

# REINS OF LIFE, INC.

*Bridging Hope and Potential*



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**Volunteer of the Year**  
**Kyle Minnick**



**Horse of the Year**  
**'Fancy Fay'**

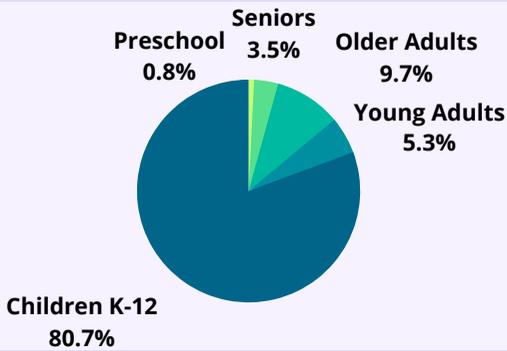
The Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship is an international organization that provides safety and best practice guidelines to accredited centers like Reins of Life. The PATH Int'l comprises 11 regions. Region 4 is made up of Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, and Ontario equine-assisted service centers and members. The dedication and the talent of the humans and horses at Reins of Life are award-winning, and PATH Intl Region 4 agrees. 2023 Volunteer of the Year was awarded to Kyle Minnick of the Michigan City Barn and 2023 Horse of the Year was awarded to 'Fancy Fay' (pictured above).

Kyle Minnick began volunteering in 2019 and now helps in a variety of programs including therapeutic riding, interactive vaulting, therapeutic driving, and school groups. Additionally, he has volunteered to lead a teen work group doing facility projects and volunteers as a horse feeder on a regular basis. It has been an amazing experience to witness this teen develop over the last few years. The maturity and leadership that he shows are just part of what makes him a true gem.

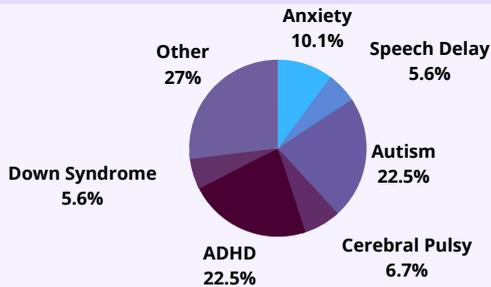
'Fancy Fay' is a 14.2 Hand Haflinger Mare. Reins of Life was able to purchase 'Fancy Fay' in 2018 through an awarded grant from the Michigan City Community Enrichment Corporation. Fay ( for short ) takes part in therapeutic carriage driving, therapeutic riding, and school programs at the Michigan City Barn. She has also been a partner to students competing in Carriage Driving and Benefit Dressage Shows. An ROL parent says it best, "At first, my daughter was somewhat nervous and unsure about trying carriage driving, but because this horse has such a great temperament, is always calm, and is always ready to work, she quickly overcame her uncertainty. Since my daughter began this program, I have seen her self esteem improve and she has become more self-confident in her daily activities. I believe this is due in large part to this program and her horse."

Kyle and Fay's regional awards have been submitted to PATH Intl. for consideration for the international award, announced Summer 2023.

## Participants served in on-site 2022 programming grouped by age



## Participants' diagnoses in on-site 2022 programming by frequency



## A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Reins of Life promotes an inclusive environment for people from all walks of life, ages, and abilities. We offer multiple mounted and unmounted programs to address the specific needs of our communities. We continue to remove barriers, and improve current or create new programs. Just a couple of months ago, we installed SureHands, a mechanical lift, to transfer participants out of wheelchairs for lessons at one of our two centers.

After two years of the pandemic and dealing with its imposed limitations, we noted a growth of almost 40%. We enrolled over 630 individuals in onsite programming with multiple candidates on the waiting list. We accepted riders as young as two years old, with the oldest participant being 78 years old.

We registered 114 unique diagnoses, which fall into physical, cognitive, emotional, and social categories. In most cases, participants had multiple diagnoses. The most frequently recorded were: Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, Anxiety, and Cerebral

“ Reins of Life, at its core, uplifts the human spirit. It brings people together by honoring all walks of life, forms of learning, and means of connecting with one another. ”  
*Kasia M. Derbiszewska, Ed. M.  
 Author. Speaker. Education Consultant.  
 Learning Key Educational Consulting*

Palsy, with a couple less known like Malan Syndrome, Agenesis Corpus Callosum, and Periventricular Leukomalacia. The driving force behind every action we take is a deep conviction that everyone deserves a chance to live a life with dignity, and each of our participants has untapped talents, which could blossom when nurtured in the right, stimulating environment. **Dorota Janik, PhD**

## REMEMBERING A FOUNDING MOTHER & HER LEGACY



Almost 34 years ago, Reins of Life posted an ad in a local paper requesting volunteer help with hauling horses to their therapeutic horseback riding program. **Nancy Taylor** responded. That was the beginning of a long and productive partnership. Nancy, 91, passed away Feb 27 at her beloved home on the hill overlooking Reins with her children surrounding her. Nancy leaves her three children, Steve, David, and Kathy, as well as 6 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by Lloyd, her husband of 57 years. Nancy was a force to be reckoned with. After hauling horses and volunteering in classes for several years, she recognized the need for a forever home for Reins. In 1991, she and Lloyd donated 20 acres of their Lydick farm for that purpose. No task was too big or small for Nancy to undertake. Pastures were fenced and standing sheds were built to accommodate the horses. On days when the weather was too bad for volunteer feeders to come out, Nancy would trudge down to feed and care for the horses. Manual labor was not beneath her as she, Lloyd, and Lydick's neighbors toiled to complete the construction of the barn and stalls. Then Nancy put on her fundraising face and acquired much of the funding to complete the facilities. Most recently, she donated 10 additional wooded acres that are used as sensory riding trails, and are now known as Nancy's Trails. From that inauspicious beginning of hauling horses and mucking stalls, Nancy was instrumental in developing the Taylor Center, the heart of Reins of Life today. Nancy became a member of the Board of Directors in 1990, on which she remained until 2019 when health issues intervened. She held positions as Board President, Vice President, and Secretary for several years. Her voice was always heard and respected reflecting her many years of experience seeing Reins through both good and difficult years. She continued volunteering well into her 80s taking on any task asked of her, from baking her famous chocolate cherry cake for various events to writing thank you cards to attending the Kelsey Marie Meekhof Benefit Dinner and other fundraisers. When you throw a pebble into a pond, the ripples spread out to the edges of the water. Nancy was that pebble. The ripple effect of her single-minded dedication and devotion will be felt for many years to come benefiting an untold number of people. She is greatly missed.

Thank you, Nancy and the Taylor family.

# WELCOME TO THE HERD

## AN EXPERT IN HER FIELD & NEW EQUINES IN OURS



**Morgan Paelow**  
**Events & Projects Director**  
 Morgan is the newest member of the Reins of Life Team. She has a passion for working with individuals with special needs and is so happy to be able to incorporate that passion into her career. She quickly fell in love with ROL after hearing about our mission and the impact we make in the lives of those we serve. Morgan comes to us from The Salvation Army Kroc Center where she worked as the Director of Community Engagement. Her years of experience in event management and community outreach make her a great addition to our team!

BLIZZARD is a 9 year old Appaloosa gelding who resides at our Michigan City Facility. He is calm and quiet with training in both English and Western riding. We adore him!



BALOO is one of our newest horses. He was donated to us by a friend. Baloo participates in our Therapeutic Riding Program and is described as a super sweet but sensitive soul! We love having him on our team!



## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: GRETCHEN ANDERSON

With her help throughout lessons, feeding shifts and even mowing at the barn, Gretchen Anderson has truly been gifting her time and talents to Reins of Life with all of her heart. Staff took extra notice of this "under-the-radar All Star" from Chesterton, IN since her time at the Michigan City Barn began in Feb 2021. Her "can-do" attitude, busy hands, and positivity shine and the Reins of Life Family is so very grateful. Without the commitment of volunteers like Gretchen, the upkeep of the 46 acres at the Michigan City barn, equine-partners, and life-changing programs would not be possible. Thank you to Gretchen and all the helping hands and hearts that call Reins their home away from home. Wondering how you can help at the barns? Give us a call today at 574.232.0853.



SAWYER is a Norwegian Fjord Gelding who was selected for the team at Reins of Life specifically because he will be able to serve in all of our program areas including Therapeutic Riding, Therapeutic Carriage Driving and Interactive Vaulting. It takes a special horse to participate across all program areas and we are thrilled to have him join our team!



ELMER is the newest pony at Reins of Life and he is absolutely adorable! He is like a little living Thelwell pony. He has riding and driving experience and we are so happy to have him at Reins!



## STRONG HANDS & HEARTS

Without finding a way to add more hours into a 24hr day, the maintenance team of staff and marvelous volunteers at Reins of Life maintains, prevents, and prepares all 76 acres for every season. Ron Messer, South Bend Barn Maintenance Lead, has been the boots on the ground for nearly 18 years. His experience, engineering, and barnyard grit keep pastures healthy and the facility functioning properly. Neil Novak, Michigan City Barn Maintenance Lead, has been with the team as a volunteer for just over 4 years. His passion for the Reins of Life mission doesn't stop at the maintenance cave. Neil has welcomed ASPIRE, a group of young adults with disabilities, to practice weekly workforce tasks in a safe and inclusive environment. John Owsley, Michigan City Special Projects, has been a fixture at Reins through volunteering and specialty projects since he joined the team in 2017.

The acres of maintenance is not just a task for three. With helping hands from the Re-Entry Center of St. Joseph County, Westville Correctional Facility Staff, and Parkdale, the barns continue to run like a well-oiled machine. The beauty of the barns comes from your help too! Community service groups from local businesses, service groups, and schools gift their time and talents through service days. Interested in getting your boots a bit dirty? Email [staff@reinsoflife.org](mailto:staff@reinsoflife.org) to volunteer or schedule your group service day!



## AWARDS & RECOGNITION

- Michiana 2022 Dressage Club Members Choice Awards:
  - Best Show Arena Footing
  - Best Warm Up Area
  - Most Organized Show
  - Overall Show Facility of the Year
- Valparaiso University's Learning by Giving Award



## Are you thinking about your legacy?

Your words, things you do and celebrate - all is a timeless record of your dreams and beliefs for the next generation. Your legacy could change the world. Maybe not the whole Universe, but the world around you. Planned gifts, no matter the type or size, will have an impact on our future. Through your generosity, you can empower many. Consider charitable contributions, that could benefit Reins of Life now or for generations to come, in your conversations about Charitable Estate Planning with your tax accountant, estate attorney, or financial planner.

Visit [www.reinsoflife.org/give](http://www.reinsoflife.org/give) for more simple and confident ways to help change life at Reins of Life.



**Reins of Life, Inc.**

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PAID  
South Bend, IN  
Permit No. 177



**APRIL  
AUTISM  
AWARENESS  
MONTH**

**May 12th-15th**



**INTERACTIVE VAULTING  
WORKSHOP &  
CERTIFICATION**

**BENEFIT  
DRESSAGE  
SHOWS**  
JUNE 3RD-4TH SB  
SEPT 30TH-OCT 1 MC



Thank you to all supporters, donors & volunteers who helped make the 2022 event season a record-setting year to remember. The 2023 event calendar is loaded and ready for your rsvp. See you this summer!

FOR A FULL LIST OF EVENTS VISIT  
[WWW.REINSOFLIFE.ORG/EVENTS](http://WWW.REINSOFLIFE.ORG/EVENTS)



[www.reinsoflife.org](http://www.reinsoflife.org)



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**JULY 31ST**  
*Annual Golf  
Outing*

**SEPT 9TH**

**HOOFIN-IT  
5K WALK  
& RUN**



**NOV 4TH**  
**FALL FUN  
SHOW**