cooperative         |
| Larry Flowers                 | Ryan Foss               | Cyd Gillette           | First State Bank and Trust             |
| Beverly Gerth                 | Trevor Griffiths        | McKenna Greene         | Amy Girling and Family                 |
| Grand Casino Hinckley         | Trey Given              | Haskell's              | Guthrie Theatre                        |
| Gulden's Restaurant & Bar     | Virginia Haines         | Cheryl Holt            | Todd-Allen Hamilton                    |
| Larry and Anne Headrick       | Kathy Jo Hanson         | Brian Houdek           | Hubbard Broadcasting Foundation        |
| William Hudnall               | Hudson 12 Theater       | Hy-Vee                 | The Staff of Inwood Oaks               |
| Jill Irvine Crow              | Hod Irvine              | Joe Jasicki            | Jim & Angie Jasinski                   |
| Linda and Ted Johnson         | Mari Jordan             | Lynn and Jim Jutz      | Kowalski's Market – Woodbury           |
| Barb Knoth                    | Linda Knutson           | Kelly Labare           | Mall of America                        |
| Let's Dish                    | Lunds & Byerlys         | Mike McLaughlin        | Lori Matz in memory of Orphy Beattie   |
| Joe & Teresa Mauer            | Mama Maria's            | Theresa Milligan       | Mancini's Charhouse                    |
| Lauren and Kyle Mealey        | MidWestOne Bank         | Minnesota Vikings      | Minnesota Landscape Arboretum          |
| Mintahoe Catering and Events  | Minnesota Orchestra     | My Pillow              | Minnesota Timberwolves & Lynx          |
| Eunice Morelli                | Craig Murphy            | Roger Newman           | Minnesota Twins Baseball Club          |
| Mystic Lake Casino            | The Naughty Greek       | Jay Olstad             | Northern OuterRealm Paranormal Society |
| Norman Quack's                | Old Log Theatre         | Plastics International | Osceola Veterinary Service             |
| Park Square Theatre           | Piattelli Vineyards     | R.F. Moeller           | The Phipps Center For The Arts         |
| Peter Polga                   | RAM Buildings, Inc.     | Nick Salay             | Resource Logistics                     |
| The Reyers Family             | Rudy's Redeye Grill     | Jay Schrankler         | Rick Bronson's House of Comedy         |
| Dorothy Sankey                | Sam's Club              | Smack Shack            | Selma's Ice Cream Parlour              |
| Schneiderman's Furniture      | Smac Specialties        | SPIRE Credit Union     | Science Museum of Minnesota            |
| Jason Shannon                 | Sol Luna Salon          | St. Croix Casino       | Neil and Peggy Spofford                |
| Lisa Spofford                 | Jill Steeves            | The St. Paul Hotel     | Rick & Judie Steenberg                 |
| St. Paul Brewing Company      | St. Croix Saddlery      | Strukturoc, Inc.       | St. Paul Police Dept.                  |
| Stages Theatre Company        | Stout's Pub             | Jill Tauscher          | Stillwater Equine Veterinary Service   |
| St. Paul Saints Baseball Club | Surly Brewing Co.       | Target                 | Taylor Falls Scenic Boat Tours         |
| Three Rivers Park District    | Jae Taylor              | Tin Whiskers           | Tom Reid's Hockey City Pub             |
| Tongue in Cheek               | David Townsel           | Trapped Puzzle Room    | University of Minnesota–Bell Museum    |
| W.A. Frost and Company        | Isabelle White          | Jeanette Wilwert       | Wiessner Insurance Agency              |
| Woodbury Family Chiropractic  | The Works Museum        | Zoo School Studio      | Cheri Zundel                           |



# RIVER VALLEY RIDERS REVIEW



## Rider Spotlight: Maren



2019 was Maren's first year participating in therapeutic riding lessons with River Valley Riders. It was an exceptional year! Her team shares:

- "Maren arrived for her lessons shy and cautious. She cooperated slowly and moved carefully to mount her pony Daisy. From that point on, Maren became wonderfully happy with a joyful smile when trotting." —Instructor Nancy Mammel
- "Maren loved trotting Daisy—always with a smile and her contagious laughter! She wore the cutest horse outfits to go along with her boots." —Volunteer Deb Zappa
- "Maren improved her task focus, balance, core strengthening and voice commands. These skills have paid off as she controlled her horse and self-corrected her posture." —Instructor Joan Berg
- "Maren was a delight to work with each Thursday night. It was gratifying to see her self confidence develop while riding Daisy. I love going to River Valley Riders to work with such a special girl!" —Volunteer Corrine Nelson



Maren, we miss you and all of our riders, drivers, families, volunteers, instructors and horses! We are already looking forward to 2020!