

STABLE
CONNECTIONS

ZINE



YEAR OF THE FIRE HORSE

SPRING 2026



CAREY SWEET (WRITER)

With nearly three decades writing about food, culinary travel, restaurants and the chefs that make them happen, Sweet contributes to numerous publications, including the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Press Democrat*, *Houston Chronicle*, *USA Today*, *Alaska Airlines* magazine and *Sonoma Magazine*, among many others. When not eating, interviewing, traveling or chained to a computer writing, she shares her home, a farm in Sonoma, with a menagerie of horses, goats, dogs, chickens, cats and various visiting wildlife. All her pets are beloved rescues.



SHONNA BERK (CREATOR)

moved to Sonoma County in 2016, working with a few different trainers and multiple local tack shops over the years trying to find her way in the horse world. In 2019, she started West Coast PEMF Team where she offers Pulsed Electro-Magnetic Field sessions to horses, small animals, and people while still feeling a pull to create something more. Stable Connections the Podcast was born in 2022, which has now blossomed into not only a podcast, but a Business Finder, Calendar of Events, and now a Zine! A true entrepreneur at heart, Shonna is consistently thinking up new ideas and is eager to create a community feel around her.

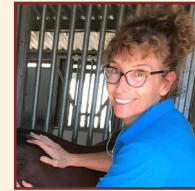
CONTRIBUTORS



MIMI DUFFY (WRITER) has been a devoted horsewoman for over 50 years, dedicating her life to the care, education, and empowerment of both horses and riders. Mimi is a nurse specializing in alternative medicine, but her true passion lies in teaching horsemanship and equine communication. As a Certified Masterson Method Practitioner, she developed a Youth Program for the Masterson Method based on Pony Club standards. Mimi coaches the Rosewood Riders United States Pony Club and serves as a project leader for the H Lane Vaqueros 4-H program in Marin County—both of which have produced National Champions under her guidance.



KARI ONTKO (DESIGNER AND ILLUSTRATOR) has been drawing for as long as she can remember—making her path into art and design a natural one. After graduating from design school, she founded Ontko Design, where she has collaborated with clients such as Williams Sonoma, Apple, Z Gallerie, and Title Nine. Her work spans a wide range of projects, from cookbooks and photo art direction to branding and logo design. Today, Kari brings together her passion for art and her love of horses in a wonderful line of paper goods, available at etsy.com/shop/OntkoDesign. She lives in Sonoma with Roger and their rescue Schnauzer mix, Ryder—and when she's not in the studio, you'll likely find her at the barn riding her horse, Rudy.



JULIE MCCARTHY (WRITER)

Julie's passion for horses started decades ago, learning to ride warmbloods while living in Germany. She immediately knew she wanted to learn everything about these beautiful creatures. Mucking out and being at the barn everyday to learn everything she could about horses helped her to be the horsewoman she is today. After years of working with horses, Julie received her Certified Equine Massage Therapist (CEMT) certification from Rocky Mountain School of Animal Acupuncture and Massage in 2013. Now Julie has her own business – Healthy Horse Massage and Grooming.



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ADVICE STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH



Created by HANNAH BEEBE with Chameleon Color powder for Los Lagos Equestrian.

Galloping into the Year of the Horse

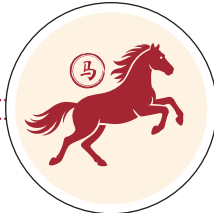
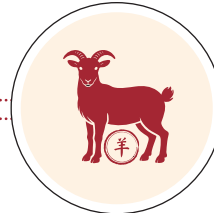
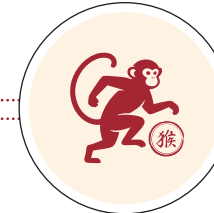
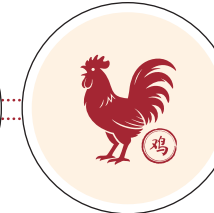
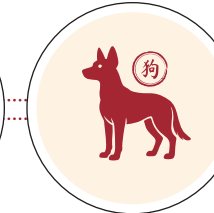
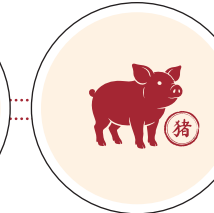


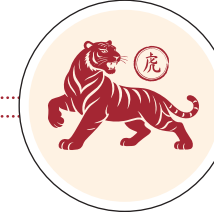
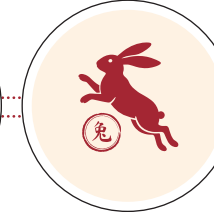
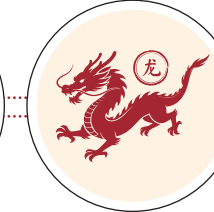
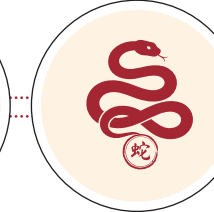
FINE NEW SPARKING TO TOAST YOUR BELOVED STEED

BY CAREY SWEET



On February 17, China and Chinese communities around the world celebrated Lunar New Year, marking the first new moon of their complex zodiac calendar. Millions – likely billions – of participants came together for various 15-day Spring Festivals, taking in the sight of colorful lantern displays, dramatic dragon dance parades and all kinds of spectacular festivities crowded into city squares.

For Americans who've dined at an old-school Chinese restaurant, the quaint printed paper placemats used to tell us the story. The zodiac, or shengxiao (shnng-sshyao, meaning "born resembling"), is represented by 12 animals based on your birth year, bringing mystic thoughts on what your coming fortune might be. Spiritual creatures include Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, Pig, and for 2026, the noble Horse.

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| HORSE 1918, 1930, 1942, 1954, 1966, 1978, 1990, 2002, 2014, 2026 | GOAT 1919, 1931, 1943, 1955, 1967, 1979, 1991, 2003, 2015 | MONKEY 1920, 1932, 1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992, 2004, 2016 | ROOSTER 1921, 1933, 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993, 2005, 2017 | DOG 1922, 1934, 1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006, 2018 | PIG 1923, 1935, 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007, 2019 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| RAT 1912, 1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, 2008, 2020 | OX 1913, 1925, 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997, 2009 | TIGER 1914, 1926, 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998, 2010 | RABBIT 1915, 1927, 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999, 2011 | DRAGON 1916, 1928, 1940, 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000, 2012, 2024 | SNAKE 1917, 1929, 1941, 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989, 2001, 2013, 2025 |



"In Lunar tradition, the Horse symbolizes vitality, momentum, and forward motion, qualities that resonate deeply with how we think about our next chapter," said winery Partner/CEO Joy Sterling. Her parents, Audrey and the late Barry Sterling founded the Russian River Valley estate in 1976, and quickly became best known for their sparkling wines, served at the White House for seven consecutive presidential administrations, beginning with the historic Reagan-Gorbachev Summit Meetings that ended the cold war.

The Year of the Horse Vintage Blanc de Blancs is a true Brut Zero - completely dry - crafted from 100% estate-grown Chardonnay and aged more than three years en tirage.

"Sleek, driven, and precise, it drinks like unbridled optimism."

—JOY STERLING ON THE YEAR OF THE HORSE VINTAGE BLANC DE BLANCS



The Year of the Horse arrives only once every twelve years (2027, for example, will be the Year of the Goat). This sparkling vintage marks the second Horse release; the first debuted twelve years ago, and the next will not return for another twelve. The 2026 edition carries special significance for the winery family, too.

"This year is our 50th anniversary at Iron Horse," Sterling said. "It feels like more than coincidence. It's a rare opportunity to mark a golden anniversary with a wine that symbolizes strength, great heart, stamina, and forward momentum."

As for pairings, those dumplings and carp work well - or really any fish you like if you can't catch carp. So

does succulent roast chicken with ginger and soy. To be authentic, serve the bird whole including the head and feet to support "unity" and a good beginning to the year.

Pair the wine with fried spring rolls - the crispy, meat and veggie wonton shells symbolize prosperity, especially when you say hwung-jin wan-lyang before crunching into them. That means "a ton of gold," because fried spring rolls look like gold bars, right?

A party can be as simple as popping open a bottle of sparkling when celebrating with friends, perhaps in the barn after a particularly successful ride, when the horses are hugged, groomed and put away. A small splash and a clink-clink is a lovely way to end a wonderful day, even better with the crinkle of a potato chip bag and a splurge of caviar.

"I happen to be a Horse in the lunar zodiac, as is my niece Barrie Sterling," Sterling said, raising a glass. "Along with 321 members of our wine club."

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What a great reason to arrange your own Year of the Horse party - anytime of the year through 2026 and even beyond.

Adorned in long, flowing silk cross-collar robes, particularly dedicated New Year followers dress in hanfu, clothing traditionally worn by the world's largest population group, the Han Chinese, now counting at more than 1.4 billion around the globe. They feast on symbolic foods including crucian carp (the first Chinese character for the fish (jìyú / jee-yoo) sounds like the Chinese word (jí /jee), meaning good luck/good prosperity).

They savor dumplings shaped like oval Chinese silver ingots, under the legend that the more dumplings you eat during the New Year celebrations, the more money you'll make later. And they drink baijiu, an ancient style Chinese white wine that is usually made from fermented sorghum and is quite strong, like vodka.

Here in Sonoma County, wine lovers are toasting with something more contemporary and mild - a brand new release of Iron Horse Vineyards Year of the Horse sparkling wine. The Sebastopol winery is raising a glass to salute what the Horse represents, in a time where a lot of us can especially use some cheerful inspiration.





A Journey of Connection, Growth and Gratitude

THE MASTERSON METHOD YOUTH PROGRAM

BY MIMI DUFFY

I had the incredible honor of coaching two of my students, Maya and Zoe, as they represented the Sierra Pacific Region and our Rosewood Riders Pony Club in Tetrathlon at the United States Pony Club Festival in July 2024. This national competition, held every two years at the Kentucky Horse Park, is a celebration of horsemanship, teamwork, and dedication. For me, it was more than just another trip to the Festival—it was a chance to see the Masterson Method come to life in a high-level competition setting, and to witness how deeply it could impact both horses and riders. Masterson Method is a form of equine bodywork that focuses on releasing tension in the horse while also strengthening the relationship between horse and rider.

The first time I attended Festival was in 2021, when my students and I had the privilege of teaching the Bladder Meridian technique alongside Jim Masterson to more than 75 Pony Club members. That experience was unforgettable, but this time, I had what people call “skin in the game.” Watching my students apply what they had learned in real competition was both nerve-racking and profoundly rewarding.

ABOVE: Zoe and Maya, 2024 National Champions in Tetrathlon

SEEING THE MASTERSON METHOD IN ACTION

Both Maya and Zoe had qualified for Tetrathlon, a competition consisting of four sports: Running Swimming, Target Shooting and Jumping. They both qualified on their horses in California but were borrowing mounts for the jumping competition in Kentucky. Maya flew out a week early and had a few extra days to ride and get to know her horse. Zoe, on the other hand, had very little time to connect with her borrowed mare, Janney, an OTTB, who had traveled from Virginia. The environment was hectic—vet checks, new surroundings, limited warm-up space—and Janney’s anxiety was clear. She carried her head high, her muscles were tight, and her eyes showed worry.

I could see that Zoe was feeling the pressure too. It’s never easy to ride a new horse, let alone in a national competition, especially one that is tense and uncertain. So, we took a few quiet moments together and did the Bladder Meridian technique. As Zoe gently worked along Janney’s neck and back, the mare’s eyes softened, her breathing slowed, and she began to look toward Zoe for reassurance. I noticed Zoe’s shoulders drop as she took a deep breath herself. At that moment, both horse and rider began to relax—and connect. I knew we were making progress.

Later, we watched Janney’s regular rider warm up. The mare was anxious, tossing her head, refusing fences, and struggling to pick up the right lead. Her rider was in tears. After a disastrous first round for both of Janney’s riders, we got permission from Horse Management for me to do a full bodywork session on Janney. She was stoic at first, but as I worked, she began to release—big yawns, deep sighs, and soft eyes. By the end, her whole demeanor had changed.

At 6:00 the next morning, Zoe was in a fender bender on her way to the barn to feed; she was very shaken and was considering scratching from the competition. I got permission to go into the stall with Zoe and Janney. I had Zoe connect with Janney again doing the Bladder Meridian technique.

As Zoe focused on Janney’s responses and releases, her own breathing slowed and she regained her confidence to compete. She and I talked through a new plan. We decided she would trot into the 2’6” fences instead of cantering, giving Janney more time to think and stay relaxed. It worked beautifully. They had a clear round, and the joy on Zoe’s face said it all. It was a confidence boost not only for her but also for Janney—and even for Janney’s regular rider, who got to see her horse shine in a new light.

Maya and Zoe mastered the art of building trust with a new mount and their team came home as National Champions in Tetrathlon!

THE MAGIC OF CONNECTION

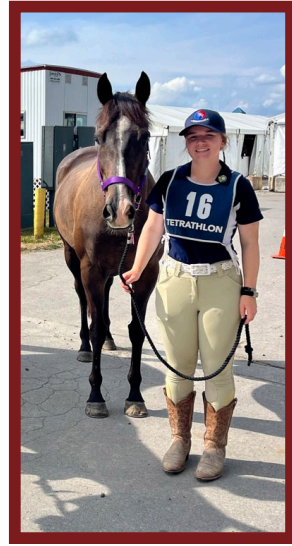
That week at the Festival was full of moments like that. I had eight other students competing in Quiz; a knowledge based competition, and they stayed for the educational portion. They attended upper-level clinics and D Camp—all on borrowed horses. When six new ponies arrived off a big trailer, the kids immediately went to work doing Bladder Meridian with my colleague, Megan Dushin, and me supervising. The ponies visibly relaxed as the children worked, and the kids themselves calmed down too. Watching those 10–12-year-olds quietly connect with their new ponies in the middle of all the chaos was pure magic.

Another special moment came when my good friend’s daughter Marie Charlotte, also from our region, brought her Connemara, Sweet Mimi, to compete in Dressage Championships. Unfortunately, Sweet Mimi had fractured her tail rolling in the portable stalls and was in pain. She couldn’t even tolerate being groomed for turnout inspections without pain medications. After the vet visit, I was able to work on her using Masterson Method techniques. There was a lot of anxiety and concern for this very special pony. She is related to my mother’s Connemara Pony Angel. Sweet Mimi was very stoic, but as I listened to her and she let me know where to touch. She let out a very deep sigh and had multiple yawns, releasing a lot of tension. Marie Charlotte also started to relax.



Mimi and Zoe helping Janney with Masterson Method





By the end of the session, she was comfortable enough to have her tail handled again and even participated in her dressage clinic the next day! Knowing she would soon be trailering back across the country, it was deeply rewarding to help her feel better before the long trip home. She made it home safely and well decorated! They won the Freestyle Training Level, The Dover Award, the ASPC Dressage Award, 1st Training Level Overall and 1st Place Horse Management!!

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Over the past six years, I've been incorporating Masterson Method techniques into my youth programs. Teaching children how to listen to their horses—to really see and feel the subtle signs of communication—has completely changed the way I teach. Once I saw the transformation in both the kids and their ponies, I couldn't unsee it. I knew this was something that needed to be part of Pony Club. The Pony Club Pledge states, "I shall endeavor to maintain the best tradition of the ancient and noble skill of horsemanship, always treating my horse with consideration due a partner.

I never set out to expand the Masterson Method business model; my goal was simply to fill a gap I had felt in my own Pony Club education. I realized that horses can't learn if their jaws are tight or if they don't feel safe enough to relax. The techniques we teach are simple, gentle, and accessible—things every horse person can do to help relieve tension and build trust. What started as a way to help older rescue horses has grown beyond anything I could have imagined.

THE MISSION AND THE FUTURE

With Jim Masterson's support, I helped develop the Masterson Method Youth Course to bring this level of communication and awareness to the next generation. The mission is simple but powerful: to change the way we communicate with and honor our riding partners. This summer, our team will return to the United States Pony Club Festival in Kentucky—not just to compete, but to teach. My students will be working alongside Jim Masterson himself, sharing hands-on techniques with other Pony Club members from across the country. It will also mark the national launch of the Masterson Method Youth Course, a milestone that represents years of dedication, collaboration, and belief in the power of connection.



TOP: Maya and Zoe with their mounts getting ready for the riding portion of the Tetrathlon

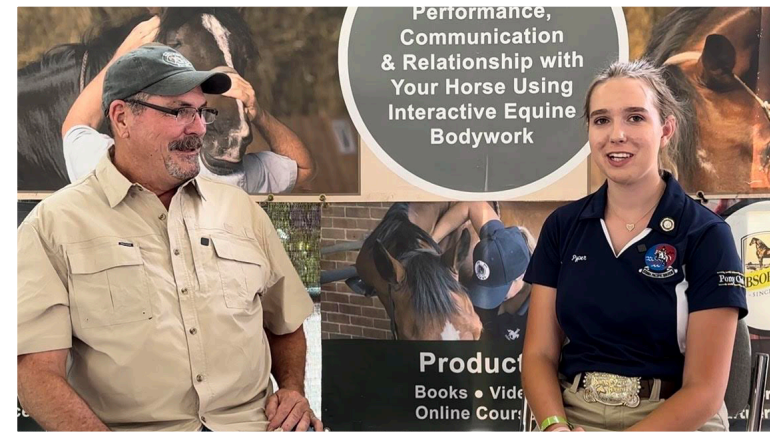
BOTTOM: Mimi with Zoe and Maya celebrating their victory

CONCLUSION

Looking back, I'm filled with pride and gratitude—for my students, for the horses, for my mentors and for the journey that brought us here. Watching young riders use the Masterson Method to calm, connect, and communicate with their horses has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my career. Not everyone will take the time to do bodywork on their horses, but, this program isn't just about bodywork—it's about empathy, awareness, and partnership.

The Masterson Method Youth Program is helping shape a new generation of equestrians who understand that true horsemanship begins with listening. As I watch these young riders grow, I know the future of our sport—and our horses—is in good hands.

MASTERSONMETHOD.COM



MY EXPERIENCE WITH MASTERSON METHOD EQUINE BODYWORK

My name is Pyper Arnold, and I'm an 18-year-old, 5-year Pony Club member and 10-year 4-H member. I was first introduced to Masterson Method when I was in middle school, after my trainer, Mimi Duffy, at the barn where I ride, started working toward her certification in the practice. As Mimi was learning from the courses she participated in, she showed me and some other kids at the barn the basics of what she learned and helped us practice the techniques on the horses at our barn.

At first, what was most striking to me was how subtle it is. A session with the horse mostly looks like gently resting a hand on the horse and simply waiting, watching for a signal that the horse is holding tension in that area. Instead of big movements, you're looking for very small responses from the horse; things like blinking or a twitch of their lip. Those small reactions are the signal or response. Holding your attention there is the key to the release of tension. As the horse begins to release, the signs can be as big as yawning or rolling to

as small as licking and chewing. Learning to notice the signals made me realize how much horses can communicate with us, when we take the time to pay attention.

My first experience helping Mimi teach it to other kids was in July of 2021, the summer after my 7th grade. She took me and a couple of other riders to Kentucky for Pony Club National Festival. This opportunity also included learning from Jim Masterson himself, the creator of the method. And, not only did we get to learn directly from him, but we were also able to show other Pony Clubbers how the method works and how it can benefit their horses.

After that first event, I continued helping out at various demonstrations at Pony Club events. In June of 2024, at the end of my sophomore year of high school, I had the chance to interview Jim Masterson at Horse Expo in Rancho Murrieta. Talking to him again was enlightening, learning more about how he's been working with horses, and how he's been learning how his method can help other animals, like dogs or cats.

Then, a year later, a friend of mine and I traveled to Kentucky again for Pony Club National Festival to help run a Masterson Method informational booth with Mimi and another certified practitioner.

Learning from Mimi over the past five years has been an incredible experience and I can't imagine forming such strong connections with my horse in any other way. Being able to relieve tension in her body, as well as helping other horses, has been a highlight for me, and I wouldn't trade it for anything. In the end, it's hard to pinpoint one moment that changed everything; horses change slowly, and so do we.



LOST HEARTS & SOULS RESCUE

BY CAREY SWEET

The last thing Betsy Bueno needed was another horse. And certainly not two. The founder of Lost Hearts and Souls Horse Rescue was already caring for 16 souls at her Santa Rosa ranch.

But when the call came in from Sonoma County Animal Control about two horses that had been found at a home in Healdsburg in January, she used her lunch break from her work at the Healdsburg Police Department to stop by the property. "The elderly owner had been under investigation by Animal Control for the horses' poor condition at the end of December," she said. "Then he unexpectedly died and no one knew. He was not discovered for two weeks, and when family arrived from L.A., they learned that the horses had not been fed for all that time."



Betsy Bueno

So she got her trailer, loaded them up and tucked them into her recovery barn. One was a 30-year-old gelding, and was starving from being fed the wrong food. The other gelding was 16, and was healthier but stressed.

"You know starvation is at its worse when the fat build up is completely gone and the body then eats muscle," she said. "The owner probably meant well, but might not have known that senior horses need a very different diet. But the horse is a fighter, and made it through the refeeding program. He will look a lot better once he rebuilds some muscle on his back and hind."

The calls come constantly, and Bueno does as much as she can, as she has since she dreamed up her nonprofit rescue nearly three decades ago. The need to rescue animals never ends, and Bueno has traveled all across Northern California, Oregon and beyond to help thousands of beautiful creatures ranging from horses, to llamas, donkeys, mini horses, dogs, cats, sheep, chickens, skunks, a few coyotes and even a couple of Italian water buffaloes.

Sometimes she is able to place animals at private homes – in November she rescued an off-track thoroughbred (OTTB) who had been left in a junk-strewn field next door to a plumbing company after its owner died. It was just in time for another OTTB lover to scoop him up soon before the lady's own 30-year-old thoroughbred passed on from old age. Networking plays a large part of her daily life.

Still, most of her horses lives out their years at her 4-acre ranch at the base of Taylor Mountain. That's because most of the animals have been neglected or severely abused, or are simply too old to rehome. She pays for vet fees, rehabilitation expenses and never-ending feed bills.

"It's incredibly sad that so many horses in Sonoma County are being neglected and abandoned," she said. "People throw these dear souls away when they get older and no longer useful – some even get a younger horse. Would you just give up on a family member because it's older and needs more medical attention?"

She sees some of the very worst cases, and appears frequently in court pursuing penalties for cruel owners. "I cry a lot, and some of the owners have seriously threatened me," she admitted. "But someone has to try to get justice for these innocent beings."

"I feel the need to do this in my soul, and nothing makes me happier than making a difference in the animals' lives."



30-year-old Bart when he arrived and after the refeeding program



It's a path that Bueno, now 66, seemed destined to take. In her 20s, she joined the U.S Army as a Military Police officer. The San Francisco native then joined the South San Francisco Police Department and later transferred to the Napa Police Department, serving on the K-9 unit. After she retired in 1999 with a pension, she planned to stay home to raise her children.

But then her daughter asked for a horse, and Bueno bought one that, as it turned out, had been drugged for the purchase inspection and ended up having been horribly abused and injured. She soon volunteered with agencies including North Bay Horse Rescue and Welfare, the Humane Society of Sonoma County, Sonoma County Animal Services. She helped organize the non-profit Sonoma CHANGE program (Community Horses Acting in Need of Genuine Education), set up in 2007 to support local law enforcement in managing and fostering equine humane cases including neglect, abuse and abandonment.

"The good news about horses in Sonoma County is we do have horse rescue organizations," she said. "Sometimes, like with CHANGE, there can be help for animal cruelty cases where the owner is being charged."



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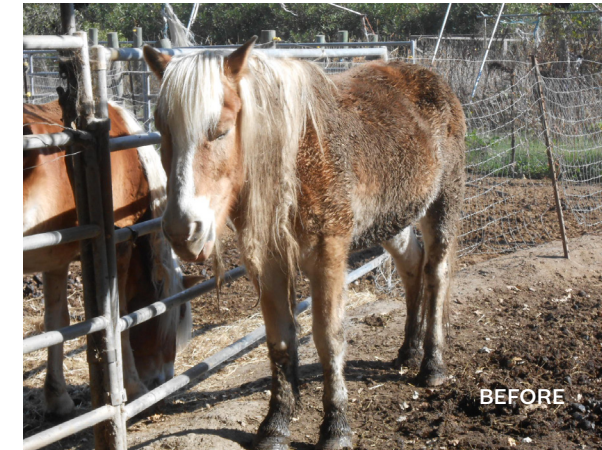
📞 209-993-7306

📍 Northern California

But sadly most of the horses that are neglected or abandoned are not seized and owners are not charged, so then it falls on rescue groups to fight the fight."

In 2004, she bought her current ranch, and in 2011, she established her 501(c)(3) nonprofit status. She does whatever it takes to keep things running, including applying her pension savings and taking jobs including as a FedEx driver and for Sonoma County Paratransit (catering to people living with a disability and unable to access transport).



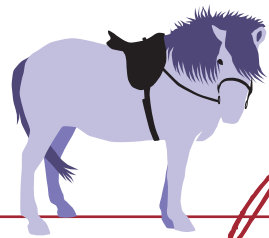
In her free time, she works as an unpaid first responder driving her trailer into the flames to rescue countless animals from the wildfires since 2017. Then securing donations of feed and pasture for animals made homeless and helping their people, too, with love and support and connections to assistance.

"There's never enough money and room at the inn, but we try our best to take in or network out, never leaving one behind," she said. "Somehow, some way, we seem to get it done. Thank goodness for people who are animal lovers able to donate toward our cause and keep us going. It does take a village."

As Bueno stroked the 30 year old gelding's neck while he happily munched on senior select grain, she smiled. "It's funny how their coat and even their color changes during the healing process. He is such a happy boy now and will always have his buddy who came in with him. They're both doing fine. Welcome to your forever home, boys."

REACH BETSY AT 707-479-5639 OR BETSYBUENO@AOL.COM
DONATIONS ARE WELCOME AT LOSTHEARTSANDSOULS.ORG





pony time

MY NAME IS ALLIE NIELSEN I'm a 16-year-old who's been in Pony Club for the past four years. I'm rated as a C2 in both horse management and dressage, and I plan to get my HB later this year.

Whenever I'm asked to describe my experience with Pony Club to curious parents or prospective members, I always struggle to come up with a quick, easy answer. These past four years, I've gone to so many places, been to so many meetings, and made so many memories that a few sentences never seem like enough to truly encapsulate what it means to be a part of this organization.

First and foremost, Pony Club is an excellent way for dedicated children (and adults!) to receive education about horses. After all the many ratings, rallies, and meetings I've attended, I can confidently say I know more about horses than I do about humans. A lot of the knowledge regarding diseases, land conservation, nutrition, and more is also transferable. For example, while studying for my C2, I learned about Clostridium tetani—the bacterium that causes tetanus—and was able to understand how it affects both humans and horses. Right now, I'm starting the process of studying for my HB, and have begun learning the biological details of digestion. This has helped me greatly in the Biology class I'm taking at school, and saved me a lot of studying for my last test.

However, Pony Club doesn't just offer a classroom-style education—it nurtures friendships, creates a team environment, and teaches you how to work with a variety of different people. In the summer of 2024, my Pony Club made the journey to Kentucky to compete in Pony Club Championships. We're located in California, so the prospect of trekking horses to Kentucky was a daunting task. It took two years of preparation. Without the constant support of my teammates, I doubt I would have had the motivation to do it. We hosted fundraisers in the form of dinners, tack cleaning, fun workouts, a GoFundMe, and other events. It took a lot of work, but it took my club from merely a group of girls to a family. To this day, we all remain best friends.

Pony club also teaches the good, old-fashioned values of respect, politeness, punctuality, and hard work. Rallies are an excellent example of how the organization seeks to instill these values in its members. Rallies are horse shows that require a lot of effort. Most everyone who helps run these shows is a volunteer, and Pony Club ensures we practice respect and use our manners when talking to the people who give up their weekends to make sure we have fun. Typically beginning at 6:30 AM and ending twelve hours later, these shows are exhausting for volunteers and participants alike. In fact, I cannot think of a single rally where I've spent more than an hour out of those twelve sitting down comfortably. However, because I've now spent so many days in this way, this kind of work ethic is second nature to me. During rallies, being late to a Turnout (a formal inspection of how you and your horse are presented) is 5 points, and each minute you are late is another point. These points quickly add up, effectively encouraging punctuality. The Pony Club Pledge states that "without good manners and good temper, sport loses its cause for being." This part of the pledge truly embodies the heart of Pony Club, and I've never met anyone in the organization who doesn't carry these with them during Pony Club events and even beyond.

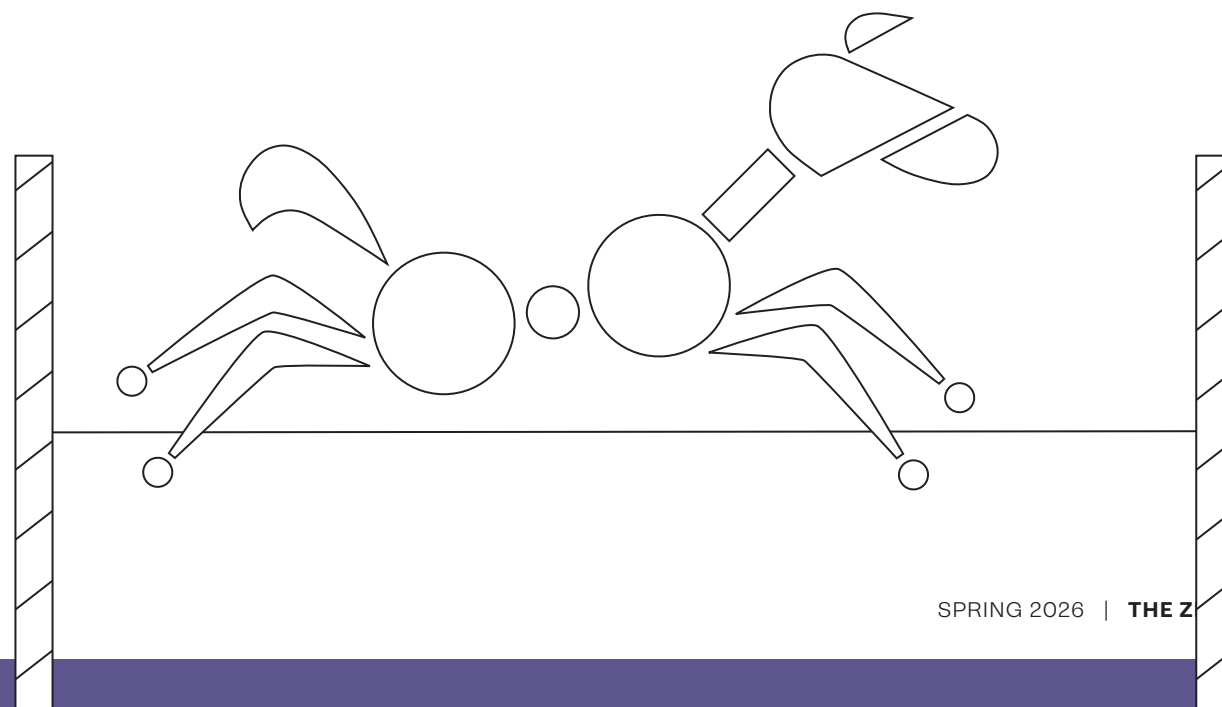
Everything I've gained from being a part of Pony Club—from the education to the teamwork—has been applicable to some other part of my life. Even my ability to clean tack (which, trust me, if you join Pony Club, you will become so, so good at cleaning tack) has made me able to aid my friends and family when they have leather goods in need of help. While the best way to describe Pony Club is to say that it's a non-profit organization that offers opportunities and education to aspiring horse people, this explanation leaves out one crucial detail: Pony Club doesn't just teach people about horses, but teaches them how to move through the world.



- Trot
- Walk
- Canter
- Gallop
- Mustang
- Saddle
- Bridle
- Pony
- Horse
- Ride
- Chestnut
- Buckskin
- Roan
- Foal
- Tail

Find the horse-themed words in this Word Search by EVIE RICHARDSON. Words may be forward, backward, horizontal, vertical or diagonal! The solution is on the next page. **Print out this page and have fun!**

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| G | X | J | W | R | E | R | P | K | R | G | D | A | X | G | G | H | G | Z | S |
| O | A | J | J | Q | Q | W | R | E | C | H | E | S | T | N | U | T | Y | W | X |
| N | X | L | J | W | E | I | G | T | D | R | N | H | H | Z | V | T | P | G | B |
| M | I | B | L | L | Z | C | O | F | I | T | L | U | K | X | M | Y | W | A | U |
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CLASSIC HORSE COOKIES

INGREDIENTS

2 cups oats
 1 cup flour (or oat flour)
 1/2 cup molasses
 1 grated carrot
 1 grated apple
 1-2 tbsp oil (coconut or vegetable)
 optional flax seeds

DIRECTIONS

PREP: Preheat oven to 325 degrees. grate carrots and apples and grease a baking sheet.
MIX: Combine all ingredients in a large bowl until a sticky dough forms.
SHAPE: Roll into small balls and flatten slightly on the sheet.
BAKE: Bake for 20–30 minutes until firm.
COOL: Allow to cool completely—they harden further as they cool—before feeding. Store in an airtight container, or store in the refrigerator to keep fresh longer.

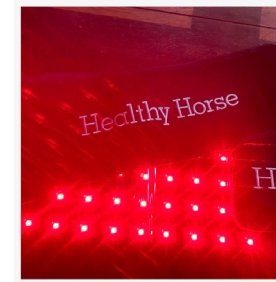
SOLUTION TO WORD SEARCH

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 Z F W **Y N O P** Z U K A J U P E V E Z D L

KIDS

If you would like to contribute an article, drawing, poem, puzzle or recipe to be published in Pony Time contact Shonna at: StableConnections.sb@gmail.com

BY JULIE MCCARTHY



HARNESSING THE POWER OF LIGHT: RED LIGHT THERAPY FOR HORSES AND THEIR HUMANS

For centuries, healers have understood that light is more than illumination — it's medicine. Today, modern science is catching up, and red light therapy (also known as photobiomodulation or low-level laser therapy) is gaining serious traction in both equine and human wellness circles.

WHAT IS RED LIGHT THERAPY?

Red and near-infrared light, typically in the 630–850 nanometer wavelength range, penetrates deep into tissue — reaching muscles, tendons, and even bone. Unlike UV light, it generates no heat damage. Instead, it stimulates the mitochondria in cells to produce more energy (ATP), essentially supercharging the body's natural healing processes.

BENEFITS FOR HORSES

Horses are arguably the greatest beneficiaries of this technology. Athletes by nature, they endure tremendous physical stress on their joints, tendons, and muscles. Red light therapy has shown promise in:

- > Accelerating wound healing — particularly useful for leg wounds that are notoriously slow to heal
- > Reducing inflammation in joints and soft tissue offering relief for conditions like arthritis & tendonitis
- > Easing muscle soreness and stiffness after hard training or competition
- > Supporting hoof health with some practitioners reporting improved circulation in the lower limb
- > Promoting relaxation — many horses visibly relax during sessions, lowering cortisol levels

BENEFITS FOR PEOPLE

The research on humans is equally compelling. Regular red light therapy sessions have been associated with:

- > Reduced joint pain and inflammation, especially in conditions like arthritis and fibromyalgia
- > Faster muscle recovery after exercise
- > Improved skin health — stimulating collagen production and reducing fine lines
- > Better sleep quality by supporting healthy melatonin regulation
- > Mood support, with some studies suggesting benefits for seasonal affective disorder

A SHARED WELLNESS TOOL

One of the most appealing aspects of red light therapy is its versatility — the same device used on your horse's stifle after a competition can be used on your own sore knees that evening. Many equestrians report making red light therapy a shared part of their daily routine with their horses, building quiet connection time into the process.

As with any wellness tool, consistency matters. Most practitioners recommend sessions of 10–20 minutes several times per week to see lasting results.

Always consult your veterinarian or healthcare provider before beginning a new therapeutic protocol.

HEALTHY HORSE MASSAGE AND GROOMING
 925.876.1440 OR JULIE@HEALTHYHORSE.CO
WWW.HEALTHYHORSE.CO

EVENTS 2026

MARCH

March 21-22, 2026
Matt Brown Clinic with Kalember Equine / Petaluma, CA
Contact Melissa Kalember 707-363-1258

March 21, 2026
Wish Fulfilling Tree Ranch Tour & Experience Day / Sebastopol, CA
Contact Shanti Hill-Gauer 707-634-4667

March 27, 2026
Seeking Refinement Clinic with Mike Bridges / Novato, CA
Contact Scott Colvin 415-716-1927 or colvin523@msn.com

March 28, 2026
Equine Lower Limb Anatomy: Form & Function, Hoof Trimming And Shoeing / Healdsburg, CA
Contact Kirk Adkins kirk@equithotics.com

March 28, 2026
Woodbridge Dressage Schooling Show / Petaluma, CA
woodbridge-farmdressage.com

March 29, 2026
Cavaletti Clinic at Woodbridge Farm / Petaluma, CA
Erika Jansson 707-326-7612

March 29, 2026
Annual Sonoma County CDS Chapter Awards Party
Penngrove, CA
Purchase tickets online

APRIL

April 10-12, 2026
Essence & Earth: A 3 Day Retreat
Santa Rosa, CA
Contact Ariana Strozzi Mazzucchi 707-338-9817 or ariana@casariranch.com

April 11, 2026
Chris Ellsworth Clinic
Calistoga, CA
Contact Erin King 415-385-8354

April 11, 2026
Mustang Matt Clinic at Novato Horsemen's / Novato, CA
Contact Jane Ratto 415-328-3195

April 11, 2026
The Spring Edition Horse Show at Sonoma County Fairgrounds
Santa Rosa, CA
Sign-up online

April 14-15, 2026
Finesse Without Force Positive Life Skills for Horses and Humans
Sonoma, CA
Contact Jenni Purcell @ RavendaisyFarm@gmail.com

April 17-19, 2026
Spring Schooling Show Sonoma Horse Park / Petaluma, CA
Contact Lyn Nelson lyn@sonomahorsepark.com

April 19, 2026
Novato Horseman Horse Show
Novato, CA
Contact Jonathan Ibarra 628-294-8532

April 24, 2026
Horses and Heartmath
Sonoma, CA
Sign-up online

April 25-26, 2026
From Burnout to Balance
Sebastopol, CA
Contact Shanti Hill-Gauer shanti@therapeuticranch.com or 707-634-4667

April 25, 2026
Woodbridge Dressage Schooling Show / Petaluma, CA
woodbridge-farmdressage.com

April 26, 2026
Cavaletti Clinic at Woodbridge Farm / Petaluma, CA
Erika JanssoN 707-326-7612

April 26, 2026
Embodied Equestrians: Managing What Gets In The Way
Petaluma, CA
Contact Caroline Vetter drcarolinevetter@drcarolinevetter.com

April 30, 2026
Biomechanics and Awareness Training with Age Yother
Santa Rosa, CA
Contact Sarah Mowaid 831-888-7903

MAY

May 2-3, 2026
Building Confidence & Connection from the Ground Up / Novato, CA
Contact Micaela 530-320-8094 or info@lovehorsemanship.com

May 2, 2026
Sonoma County Spring Trails Open House / Santa Rosa, CA
Contact Ariana Strozzi Mazzucchi 707-338-9817

May 3, 2026
Interconn-Eq-Ted / Petaluma, CA
Contact changeyourlead@gmail.com

May 13-17, 2026
Sonoma Horse Park Spring Classic / Petaluma, CA
Contact Lyn Nelson lyn@sonomahorsepark.com

May 17, 2026
Marin Chapter Dressage Show***
Petaluma, CA
Contact Kathleen Goldstein 415-608-2770, Lv2trot1@aol.com

May 23, 2026
Woodbridge Dressage Schooling Show / Petaluma, CA
woodbridge-farmdressage.com

May 24, 2026
Cavaletti Clinic at Woodbridge Farm / Petaluma, CA
Erika Jansson 707-326-7612

May 30-31, 2026
Sonoma Chapter Shelley Siegel Dressage Show*** / Petaluma, CA
Contact Tracy Ladd 707-495-2428

JUNE

June 3-7, 2026
Leadership & Horses
Santa Rosa, CA
Contact Ariana Strozzi Mazzucchi 707-338-9817

June 3, 2026
Teen Leadership And Self-Esteem Workshop / Petaluma, CA
Contact 707-780-2496 or lindseywertimft@gmail.com

June 14, 2026
Introduction to Psychotherapy With Horses- Change your Lead
Petaluma, CA
Contact changeyourlead@gmail.com

June 15-18, 2026
Giant Steps Summer Camp
Petaluma, CA
Register online

June 27, 2026
Woodbridge Dressage Schooling Show / Petaluma, CA
woodbridge-farmdressage.com

June 28, 2026
Cavaletti Clinic at Woodbridge Farm / Petaluma, CA
Erika Jansson 707-326-7612

JULY

July 19, 2026
Marin Chapter Summer Dressage Show*** / Petaluma, CA
Contact Kathleen Goldstein 415-608-2770, Lv2trot1@aol.com

July 25, 2026
Woodbridge Dressage Schooling Show / Petaluma, CA
woodbridge-farmdressage.com

AUGUST

July 29-August 2, 2026
Giant Steps Charity Classic Sonoma Horse Park
Petaluma, CA
Contact Lyn Nelson lyn@sonomahorsepark.com

August 29, 2026
Woodbridge Dressage Schooling Show / Petaluma, CA
woodbridge-farmdressage.com

August 30, 2026
Cavaletti Clinic at Woodbridge Farm / Petaluma, CA
Erika Jansson 707-326-7612

SEPTEMBER

September 2-6, 2026
Sonoma Horse Park Fall Classic I
Petaluma, CA
Contact Lyn Nelson lyn@sonomahorsepark.com

September 9-16, 2026
Advanced Equine Guided Education / Santa Rosa, CA
Contact Ariana Strozzi Mazzucchi 707-338-9817

September 9-13, 2026
Sonoma Horse Park Fall Classic II
Petaluma, CA
Contact Lyn Nelson lyn@sonomahorsepark.com

September 26, 2026
Woodbridge Dressage Schooling Show / Petaluma, CA
woodbridge-farmdressage.com

September 27, 2026
Cavaletti Clinic at Woodbridge Farm / Petaluma, CA
Erika Jansson 707-326-7612

OCTOBER

October 23-25, 2026
Freedom Cowgirl Retreat
Santa Rosa, CA
Contact Ariana Strozzi Mazzucchi 707-338-9817

October 25, 2026
Cavaletti Clinic at Woodbridge Farm / Petaluma, CA
Erika Jansson 707-326-7612

October 31, 2026
Woodbridge Dressage Schooling Show / Petaluma, CA
woodbridge-farmdressage.com

NOVEMBER

November 21-22, 2026
Chris Ellsworth Clinic
Calistoga, CA
Contact Erin King 415-385-8354

November 22, 2026
Cavaletti Clinic at Woodbridge Farm / Petaluma, CA
Erika Jansson 707-326-7612

DECEMBER

December 13, 2026
Cavaletti Clinic at Woodbridge Farm / Petaluma, CA
Erika Jansson 707-326-7612

STABLE EDUCATION

(COMING SOON!)

If you are a professional and would like to host an education evening, contact Shonna at: StableConnections.sb@gmail.com

Ask Scout

ADVICE STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH



Q: Why the sudden switch to low sugar cookies and CELERY? And my mom is talking about a muzzle when I go out to turnout!?!? —Oscar

A: Laminitis can be caused by a high-sugar diet. She is trying to keep you from a painful disease. Tell your mom a low-sugar diet is good for everyone :-)

Q: My mom is reading a book called *Death by Dressage*. Should I be worried?? —Franz

A: No, it's a mystery by Carolyn Banks though sometimes it seems like dressage can be...

Q: My mom is always complaining that I lose my fly mask. What am I to do? —Golly

A: Stop the madness and keep away from your neighbors. They don't have to deal with your mom.

Q: Why does my mom keeps saying "It's a journey". Are we going to Bali? —Blue

A: Lower your expectations, a tropical holiday is not in your future. It's the day to day adventure of training.

Q: As my mom puts me in my turnout field, she says "Make good choices". What does she mean? —Pickle

A: Act Responsibly! Don't act like a lunatic and end up with your leg stuck through the fence or something worse. She might wrap you up in bubble wrap. It's an idea that I hear a lot.

If you have a question for Scout, email AskScout@gmail.com



(PODCAST SPOTLIGHT)

EPISODE 118: CHRIS ELLSWORTH

Chris Ellsworth talks to us about how he went from rodeo to ranch life and is now holding clinics around the U.S. Listen on either Apple Podcasts or Spotify.

CHECK OUT ALL THE PODCASTS AT
StableConnectionsThePodcast.com