



EQUINE- ASSISTED THERAPY



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SPRING 2025 ISSUE



EQUINE-
ASSISTED THERAPY

Letter From Lulu

Executive Director

Dear EAT Family and Friends,

Think Spring! After the winter we've had, I think we're all more than ready for some sunshine and warmer temperatures. We truly appreciate your patience with weather-related cancellations—it's never easy to miss a class, and we know firsthand how much these sessions mean to our participants and volunteers alike.

We also want to extend our heartfelt gratitude for the kind words, notes, and messages we received following the loss of Dokka and Obi. Your compassion and support mean the world to our team, and we are so grateful for this amazing community.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who participated in our first fundraiser of the year, Val-Equines! It was a tremendous success, and we couldn't have done it without you. Be sure to check this newsletter for the list of winners!

A huge congratulations to our six new Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) Facilitators—welcome Elle, Jack, Rich, Mary, Carole, Amanda, and Sean! You may see them observing riding classes as they complete their required hours. While EAT has long offered EAL, we are thrilled to expand this program with a dedicated team of facilitators. If you or someone you know is interested in a hands-on, groundwork-based experiential learning program—perfect for businesses, families, Bible studies, or individuals—EAL might be just the experience you're looking for. Reach out for more details!

We're also always looking to collaborate with businesses and organizations for service days. If you know of a group looking to give back, please send them our way—we love making new connections!

Thank you all for your ongoing friendship, support, and trust in our mission of "Changing lives one hoofprint at a time."

Walk On
- Lulu Bogolin



Looking ahead, we have some exciting events coming up:

- **Egg Hunt (Town & Country) – April 12**
- **Volunteer BBQ - May 3**
- **Annual Horse Show – May 18**

These events are fun, family-friendly, and a great way to support EAT. If you need more information, feel free to stop by the office or reach out—we'd love to see you there!



Dokka



In Memoriam

Dokka was one of a kind. With his droopy lip and calm, steady presence, he was a horse you could always count on. He had a knack for knowing exactly what a rider needed—whether it was offering a solid, reassuring presence or knocking over a saddle or taking a big bite out of a chair just to keep things interesting. He didn't just do his job; he had a way of making it feel like he was there for you.

Obi-Wan Kenobi, or Obi, as we knew him, was a beloved and long-time member of the Equine-Assisted Therapy herd. He found his calling as a therapy horse in 2014 and was truly one of the best at his job. He carried everything needed to be a Jedi Master—keeping peace for his riders while maintaining justice in his herd. He was as beautiful as he was strong, offering unwavering support, quiet wisdom, and a gentle heart to all who had the privilege of knowing him. Though he has crossed the final horizon, his spirit will forever remain a guiding force in our hearts.

Grief in the Herd

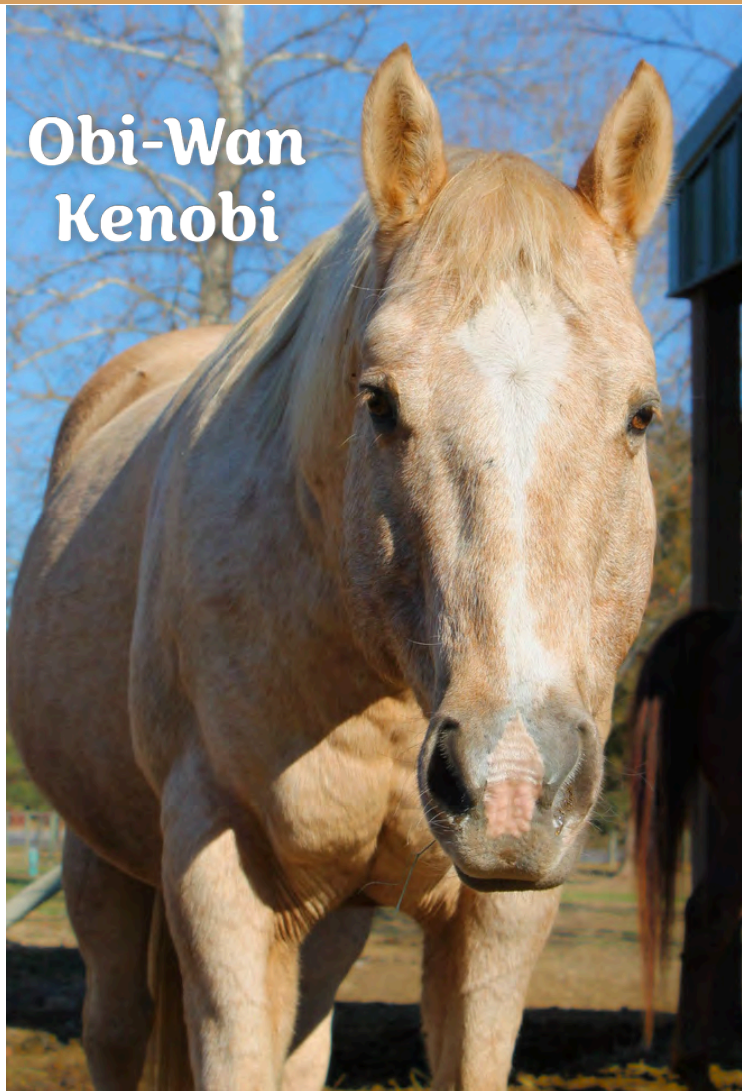
When a horse passes, we give their herd a chance to say goodbye. It's an important part of the grieving process for our horses—one we honor with care. We bring each member of the herd to pay their respects, and each processes the loss in their own way.

Many pause at a distance, lowering their heads in quiet respect. They often step closer, some using their noses to trace along their friend's body. Some linger, standing steadfast beside their fallen companion, keeping watch in peaceful stillness. To witness this process feels like participating in an ancient, sacred ritual—a powerful expression of love that words cannot capture.

Grief looks different for every horse, just as it does for every person. At first, loss feels all-consuming, changing the shape of our world. We're told that time heals, but time doesn't make loss smaller. Instead, our hearts grow around it, creating space for new love and experiences. The loss remains, but it becomes part of something larger—a story that continues.

Obi and Dokka were deeply loved, and their absence is felt in the quiet spaces they once filled. But grief is love that endures, and their presence remains—in the lessons they taught, the bonds they helped forge, and the work we carry forward in their honor.

Obi-Wan Kenobi





Honoring Denise and Obi

A Family's Tribute through Sponsorship

For one special family, supporting Equine Assisted Therapy is more than just an act of generosity—it's a heartfelt tribute to a beloved sister and daughter, Denise.

Denise was born in 1964 with Down Syndrome to very young parents, Bob and Judy Boomer. At the time, conventional medical advice was to place children like her in state hospitals and move on. But Bob and Judy chose a different path, embracing her with love and commitment. Genetic testing confirmed she had Trisomy 21, and despite recommendations to have more children and "focus forward," they cherished every moment with Denise, later welcoming a sister, Becky Boomer-Schlegel, and a brother, Scott, into their lives.

Denise brought immeasurable joy and wisdom to her family. She lived at home until she was 24, at which point she expressed a strong desire for greater independence and friendships. Her family found a nearby group home, ensuring she could visit often while enjoying a more autonomous life.

One day, during a routine drive home, they passed a horse farm, and Denise's reaction was immediate and electric—her excitement unmistakable. When asked if she had been there before, she grabbed imaginary reins and made clicking sounds, as if guiding a horse forward. Curious, her family later checked the group home's activity board and found a picture of Denise, beaming atop a therapy horse. It was a moment of discovery that sparked a lifelong appreciation for Equine Assisted Therapy within their family.

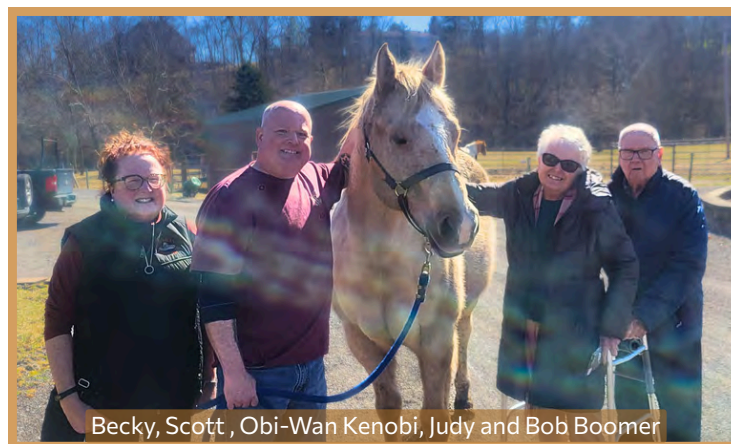
In January 2021, Denise passed away due to complications from Covid-19. As the anniversary of her passing approached this past January, her family sought a meaningful way to honor her memory. They found that opportunity by sponsoring Obi-Wan Kenobi, one of our beloved therapy horses. Chosen in part because Denise's brother Scott is a devoted Star Wars fan, Obi's work became a tribute to Denise's love for horses and the joy she found in therapeutic riding. Scott even got a chance to meet Obi earlier in March when he was in town for a visit.

Tragically, the Equine Assisted Therapy community recently had to say a very sudden goodbye to Obi. We called Becky, who came with Bob and Judy to wish him farewell. As they offered gentle words, loving pats, and quiet gratitude for all the joy he had brought, Judy remarked, "When I heard the news, my first thought was that Denise must have wanted a new horse." Her words captured the deep connection between Denise's spirit and the special work of these therapy horses—always giving, always healing, and always bringing joy.

Though Obi-Wan is no longer with us, his impact—like Denise's—lives on. Supporting Equine-Assisted Therapy in Denise's name is more than just a gesture; it's a legacy of inclusion, independence, and love. Her family—Bob and Judy Boomer, along with Becky Boomer-Schlegel and her husband Mike Schlegel—finds comfort knowing that their sponsorship helps other children and adults experience the same happiness Denise once did in the saddle.

"Bless you for what you, your team, and volunteers do for such deserving children and adults," they shared. "Denise's love lives on through every rider who finds joy, confidence, and healing with the help of a therapy horse."

Denise's story is a heartfelt tribute to the deep bond between humans and horses—a connection filled with love, freedom, and joy. We like to imagine Denise and Obi now galloping through sunlit, endless green pastures together.





Cornhole for a Cause

Our Cornhole Tournament was a huge success, bringing together over 30 teams for a day of friendly competition, community, and fun!

Congratulations to the winning team, Bros-in-Law!

Walkaway Waffles kept everyone fueled with their delicious treats, which led to them selling out by the end of the day! They also generously donated 100% of their sales to our cause. Excitement ran high during our raffles, including the 50/50, which raised \$950. Most importantly, thanks to the incredible generosity of our participants and supporters, we raised over \$5,000 to benefit the Annie Grace Scholarship Fund. These funds will help train instructors at Equine-Assisted Therapy and expand programming focused on mental health support, including our equine-assisted learning programs.

A huge thank you to O.J. Laughlin Plumbing for sponsoring this event and to everyone who played, cheered, and contributed to making the day a success. Your support directly impacts our ability to provide meaningful, healing experiences through our programs, and we could not do that without you.



Be Mine, Val-Equine!

Thank you to everyone who supported our first-ever Val-Equines! We designed these adorable cards to showcase the members of our herd, complete with an extra cute “dating profile” full of facts on the back. We loved them - and so did you!

Together, we raised **over \$4000** through our Val-Equines sales. We are so grateful to have had your help making such a success of this initiative.

Congratulations to our top Val-Equines sellers, volunteer Barb Jacobs and rider Aiden!





Elizabeth "Elle" in 1984



Team Member Spotlight

Elle Brodsky

I'm incredibly grateful to join EAT as an Equine Assisted Learning facilitator and an enthusiastic member of the administrative team. I'm excited to help expand our Equine Assisted Learning program and bring my non-profit experience to support our growing impact!

Horses were a central part of my childhood. I grew up in Kansas City, KS, where my dad Russell Potter was a farrier, and our family raised and raced quarter horses. I loved being his assistant as a kid, handing him the rasp and clippers while he quizzed me on hoof anatomy. I spent nights in the barn with him when our mare Sis was in foal, watching eight new souls enter the world. When we moved to Colorado in the winter of 1998, we even set up a stall for an orphaned foal in our walkout basement. I didn't ride much, but I just loved being around horses—they were my happy place. As an adult, I drifted away from both my father and horses, but that love never left me (in either case). Finding my way to Equine-Assisted Therapy has felt like coming home.

I moved to St. Louis in 2011 and built a career in yoga, eventually being drawn to trauma-informed and adaptive yoga. I was Founding Director of the nonprofit Yoga Buzz in 2014 to make movement accessible to all and trained over 200 people become yoga instructors in the St. Louis area.

In 2021, I lost my business, career, and my father within two months time. My mental health plummeted, and my depression proved resistant to treatment after treatment. After a hospitalization in late 2023, I was at my lowest. Searching desperately for something to bring me joy, horses were the only thing that came to mind. When I first reached out in

February 2024, I told Emelia that even just shoveling manure would mean the world to me. So, I showed up—and I kept showing up. This place, these horses, and the work we do here have truly given me the strength to "Walk On" in my own life.

I've been married to my wonderful partner, Troika, for ten years this May, and we have a six-year-old named Daniel. My kiddo's autism diagnosis led to my own recent AuDHD diagnosis, which has helped me better navigate my mental health. My own challenges, also including connective tissue disease and dysautonomia, have deepened my appreciation for adaptability and compassionate care. I'm passionate about meeting people where they are—wherever that may be. For so long, I thought something was wrong with me, but now I see that what makes me "different" is what makes me so dang cool. Because of that, I'm especially drawn to supporting those recovering from trauma, living with anxiety and depression, and navigating neurodivergence, as well as other folks in the LGBTQ+ community.

When I learned the horses here receive energy work, y'all, I couldn't believe it—it was the perfect blend of my dad's horse world and my mom's Reiki world. I'm a Master Level Reiki practitioner, a practice passed down from my maternal grandmother. Over the past year, I earned certifications from EAGALA and Equine Connections. I'm eager to integrate all my training and experience in mindfulness, energy work, and accessibility within Equine Assisted Learning.

Horses have once again become my sanctuary, a place to embrace happy memories of my dad, and share my lifetime love for horses with others. My dad and I had our ups and downs, but gosh, I wish he could see me—working with horses, wearing Wranglers, and picking hooves. Ultimately, I know he's with me every step.



Elle with Dad in the new hay net, circa 1987



Elle Brodsky, Dusty, Carole Schmitt, Mandy, Greg and Joy of Hope Project STL, Jack Williams, Amanda Droege, Lulu Bogolin, Rich Race, Mary Downey-Jones, Sean Lundergan, Cash

What is Equine Assisted Learning?

Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) is a unique experiential learning approach that is entirely ground-based, meaning there is no riding involved. Instead, participants engage in activities such as grooming and obstacle courses, allowing them to build essential life skills through structured interactions with horses.

Horses are incredibly intuitive animals, responding to human emotions and behaviors in the moment. This provides participants with immediate, honest feedback, making EAL an effective tool for self-awareness and personal development. The horse becomes our teacher, helping us learn how to listen as well as clearly articulate our needs. Whether working individually or in groups, participants develop confidence, leadership, emotional regulation, and interpersonal skills.

In February, we were privileged to welcome our Canadian friends of Equine Connection: The Academy of Equine Assisted Learning for the in-person segment of their EAL certification. Six members from our community took part in the training alongside our colleagues Mandy, Greg, and Joy at Hope Project STL. Congratulations to the members of EAT who completed their certification: Amanda Doege, Elle Brodsky, Carole Schmitt, Jack Williams, Mary Downey-Jones, Rich Race, and Sean Lundergan.

We are thrilled to expand our EAL programming, opening the door for more people—especially those seeking mental health support—to experience the unique connection and lessons that horses offer.

The ground-based work of EAL invites horses to be fully themselves, offering more opportunities for connection without added physical exertion from increased riding sessions. This approach honors their well-being and ensures long-term sustainability for our herd.

At Equine-Assisted Therapy, we are passionate about bringing the benefits of Equine Assisted Learning to our community. If you'd like to learn more, please reach out!



A private Equine-Assisted Learning group in Summer 2024

Sponsor-A-Horse

Our therapy horses are the heart of our Equine-Assisted Therapy programs, providing healing, connection, and growth for our participants. Caring for these incredible animals is a significant commitment—costing over \$100,000 annually for feed, hay, supplements, hoof trims, chiropractic care, and veterinary services.

Through our Sponsor-A-Horse program, you can directly support the well-being of one of our therapy horses (or our beloved miniature donkey!) for a year. Your sponsorship helps ensure they receive the highest quality care, allowing them to continue making a difference in the lives of those we serve.

Whether you're an individual, family, or business, your support makes a lasting impact! Join us in keeping our therapy herd happy and healthy—sponsor a horse today!

* denotes sponsored for 2025

12 horses (and 1 miniature donkey) still available to sponsor this year!

Visit eatherapy.org for more information!



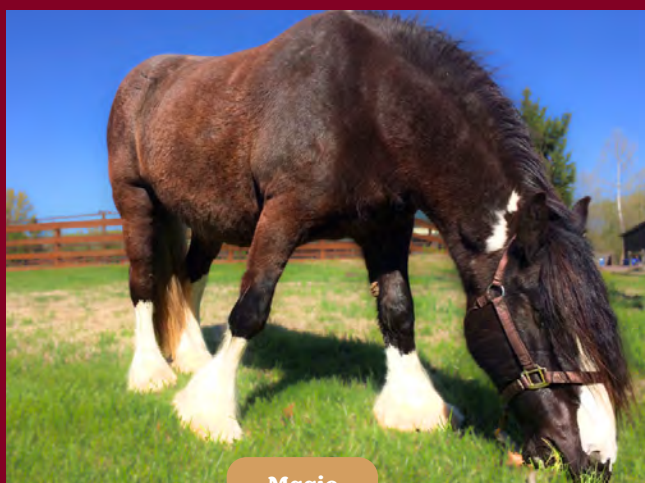
Bennett* & Tator



Hero



Dusty



Magic



Dale*

Upcoming Events



2025 Calendar

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March 9 Cornhole Tournament at WW

April 12 Easter Egg Hunt at T&C

May 3 Volunteer BBQ at WW

May 18 Horse Show at WW

****SAVE THE DATE!!****

September 27 Hoedown For Hope at WW

October 4 Fall Festival at T&C

November 22 Volunteer Thanksgiving Dinner at WW

○ Event Day

■ No Classes

With Gratitude



**A big Thank You to
Woods Basement Systems
for sponsoring this year's
Volunteer T-Shirts!**

Thank you to each and every one of you who help make EAT's mission possible!

- Adam Brown
- Ann Ducey Charitable Foundation
- Ashlie Carrell
- Bev Williams
- Bill Armon
- Blake Potter
- Bradley Johnson
- Colleen Montoya
- Cynthia Brown and Family
- Dana Garner
- Daniel and Amye Carrigan
- David Hersh
- David Wren Network Technology Partners
- Deborah Linam
- Diane Pilgrim
- Diane Wolf
- Doug Rushing and Debbie Jansma
- Elite Precast LLC
- Elle and Troika Brodsky
- Ellen Donovan
- The Hrubes Family
- James and Kathleen Ellison
- Jennifer Grabish
- Jerod Posey
- Jody Chassin
- Joe Maddox Winter Brothers Material
- Judith and Robert Boomer
- Julie Haefner
- Kim Manning
- Kristi Mikes
- Lana Delf
- Lizabeth Wilcoxson
- Lyle and Bill Seddon
- Mark Maloney and Family
- Mary Piccirilli
- Melissa Greenstrin
- Michael Vorhies
- Nancy Ade
- Nancy Ziech
- Rebecca Boomer-Schlegel
- Robyn Mikes
- Ruth Anne Krueger
- Sally Barker
- Shawn Bower
- Suzonna Sullivan
- Vik, Teri, and Jaxon Khanna
- Vincent and Zia Zagarri
- Vivian Regna
- Wahl Family Gift Fund
- Wildwood Pub



Thank You to Schlafly Beer for raising a glass (erm, a feed bucket) to Bennett's health!

Bennett, our beloved 2004 Belgian/Draft cross gelding, turned 21 this year—so what better way to celebrate than with a local brew?

But this hardworking therapy horse isn't just enjoying a pint for fun. Every morning, Bennett receives a carefully measured serving of stout beer mixed into his feed, and it's all for his health! The hops, barley, and yeast in stout beer provide essential nutrients like B vitamins, iron, and anti-inflammatory properties that help manage his chronic laminitis and improve circulation.

This year, we're thrilled to share that Schlafly is officially sponsoring Bennett's beer supply for 2025! Their generous donation of Schlafly Oatmeal Stout will ensure that Bennett continues to receive the daily boost he needs to stay happy, healthy, and ready to support our riders.

Join us at Schlafly Bottleworks in Maplewood on Wednesday, April 9th for a special opportunity to Eat Out for EAT!

10% of all sales from 4pm til 10pm will be donated by Schlafly Bottleworks in Maplewood to Equine-Assisted Therapy

Plus: Members of the Equine-Assisted Therapy team will be hanging out for a special Happy Hour from 5-7pm