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Meet Our New Herd Members!



Quincy is an 18-year-old thoroughbred, but he never took part in racing. Before he joined the Ride for Joy team, he was a former eventer and jumper. Quincy also participated in the unique discipline of dressage. Thoroughbreds are considered "hot-

blooded" horses, known for their agility, speed, and spirit. Quincy is calm and quiet and doesn't get hot-spirited about much, making him a great addition to the Ride for Joy herd.

Lexie is the smallest member of our herd, standing at just 13 hands high. She is a 15-year-old Welsh Pony and is as sweet as can be. To

be classified as a pony, an equine must be 13 hands high or smaller. Because Lexie has competed in Western Pleasure, she will be a perfect horse for our smaller students.



2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Bringing the JOY of Horses to Those in Need



Letter From the Barn

Adaptive riding is very diverse, but one thing our lessons do not involve is horse racing. Although we don't race horses at Ride for Joy, I can't help but draw some parallels between Rich Strike, horse #21 in the Kentucky Derby lineup this year, and our program.

- Rich Strike entered the race Saturday 30 seconds before the deadline.
- He only got in the race because the 20th horse had to scratch the day of the race.
- He started from the worst post position on the outside of the track.
- He had to make his way through the field of 19 other horses from the back.
- His race career: seven starts, one win.
- His jockey, Sonny Leon, had never been to the Kentucky Derby.
- His trainer, Eric Reed, had never raced a horse in the Kentucky Derby.
- Eric Reed tragically lost nearly two dozen racehorses in a barn fire a few years ago and struggled with quitting.
- Eric Reed lost his two assistant trainers in 2021 to cancer.
- Rich Strike's owner, Richard Dawson, bought his first horse in 2019 and had won less than 10 races.

- Rich Strike was purchased in a claiming race last fall for only \$30,000.
- He was slated at 80-to-1 odds, the second-longest odds in Derby history.

If you haven't seen the viral video of the Kentucky Derby race this year, I encourage you to watch it! Rich Strike begins working his way through the crowded pack, finding a few narrow, fleeting opportunities to improve his position. As the horses head toward the finish line, he miraculously moves up to fifth, then fourth, but still, no one notices him. Everyone's attention was firmly focused on the battle between the two famous front-runners.

Only seconds before the finish, Rich Strike suddenly, almost magically, passes the two front-runners. The announcer struggles to identify him and say his name in time.

He said, almost in a single breath, "Rich Strike is coming up on the inside ... Oh my goodness! The longest shot has won the Kentucky Derby!"

The video is 54 seconds, and he says Rich Strike's name at the 48-second mark.

When I watch the video of the race, I think of our students. Like Rich Strike, they are long shots, too.



Ride for Joy serves students ages 4–80 who experience a range of special needs such as autism, Down syndrome, or spina bifida. Some of our students have progressive diseases such as Rhett's syndrome, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, or Huntington's, which may worsen over time. Some students are born without the ability to hear or have visual impairments. Other students have experienced a life-changing accident that resulted in a traumatic brain injury or stroke, which has dramatically changed their life. Some of our students are veterans who experience PTSD or have a combat injury from their time serving our country.

We don't count the long shots out at Ride for Joy. We believe persistence and determination beat the odds.

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Ride for Joy Profit & Loss

Direct public support:	\$134,265.74
Donated goods and services revenue:	\$1,200.00
Revenue from nongovernment grants:	\$32,592.52
Program Related Revenue:	\$16,483.42
Investment Revenue:	\$17,170.71
Revenue from other sources:	\$157.59
Special Events Income:	\$28,928.59
TOTAL INCOME:	\$230,798.57

Jan. 1, 2021 – Dec. 31, 2021

Salaries and related expense:	\$105,471.33
Professional services:	\$2,380.99
Administrative expenses:	\$8,135.76
Facilities and equipment:	\$72,158.73
Business and Other Expenses:	\$23,620.76
Depreciation:	\$3,710
TOTAL EXPENSES:	\$211,767.57
NET PROFIT:	\$19,031.00

VETERAN TESTIMONY

"I'm a disabled veteran. I was introduced to Ride for Joy through the VA Recreation Therapy program. I had never ridden a horse before, so in the beginning, I could not see how doing so would bring 'joy.' Veterans in these programs suffer from physical limitations and/or with PTSD and other emotional issues. This is seen in many vets because the military has taught us how to put emotions into a locked box so we can accomplish our missions. The problem is that many face life not able to feel even everyday emotions like joy and fulfillment. We are numb inside. When we are asked what we enjoy, we don't have an answer. Veterans are warriors who no longer have a mission, so we often need to redefine ourselves and find other things that bring meaning to our lives. That is why we need nonprofit programs like Ride for Joy.

"On my first day in the program, I learned that our horses would bond with us and respond to our energy levels. Soon, I was on the horse and our instructor was telling us the tricks to get the best from our horses AND ourselves. The program also has volunteers for every student, someone who helps saddle the horse, walk beside you while you ride, and assist with mounting and dismounting from blocks, ramps, or lifts. There is a lot of 'manpower' needed for every hour session and for every vet. Because of these things, my disabilities didn't stop me from doing something I never thought I'd be able to do. The riding has helped me rebuild muscles, walk better, and sit tall in the saddle. As I progressed, I was able to walk my own horse from the barn to the indoor riding arena and ride the horse without as much human assistance. And lo and behold, in the pictures of me riding, I was smiling. I have true 'joy' on the days I get to come in and work with my horse. I loved it so much; I signed up for another session. But this time, I was informed that a donor had paid for my session for me. That validated me as a person and acknowledged what I gave to my country. So, if you want to know how your donations for veterans make an impact on lives, just ask me. I am grateful to all the staff, volunteers, and donors at Ride for Joy because I can now say I have something that brings me joy every week."

-K, United States Veteran Staff Sergeant, E5, Air Force



PARENT TESTIMONY

"No moment of a Ride for Joy session is wasted. From the time my son arrives in the barn until he leaves, the lesson is in progress. Preparation, social engagement, and steps of the routine are all engaged in the session. I love how the instructors allow the student to make choices and have input while riding their horse. Each planned activity addresses several goals at a time. The instruction at Ride for Joy continues to improve every year. It's a great learning environment in which the riders think they're mostly just having fun but working on so many emotional, cognitive, and physical goals."

- James, Parent of Ride for Joy Student



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Serving riders experiencing special needs or chronic illness, and veterans, remains a core of our mission: to provide professional and compassionate equine-assisted activities and adaptive riding to all these individuals.

Some of our current student goals include the following:

- A student was born at 3 pounds due to their birth mother's drug use and has a developmental disability. The rider's goal is to build core strength, identify colors, and build confidence. They want to create an emotional bond through the care of horses and cognitive and language skills by taking direction and learning to give direction to horses.
- One of our students resides in a residential habilitation-supported living home with two roommates. He stays in his room a lot. He was diagnosed with cerebral palsy and an intellectual delay. The student's goal is to "improve strength and motor coordination, enhance language and sensory regulation, and develop social skills."
- Another student was born with Down syndrome. His goals are to "communicate wants and needs, mount with assistance, and dismount with more cooperation."
- One of our student's goals is to be able to ride a bike and increase volume on "walk on" and "whoa." Others' goals are "following one- and two-step directions and greeting and interacting with staff."

Veterans' Goals

- "Increase posture and trunk muscles ... find support to be calm and relaxed, improve the ability to communicate, promote self-confidence, and provide tactile and sensory support, body awareness, balance, coordination, and control."
- "Exposure to horses with a therapeutic bucket list item to ride a horse full gallop. Support and find other veterans to call friends, and maintain and build upon existing foundational riding skills. Improve as a para-equestrian. Increase self-esteem and decrease anxiety. Build coordination."
- "Wants to work on hip positioning, turning left knee forward, and maintaining flexibility in the ankle; increasing grip strength and ability to cross midline; learn grooming, saddling, and walking; practice independent control; learn walk, trot, and canter; and left-hand control."



For some of our students, their lesson time each week is when they get to feel like they are walking because the movement on a horse is the closest thing doctors can find to that sensation.

So far in 2022, we have served over 230 riders with 1,200 hours of equine-assisted activities between

riding lessons, camps, and a veterans retreat. We have an average of 40 riders per session, almost double from three years ago.



This feat took 125 active volunteers and four interns who logged 1,755 hours of service YTD in 2022. The dollar value this provides to our organization is \$42,549.05. Ride for Joy volunteers are an incredible gift to our students, their families, and to our staff. We are so grateful for them and could not operate without their volunteerism and service to our community.

I've often thought of how much time a student experiencing special needs spends being taught how to interact with non-disabled people. But why don't we spend time teaching those without disabilities how to interact with those experiencing disabilities?

Here, at the ranch, through the joy of horses, we do just that; our wonderful staff are trained and teach other people and even our horses how to engage with those experiencing a chronic illness or living with a disability. This is beautiful and honorable work and a wonderful privilege to be a part of.

When we truly begin to view ALL people with inherent value, we begin to understand there is meaning, purpose, and dignity to every human life.

This year, Rich Strike showed us not to count anyone out no matter where they are in a lineup.

And just like Rich Strike, Ride for Joy students get stronger as they hit their stride and adaptive riding helps them reach their goals.

One equine-assisted activity for a student at Ride for Joy actually costs \$200, but RFJ only charges \$20 per rider to keep equine-assisted activities available and affordable to those in need. The importance of keeping these activities inexpensive is a necessity for individuals experiencing special needs as well as veterans and active-duty personnel, many of whom are limited financially due to low-income.

As the need for adaptive riding and equine-assisted activities increases across Treasure Valley, so too does the RFJ horse herd, participant groups, and staff to meet the growing demand and waiting list of students. The horses, instructors, and volunteers at RFJ have positively transformed countless lives by providing affordable lessons and tuition assistance.

We thank you, our donors, for partnering with equine-assisted activities provided through Ride for Joy. We hope you befriend a long shot this coming year; you'll be better for it!