

# RIDERS UP!

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ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 2020



# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

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What a whirlwind the last year has been! We started off with a bang and then...COVID! While we did shut down for a couple of months, we were still able to do some much-needed fundraising and were back to riding by mid-May.

By mid-July, we were able to bring on a new and paid team member. Audrey Tripp quickly settled into her role as barn manager and program director. She is full of personality and deeply cares for our students and the well-being of the horses. We could not have had the year we've had without her as well as our dedicated working students and volunteers.

Being a small charity in a small rural community offers its own challenges as well, particularly during a pandemic. We greatly appreciate the support we've received from friends, family, and donors - near and far! We would not have been able to make this year the success it has been without each and every one of you, whether you donated tack, hay, \$5, or \$100. Every bit has been a blessing.

We look forward to 2021 and hope it is a much smoother year! We are planning great things for this year that will allow us to reach and make an impact on many more kids this year.

*Valerie Mellema*

**VALERIE MELLEMA**  
Executive Director/Founder



Valerie Mellema  
Founder/Executive Director



Audrey Tripp  
Program Director



Lisa Lage  
Volunteer Riding Instructor

# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

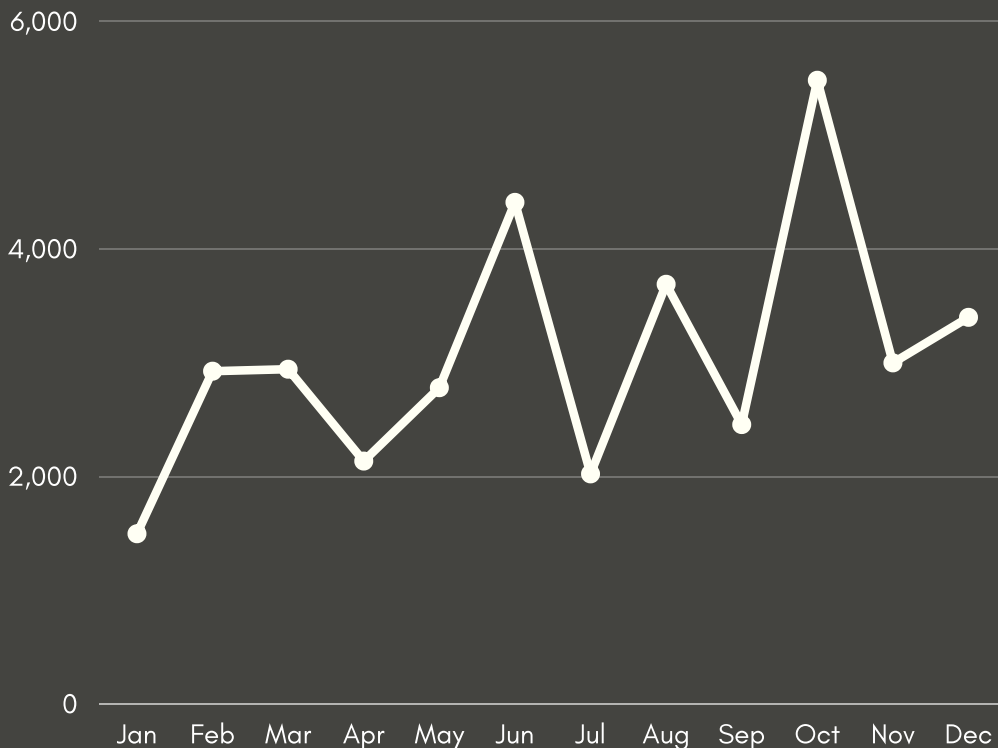
Lake Fork Stables is a small organization with a small budget. We depend on a few paid services in the form of paid riding lessons, horseback riding excursions, camps, clinics, and birthday parties. All of our other funding comes from the generosity of individual donors, a single grant and our fundraising campaigns. Our three largest fundraisers this year were:

East Texas Giving Day - \$742 raised

1st Annual Run for the Roses Virtual Gala - \$582

1st Annual Farm Fall Festival - \$4000

Facebook fundraisers have also been very instrumental in the success of Riders Up! Our Facebook fundraisers have raised over \$2500.



**FIGURE 1.**

*Operating funds for Lake Fork Stables by the month in 2020.*

# PROGRAMS

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Lake Fork Stables offers the following programs. Enrollment for each program varies based on a family's needs and financial situation:

**Riders Up!** - Free and reduced rate lessons for low income, autistic, and foster kids.

**Horses4Heroes** - Half price riding lessons for military and first responder families. Families join the Horses4Heroes program that provides them with the opportunity to receive half-priced lessons no matter where they are in the United States at partner barns.

**Horse Sense Equine Therapy Retreats** - Families of autistic children are invited on a scholarship basis to join us at Stable View Cottages and Lake Fork Stables for a relaxing weekend of equine therapy using the Horse Boy Method.

**RIDERS UP!**

**HORSE SENSE  
EQUINE THERAPY  
RETREATS**

**HORSES4HEROES**

**HORSES 101  
HOMESCHOOL COURSE**

**WORKING STUDENT  
PROGRAM**

**JUST FOR KIDS  
HORSEMANSHIP CLINICS**



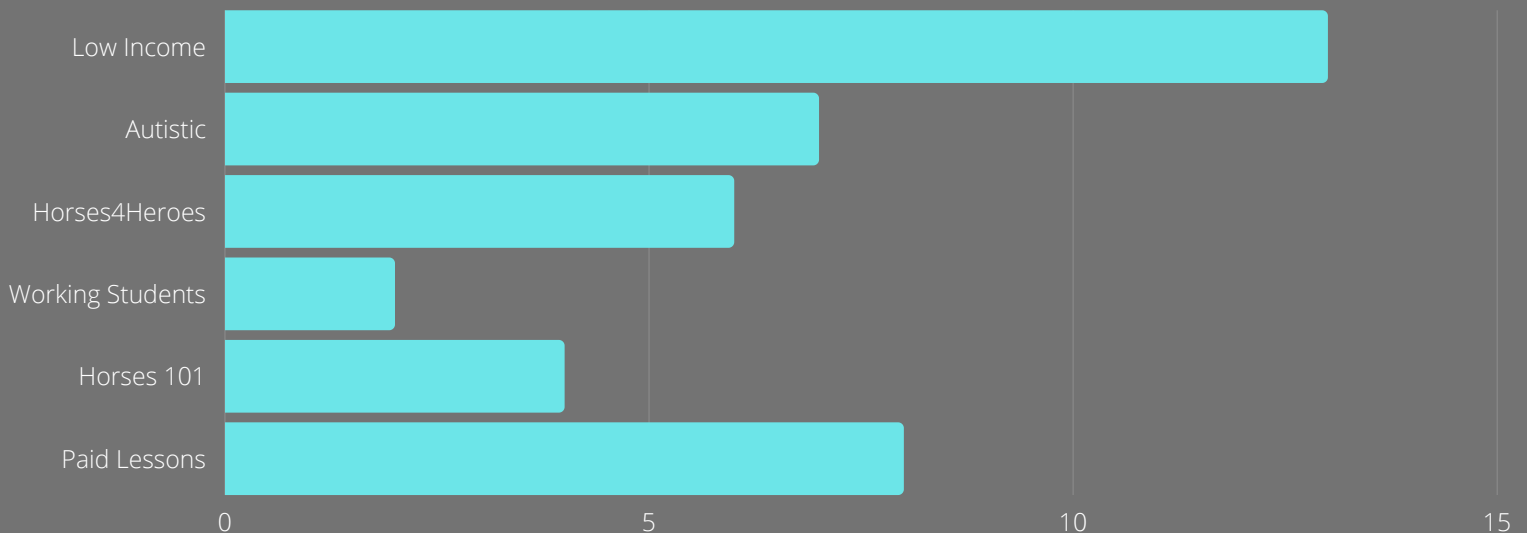
**Horses 101 for Homeschoolers** - This is a paid program allowing homeschool families the opportunity to learn the basics of horse care and horsemanship prior to enrolling in riding lessons. This is a 12-week course held in the Fall and Spring.

**Working Student Program** - Our working student program provides teenagers interested in working in the equine industry the opportunity to gain hands-on stable management experience while receiving free training lessons in return.

**Just For Kids Horsemanship Clinics** - New for 2021 is our Just For Kids clinics. These clinics will be themed and include fun games and exercises designed to teach children how to train their own horses. These clinics are designed for kids interested in or already participating in 4H, FFA, or horse showing in general.



## Children Served in 2020



# HIGHLIGHTS OF 2020

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Although this year has certainly been out of the ordinary, we still experienced many blessings and memorable moments throughout the year.



## Our First Horse Sense Equine Therapy Retreat

In June we were able to host our first Horse Sense Equine Therapy Retreat with Colton. Colton is on the autism spectrum and enjoyed two days of horseback riding on Jackson and Mistic. Although, I do believe his favorite part of the whole weekend was actually staying at the cabin and having s'mores by the campfire.



## Giving a Voice to Kids on the Spectrum

One of the most exciting things is to see kids on the spectrum come out of their shells and find their voices. Using Horse Boy Method inspired techniques, kids like Arlo, who are small but mightily are able to make great strides with just one hour per week on the back of a horse.

What's even better is when you see it come full circle and have one child on the spectrum helping another.



## Making the Lives of East Texas Kids Better

The theme of this year has been "mental health." So many of the phone calls received this year were stories of kids that were suffering from the pandemic. They needed to get out of the house, move their bodies, exercise their minds, and do something different. Our horses were more than happy to step up and help.




# GOALS

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»» Double the number of kids learning from Thoroughbreds

Spread awareness of our programs and the benefits of equine assisted therapy.



 Increase community support via activities and events at the farm.

Continue to improve our facilities to provide a better learning environment for our kids including an outdoor classroom, and play area for siblings.



## Raise \$20,000

to meet our goals and continue helping East Texas kids!

We can do it with your support!



# DONORS & SUPPORTERS

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## **Grants**

The Paddock Foundation - \$1500 for vet care, advertising & tack room remodel

## **Reserve Champion Sponsors**

Attaway Hay Farm

Karen Pratt

Words You Want

## **Blue Ribbon Sponsors**

Lynsey Cooper

Bright N' Shine Equine Massage & Grooming

Stable View Cottages

Gray Horse Custom Apparel

## **Red Ribbon Sponsors**

Al's Do Drop In

Bluebonnet Feeds

Terror Trails

Mike & Lisa Goodbrake

Steve Allen

Mary Hill

Lorri Hart

Michael Hart

Kathy Cooper

Gary Ray Spencer

## **Board Members**

Troy Mellema

Jennifer Schneider

Marea Breedlove