SPRING 2025

FREE REIN

HORSES HELPING HUMANS

Providing a loving sanctuary for abused and unwanted horses and harnessing their unique intuitive abilities to help youth overcome mental health challenges.

FREE REIN BENEFACTORS

MARY BEHRENS
DR. Carole HARRIS

Mary Behrens stands as the visionary CEO and CFO of National Equestrian Centers, Inc., a role through which she passionately champions the remarkable work of the Free Rein Foundation since its very beginnings. For the past 38 years, she has poured her heart and soul into the Huntington Beach Equestrian Center, a true labor of love where horses have become a central part of her life.

Inspired by her father, Bill Harris, Mary grew up surrounded by the grace and beauty of horses, a foundation that has shaped her into the astute businessperson she is today. Her unwavering commitment to the equestrian world reflects her professional drive and deep personal passion.

In addition to her remarkable achievements, Mary is proud to call her twin sister, Dr. Carole Harris, the founder of the Free Rein Foundation, which embraces the profound healing powers of these majestic animals. Nestled in the picturesque pastures above the Equestrian Center, the Free Rein Foundation thrives because of Mary and Dr. Carole Harris's steadfast dedication to rescuing horses and humans, creating a nurturing environment where healing and transformation can flourish.



Mary Behrens and her sister, Dr. Carole Harris. Two women with a love for horses and their potential for healing and helping humans.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Richelle Ritschke

In the volunteer horse community, it is often said, "I have a sense of belonging and have found my people." Volunteers give their time and passion to Free Rein by supporting each other and the community.

Volunteer Richelle Ritschke joined Free Rein in March of 2023. She participated in a few monthly "Hug and Groom" events and fell in love with the horses.

Both Free Rein herds, horses and humans benefit from the energy and good cheer she brings. Her time is mostly spent in the feed barn or the pasture.

Richelle grew up doing some horseback riding on vacation but had no experience with horses beyond that. As a Huntington Beach native, she knew about the Equestrian Center as she would dine at the Park Bench Café and pass by it but never visited. She regrets not joining Free Rein earlier but has ambitiously made up for lost time.

Her message to those interested in being a volunteer is to do what you can for every volunteer makes a difference with their help.



Zinn, a 23-year-old warmblood rescued by the Free Rein Foundation, has become a cherished member of our therapy team. Under the careful guidance of our mental health professionals, Zinn helps children develop crucial life skills, providing support and healing along the way.

Hug & Groom
Free Rein welcomes the community into its pastures on the first Sunday of each month.
11 AM - 1 PM

Scan QR Code or go to Eventbrite/hugandgroom

Corporate Events
Have your company's next picnic or team-building session in the Free Rein pastures. We can also cater a great taco lunch!

Charter Schools/Kid Groups
We have One to Four 3 hour groundwork sessions involving 10 to 15 students and equine learning specialists, culminating in a shared meal to reflect and connect.

For more information visit the Free Rein website at freereinfoundation.org

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Frank & Ardel Vanderberg

Meet Frank and Ardel, whose dedication has helped shape Free Rein since May 2019. Their story perfectly illustrates how our sanctuary transforms both horses and humans alike.

From Honolulu's city streets to our serene pastures, Ardel's journey began with a healthy fear of horses. Meanwhile, her husband Frank brought valuable experience from his California ranching background. Together, they exemplify our sanctuary's welcoming spirit - where both beginners and experts thrive.

Recent visitors to Free Rein may have noticed our delightful new additions: miniature horses and goats bringing extra charm to our sanctuary family. You'll often find Ardel spending time with these smaller residents, sharing their playful energy with other volunteers.

The couple's handiwork is visible, most notably in our enhanced red barn. Thanks to Frank's expertise, the building now boasts a spacious deck, off-grid electrical capabilities, and improved natural lighting - creating a perfect gathering space for our volunteer community.

Other remarkable experiences have come their way through their Free Rein experiences . Within two years of joining our team, they acquired horses and established their California ranch, complete with a custom barn and riding arena. Yet they continue dedicating countless hours to our sanctuary's mission. Ardel attends and assists in the monthly Hug & Groom events and donates refreshments.



"Every day at Free Rein brings new learning experiences and deeper connections - both with our horses and our amazing volunteer community"

A heartfelt big thank you to all volunteers that give of their time and financial support to take care of our horse herd on a daily, monthly and annual basis.

Volunteering is a reminder that even small acts of kindness can create lasting change.

Free Rein would not exist if not for the the additional support and donations from volunteer organizations, sponsorships, individual donations and the City of Huntington Beach, and other communities.

SAVE THE DATE

WESTERN MUSIC HALL OF FAME ENTERTAINER DAVE STAMEY
SUNDAY JUNE 8TH
Get your tickets at eventbrite.com

CATTLE BARON'S BALL
SATURDAY AUGUST 9TH

Kick up your boots and scan the code above to join the fun

IT IS EASY TO SUPPORT FREE REIN FOUNDATION

Scan code to donate or
visit freereinfoundation.org/donate

RECENT EVENTS



Mayor Pat Burns Joins Local Leaders for Scenic Trail Ride

The newly appointed Huntington Beach Mayor, Pat Burns, recently joined Mary Behrens, owner/operator of the Huntington Beach Central Park Equestrian Center, and Justine Makoff, President of the Free Rein Foundation, for a memorable trail ride. During the ride, Mayor Burns was captivated by the beauty and vastness of the adjoining Urban Forest. At the end of the journey, he took a moment to express his gratitude to his trail horse for the experience.

Want to experience the beauty for yourself? Book your own trail ride at www.hcpec.com



The Sunburst Youth Academy cadets helped dig trenches just before this recent February rain storm in the Free Rein pastures and while the cadets weren't working hard to give back to the community, they spent time with the Free Rein horses working on trust and communication.