

Nickers and Neighs from the New Member of the LC Herd

Contributor: Leslie Hunter

Welcome to the summer edition of *The Little Creek Times*, the official newsletter of the Little Creek Horse Farm and Park. My name is Leslie Hunter, and in the months to come I'll be leading you on a virtual trail ride through the many activities of our busy barn community. For those of you I've yet to meet, I'm new to the equine world. While I live less than a mile from here, I didn't know anything about this pastoral piece of heaven until I attended Horse Fest several years ago. After that I spent many Sundays outside the fence, gazing at the beautiful residents grazing on the grass. Evenings spent binge-watching the Canadian horse opera, *Heartland*, sealed the deal on my new love affair. Among my current favorites are Appaloosas and Mustangs as well as exotic beauties from Iceland and Mongolia. And let's not forget the quarter horse. (Dillon would never forgive me if I left him out.) And the list goes on.

So I wondered: was there a place for me in this world? The only pets I've ever had have been rabbits – prey animals like horses, but cute and cuddly as opposed to majestic and mysterious. Little did I know at the time how much they have in common. More on that in a minute.

Unlike most everyone I've met at Little Creek, I had zero experience with horses as a child, other than the ones I rode on the carousel at Euclid Beach, the amusement park where I grew up in Cleveland, Ohio. I wasn't the lovestruck little girl longing for Flicka or The Pie of *National Velvet*. But I'm more than making up for it now. If there's such a thing as horse fever, I have a case of it that will only be sated by time spent with these magnificent creatures and learning everything I can about them. As a recent retiree from 30 years as a fundraising researcher at Emory University, I was seeking a meaningful focus to my new life. Also, having spent time as a freelance writer some years ago, I missed the creative outlet that stringing words together to communicate a message provided. Turns out Little Creek is my perfect fit. Riding lessons with Brad Williams, volunteering with Stride Ahead, participating in Pony Crew, and serving as your newsletter contributing editor--with the guidance and support of Conservancy president Rene Iverson--check off all my boxes. I couldn't be happier. If I could whinny, I would!

Accompanying me on this journey is my faithful partner and daily inspiration, Holly Hunter. Not the Conyers-born actress. My Holly Hunter is my feisty fur-mate -- a middle-aged rescued rabbit with an opinion on everything. But interestingly enough, Holly has also become my unofficial horse whisperer. As I learn about horses via my time riding, grooming and reading about them, I've noticed something very interesting and exciting. Horses and rabbits – while at the opposite end of the size scale of mammals--share a number of traits in common. They are grazers, eat a nearly identical diet, view the world with the same sort of vision, are prey animals, communicate with their ears and lick and chew when they're relaxed. Holly even has a white blaze on her face and loves to jump over the obstacle course in her rectangular pen in anticipation of her carrot treat. When I told Holly's vet that I'd become involved with horses, she told me that exotic vets often refer to rabbits as "little horses." (Holly says horses are just big bunnies. We in the rabbit world call that *rabbitude*.)



I am thrilled and honored to be your intrepid reporter and look forward to keeping you in the know. I also love feedback. So, if you want to nicker or neigh at me, I can be reached at leslieruthhunter@gmail.com. Looking forward to exploring our happy trails together! This is me if I was a horse. (A girl can dream...)

Behind the Barn....Notes from the Conservancy Admin Team

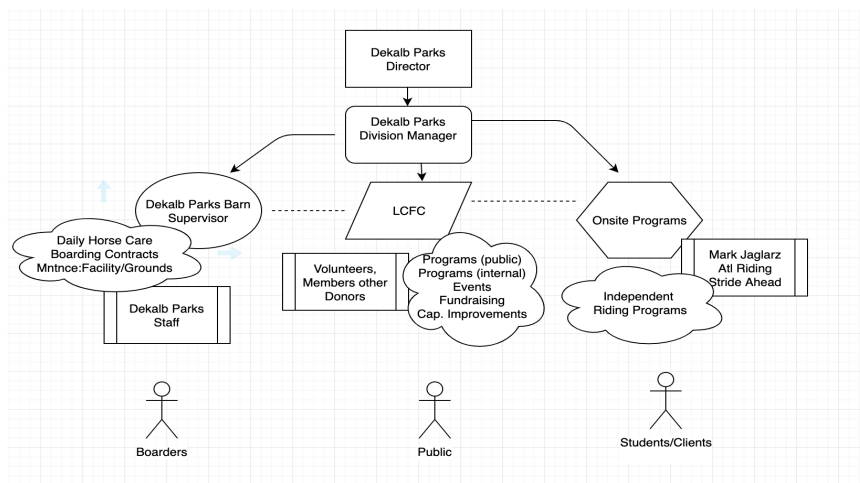
Contributor: Rene Iverson

We are excited to have a need (*more consistent communications*) and a ready volunteer (*thanks, Leslie Hunter!*) come together in the form of this newsletter. For now, expect three issues this year... It takes some time to ask for and receive/edit submissions and so we're starting conservatively.



In addition to creative content, there will be regular features rotating between the independent Programs & Conservancy programs. The county operations team is all set to begin regular contributions within the next couple of editions, and we'll look forward to including them whenever they feel ready.

(This diagram may help newer friends understand this truly unique park. I doodled it while trying to help a new volunteer understand just what is going on around here! One note for savvy chart readers: LCFC is actually independent of Dekalb County Parks...but we do work hand in hand within a Letter of Understanding, for the good of horse education to the public and this Park which houses our equine friends and helpers.)



First Post-Pandemic Pony Rides and Petting Zoo

It was a small event - strategically planned so our volunteers could dip their toe back into events without being overwhelmed and it was gratifying to see the happy faces of parents and kids being welcomed into the Park - back to normal!?

Although in the past, boarders' private horses were used for "pony" rides, the Conservancy thought an outside vendor would be a safer and more manageable option. *For instance, volunteers used to have to lift kids of all sizes and ages up onto the typically taller horses that board at Little Creek (strength building - I can personally attest!)*

And so, many thanks to Little Red Barn for bringing their much loved (and well-cared for) ponies and other animals to see us. They provided Coggins (a sort of "passport of horse health") and a

certificate of insurance, too. The Conservancy is honored to work with such a reputable team, and plans are underway for two more small events in the fall...with sponsors to help with costs.

Finally, this was very much a fundraiser--charging \$30 per child to ride and pet--however, LCFC provided 15 tickets at no cost to the community, via Commissioner Ted Terry. (Staff and their immediate families are always welcome--at no charge, of course).

Interested in sponsoring in the future? Get in touch with us anytime!

Annual Elections

LCFC is a membership organization per its Bylaws. This means quarterly meetings (or communications....as meetings fell off during pandemic) and annual elections. This year, the treasurer and vice president positions were up for election. Serving until May 2024, **Peggy Berg** was re-elected treasurer and **Nick Thompson**, formerly secretary, was elected vice president. This left the secretary position vacant.

The Bylaws state that the Board is to appoint a replacement as "interim" until the next regularly scheduled election - and **Jamie Hodges** has been selected as interim secretary until May 2023. The Board feels that Jamie's knowledge of the Parks Department and her commitment to the Conservancy's programs will serve the Park well. Her flexible schedule fits well with the needs of this busy and dedicated volunteer group. Many thanks to others who expressed interest - we are actively working to find a fit and hope to work with you in other ways!

Any treasurers out there? Peggy has faithfully served on the Conservancy board for many years now - and I can't imagine life without her insight. She has happily found **Nancy Scott**, who is in training right now to help with bookkeeping tasks. However, if there is someone out there who would be willing to train into the treasurer position - please reach out to Peggy (treasurer@littlecreekfarmconservancy.org) anytime. She has some other life goals she'd like to spend time on, but in her steadfast support of the Park and LCFC, won't leave us until she's confident in a replacement.

Current busy-ness:

- Finishing the 2020 Community Access Grant signage
- Received updated quote on Big A** Fans for the Barn - just dreaming for now
- Working on installing the Gathering Corral (waiting on vendor)
- Continuously booking & coordinating birthday parties (2x/ month), Hands on Horses and other special tours
- Piloting a "Sprinkles on the Move" program for special visits that highlight the Park and support public equine appreciation and education
- Working on fall and/or winter plans with Emory Cares and the Park's Operations team for some volunteer work days
- Coordinated a Dekalb employee volunteer day with Dekalb on site operations
- Administration for the monthly Advisory Group meetings that help keep stakeholders at the barn on the same page
- Insurance renewal paperwork

- Working on a new fundraising idea “Art in the Barn” - a possible addition to Fall's activities - TBD
- Ongoing database maintenance, social media and website
- Starting this newsletter to increase communication quality and quantity for the barn community, neighbors, volunteers and donors and anyone interested.

Ongoing programs and their Coordinators (Chairs):

Celebrations: Peggy Berg, with Valerie Morvan

Hands on Horses: Lynn Leonard

Volunteer Days: varies, but Karen Maloney is usually instrumental!

Audubon Area: Bobbi Woolwine

Special Events: varies by event

Recycling: Jennifer McQuiston

Pony Crew Leader: (September-May) Nancy Cornish; Board liaison: Bobbi Woolwine

Membership: Jane Donofrio

Social Media: Laura Neely Lanio, with the tiniest help from Rene Iverson

Fly Predator Program: Nancy Scott

Newsletter: Leslie Hunter



There are not enough thanks for the volunteers that run or otherwise support these programs!

Coming soon!

- ◆ Emory Cares workday(s): September 10, November 12, and January 16
- ◆ Next pony ride event: October 9
- ◆ Next newsletter: (September/October)
- ◆ Halloween Costume event - TBD, maybe Oct 30th?

CULTURE CORRAL

Starting with this issue of *The Little Creek Times* we'll be featuring a piece of writing with horses as the central theme. Some will be from authors you know, others will be original works from undiscovered talent. We proudly inaugurate this exciting space with a poem by Ainsley Andersen, a ten year-old member of the LCFC Pony Crew, and a rising 5th grader.

Where I'm From

By Ainsley Andersen

I am from the bright red stop sign right in front of my house.
From the triangle the gardeners said they'd fill with grass and flowers but never did.
I'm from the magnolia tree swaying in the wind, and its petals falling to the muddy floor.
And the musty smell of renovation floating throughout the hallways.
I am from slobber on my face, saying "Get off." and "That tickles!"
From Ruthie B. and all the comfort she brings me on the couch of the living room.
I am from my dogs, big and little, keeping watch on me from up high.
And the musical notes of the wooden violin and the complicated songs it can play.
I am from the many adventures I go on, all in one thick book.
And the masks and Clorox Wipes my mother has in her purse.
I am from the many flowers my Grandma plants in the backyard and the tasty cookies that are always placed next to the napkins when we get there.
I am from sleepovers and "Hey let's pull an all-nighter!" And the puffy pillows being tossed back and forth and the opening of presents.
I am from dust in my eyes as I ride on horseback in the old barn.
And heaving the tacks onto their backs and the feeling I get when I brush their manes.
I'm from my family and friends.
I'm from me.



Ainsley and her pal, Dillon.

TAKING STRESS IN STRIDE

Contributed by Stride Ahead, a non profit Equine Assisted Therapy Group operating here at the Park

While the Covid crisis has calmed significantly, the stress it created can have many long-term effects. From physical trauma such as ulcers, heart attack and stroke, to emotional conditions including anxiety and depression, stress attacks the body on multiple fronts. A June 21st article in *The New York Times* cites research that suggests stress may even age the immune system.

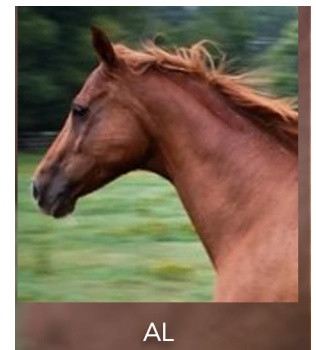
The good news is, there are strategies to manage stress safely. According to the Mayo Clinic web site, these include getting regular exercise, practicing relaxation techniques, spending time with friends and family, setting aside time for hobbies, and probably most important, keeping a sense of humor. Luckily,

Little Creek is home to a program that provides the benefits of ALL of these options in one amazing package: the Stress Relief component of the Stride Ahead equine therapy program. Stress Relief serves veterans, schoolteachers and healthcare professionals and is supported by grants from the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation and the Eveland Family Foundation.

Stride's Stress Relief program utilizes a mental health therapy model developed by EAGALA (Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association) which creates a team consisting of a licensed mental health professional, a qualified equine specialist, and specially selected horses. Stride Ahead's Stress Relief staff members have all gone through the rigorous EAGALA certification process and have also earned certification from PATH International (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship). The horses are among Stride's gentlest equine volunteers. They are truly the heart and soul of Stress Relief therapy – our four-legged healers.

Stress Relief has been serving our military veterans at Little Creek for some time. During the pandemic, Stress Relief also began helping doctors, nurses, chaplains, EMTs, veterans and schoolteachers--hardworking professionals who selflessly give so much to their communities and are in need of a little TLC of their own.

There are still spaces in Stride Ahead's Stress Relief program for those who qualify. No previous horse experience is necessary. Please contact their program manager **Pam Smith at pashme01@gmail.com** or **404-217-4895**. And say "whoa" to stress!



FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH

Thoughts from Dillon, by Leslie Hunter

Welcome to the first of this new column, *From the Horse's Mouth*. My name is Dillon and I've been given the great honor of being the first Little Creek horse to share my story with you. (*You can see me in the picture with my friend, Ainsley, in the Culture Corral section above*)

As far as I know, I wasn't named after any other Dillons. Not Matt Dillon, the fictional U.S. marshal of Dodge City on the 50s TV show, *Guns, Smoke*—although for a human, James Arness was almost as handsome as me. And not Bob Dylan who sang about *Blowin' in the Wind*, although my nickering and snorting are not all that different from his voice. And certainly not the Welsh poet Dylan Thomas, who wrote "The Song of the Mischievous Dog" when he could just as well have penned "The Ballad of the Beautiful Horse." (There's no accounting for the taste of humans.)

Anyway, as far as I know, I'm just Dillon. Not exactly just plain Dillon--because I'm anything but plain. I'm a buttermilk dun quarter horse, which means not only am I exceptionally handsome, I'm versatile, gentle and loyal. Maybe that's why my owner, Kat Smith-Tice, named me Dillon. Turns out Dillon is an Irish surname which means loyal. How about that!

One of my students who believes in something called astrology says I'm a Pisces because my birthday is March 16. I don't really know what that means, but she says Pisces people are sensitive, and go to great lengths to make sure everyone around them is happy. She also says Pisceans are creative and imaginative. I don't know if these qualities apply to animals, but I'm told my riding students love me--especially the really inexperienced ones--because I'm dependable. That may be more because I'm a quarter horse than a Pisces. I think it's because I'm really cute.

On the other hoof, when I first moved to Little Creek, I used to get into trouble whenever I joined the rest of the geldings in the pasture and someone - often me - ended up hurt. I guess that was my creativity and imagination taking over my horse sense. One time I escaped from my stall when I learned how to "pick the lock." A special latch had to be installed to keep me from getting into any more trouble. (I'm still working on that one.) I guess I just have lots of energy and need a place to direct it. That's probably why I loved doing quadrille--sort of a ballet for horses and their riders. I'm also a natural at horse games, an obstacle course which is lots of fun. My special human, Nancy Cornish, says she doesn't even have to guide me, she just goes along for the ride! That's probably the quarter horse in me. My relatives love racing, rodeos and ranch work. In fact, it's said that we quarter horses have cow sense because we're experts at cutting cattle. I've never done that, but it does sound like fun! I say, remember--I'm a sprinter. We love to run fast. Fortunately for her, only short distances.

Brad Williams, Nancy's partner and one of my riding lesson leaders, describes me as a frat boy - always looking for a good time. In fact, the other geldings finally kicked me out of their herd, so I spend my free time with my mane buddy, the mighty Max--a chestnut quarter horse who's almost as handsome as me. Maybe we should have our own fraternity: Kappa Gamma Rho: Cool Geldings Rule. Brad also calls me Big Guy which I really like. When he directs me to walk, trot or canter with a student riding on my back, it makes me happy. I like making my students happy. Maybe I have student sense.

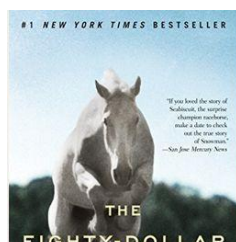
Anyway, thanks for reading my story. I love being a horse. (Especially the carrots.) And I love life at Little Creek. Stop by my stall some afternoon when you're at the barn. It's the one closest to the pastures. That is, if I haven't figured out how to pick the new latch yet!

BOOK STALL

Contributor: Leslie Hunter

Starting with this issue of *The Little Creek Times*, we'll feature reviews of books with an equine connection. Some fiction, some nonfiction. Some for adults, others for young readers. (Or the young at heart.) And some will be recently published, others, older, but new to me. Perhaps to you too. Many can be signed out from your local public library. We hope you will be inspired to read them and share your experiences with others.

The Eighty Dollar Champion

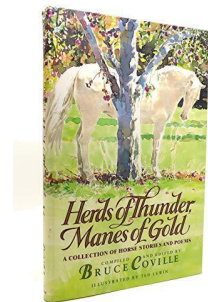


If you are one of the few horse lovers who hasn't heard the story of Harry de Leyer and his very special friend, Snowman, then you are in for a treat. If you're like me and have only seen the documentary, *Harry and Snowman*, you'll find so much more to their miraculous and touching story between the covers of Elizabeth Letts' exciting book, *The Eighty Dollar Champion*. Not only will you learn the details of this very unconventional love story, you'll step into the world of national jumping competitions. And for an added bonus, historical events of World War II through the early 1960s are woven throughout the narrative. Ms. Letts is so talented that even though I was already familiar with this rag to ribbons story, I turned the pages as if a mystery was unfolding! And I found myself wishing that the seven-year-old I was when Snowman became the much-honored hero horse of a nation could have seen him jump as if he was reaching for the stars

Harry, who died at the age of 93 in June of 2021, once said "Snowman and me both came from nothing. But together we made it to the top of the world." Join them with this heartwarming book.

Herds of Thunder, Manes of Gold

If you're the sort of person who enjoys variety, I've got just the book for you. Compiled and edited by Bruce Coville in 1989, *Herds of Thunder, Manes of Gold* is a collection of stories, book chapters, and poems that will whet the appetite of anyone who wants to extend their time with horses from riding to reading. The illustrations by Ted Lewin are ethereally colorful and invite you into each piece of literature. Bruce is described as a children's author, but as someone new to the world of equine enchantment, I found his selections educational and entertaining. Some of the authors' names will be familiar (Nathaniel Hawthorne, Carl Sandburg and Marguerite Henry) and others may be new to you. But I can promise you will find something to enjoy and perhaps lead you to other works by the writers.



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Carrot for your thoughts:

The following books may be reviewed in upcoming issues of *The Little Creek Times*...send us your suggestions of a book we should share!

- ***The Great Black Jockeys*** by Edward Hotaling (1999). Did you know that the jockey who won the first Kentucky Derby was African American?
- ***Horse*** by Geraldine Brooks, (2022) historical fiction with connections to the story of black jockeys.
- ***Unbreakable*** by Richard Askwith's (2019) nonfiction, the Nazis, gender politics and a profile in courage.
- ***The Ride of Her Life*** by Elizabeth Letts (2021), another profile in courage by the author of *The Eighty Dollar Champion* and *The Perfect Horse*.

Happy reading!



The Fine Print



The non-profit Little Creek Farm Conservancy, a 100% volunteer-run organization, supports the Park with programming to bring the public in safely, and fundraising for special projects. Please visit our website: www.littlecreekfarmconservancy.org for complete information. We have special ways to visit and volunteer opportunities available, as well as memberships that support our mission to be stewards of this special place.

This is a publication of Little Creek Farm Conservancy Inc.

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