

NEWSLETTER

FALL / WINTER



MOSES IS THE PATH, INTL EQUINE OF THE YEAR FOR 2025!

The Professional Association of Therapeutic Riding International has selected our Moses as the Region One Equine of the Year! Moses arrived at Shepard Meadows ten years ago as a rescue. Since that time, he has been an outstanding horse excelling in all areas of therapeutic work, including adaptive riding, community rides, equine assisted learning and psychotherapy and most recently within Gestalt coaching. We love you Moses and we are so very proud of you! Congratulations and best wishes for the National award.



WELCOME GATSBY!

Gatsby arrived at Shepard Meadows in 2024. Hailing from Massachusetts, he is a Patriots fan for sure. Born in 2008, he is a Quarter Horse/Draft cross who is mighty handsome indeed. Standing at an even 15 hands high, he is bay with an interrupted stripe and a snip on his face and wears one sock on his left hind leg. And the rest of the herd is envious of his fantastic forelock!



IT'S OUR 20TH ANNIVERSARY AND WE'RE CELEBRATING ALL YEAR LONG!

2025 marks twenty years of equine-assisted services; that's a lot of horsepower! As we begin our third decade as a service organization, we are supported by a new three-year strategic plan. The plan was created and adopted by the board of directors in the fall of 2024 after several full-day retreats led by Michael Suchopar, currently an Advisory Board Member alongside Board President, P. Pearl O'Rourke, M.D. The three areas of focus are: board, staff and development.

We are excited to focus our efforts internally now that our facility and programs support one another. Our facility is top notch and our programs are too, we have stopped at nothing these past few years to assure that our facility can support our ever-growing, unique and innovative programs. Our programs are designed to meet changing community needs.

Now, it's time for us, and we're ready! Join us in celebrating our anniversary in 2025! We look forward to sharing it with you!

OUR 5TH ANNUAL FARMYARD PARTY WAS FABULOUS!

It is hard to believe that we have been hosting our annual fundraiser at the farm for the past five years, yet every year the party is more and more successful, growing in attendance and success as a fundraiser. We couldn't do it without the support of our Event Chair, Kim Rencurrel. It's a lot of work but it's also a lot of fun. There is nothing like horses, nature, live music, BBQ, auction items and a joyful crowd to get the job done! In 2024 we raised over \$75,000 to support our programs, horses and facility.



SAVE THE DATE FOR THE 2025 FARMYARD PARTY, IT'S SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4TH!



VETERANS PROGRAM GOING STRONG

Our veterans program provided 75 hours of small group programming in 2024, and our Farmyard Party live auction focused on raising funds for our free veterans program. Our special thanks to Bob Blozzon, U.S. Airforce Gulf War Era Veteran for coordinating the efforts. We couldn't be prouder!

FUN FACT

A horse's hoof is continuously growing, just like human fingernails. It takes about 9-12 months to grow an entire horse hoof.



GRATEFUL FOR OUR GRANTORS!

- The McPhee Foundation
- The Clinton S. Roberts Foundation
- The Robert Rosenheim Foundation
- MSCF- Women & Girls Fund
- MSCF- Men & Boys Fund
- Sky Bight Foundation, Inc.
- Harry F. & Carol H. Barnes Family Foundation, Inc.
- O'Braitis Family Foundation of America
- The Denise D'Ascenzo Foundation
- Advocates for Bristol Seniors
- Bristol Rotary Club

OUR ANNUAL HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE DREW NEARLY 200 GUESTS!

The Holiday Open House was held on December 3rd. This is an annual event where we welcome all members of our community to visit the farm, meet the horses, learn about our programs, enjoy hot chocolate and cookies, and participate in arts and crafts. This year we welcomed over two hundred people to the event. The horses really get a kick out of all the visitors and Elmer has been known to let out a few whimpers in celebration.

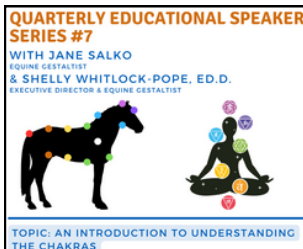


QUARTERLY EDUCATIONAL SERIES

We have had some fascinating discussions during the Quarterly Educational Speaker Series, covering a range of diverse topics. We hope to see you at the next one!



Fall 2024: “No Hoof, No Horse”
SMEC’s dedicated farrier, Emil, discussed the art of farrier science, which included a live demonstration. We had a fantastic turnout for this event!



Winter 2025: “An Introduction to Understanding the Chakras”
Join us on February 15th to learn what chakras are, and how horses can help us clear and balance our energy centers.



Spring 2025: “Courtney Maum: The Year of the Horses”
Join us on April 5th for a discussion led by American author, Courtney Maum, on how horses helped her become a better human.

WELCOME TO THE BOARD

Brett Arruda, Esq., is a long-time supporter of Shepard Meadows and our mission. He is an Attorney at Cap Specialty-A Berkshire Hathaway Company in Hartford, and he lives in West Hartford, CT. With two grown and independent children he is looking forward to giving back to the community in a meaningful way. We are excited and grateful for Brett’s service to Shepard Meadows.

If you or someone you know is interested in serving on our Board of Directors, please reach out to our Executive Director, Dr. Shelly Whitlock-Pope at shelly@shepardmeadows.org.

2025 OPEN BARN DAYS

We are often asked if people can come by to visit the horses and tour the farm. Unfortunately, we are not open to the general public on a daily basis - primarily from a resource and confidentiality viewpoint. Our solution is to host Open Barn Days, which are offered on different days of the week throughout the year. It’s the perfect time to visit and tour – we hope to see you at the farm real soon.

2025 Open Barn Days:

Monday, February 10th; 11 am - 1 pm

Wednesday, April 2nd; 11 am - 1 pm

Saturday, June 14th; 10 am - 2 pm

Sunday, December 7th; 10 am - 2 pm



VOLUNTEER UPDATE

**OUR DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS
DONATED OVER 5,500 HOURS IN 2024!**

If you or someone you know is interested in a healthy volunteer opportunity and is over the age of 14, applications are available on our website. www.shepardmeadows.org

DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE SUFFERING FROM SUBSTANCE ABUSE?

We are partnering with Caitlin Raftis, a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor, to provide counseling sessions on the farm alongside our team of therapy horses. Private sessions are one hour and include 30 minutes of equine-assisted activity followed by 30 minutes of therapy. Stay tuned for information regarding small group sessions in the spring.

Caitlin is the founder of Against the Grain, providing support to the recovery community. Animal-assisted therapy builds connection between clients and the therapist, optimizing therapy goals and providing socio-emotional tools to strengthen resilience against diversity and addiction.

Caitlin is an avid animal lover and passionate about sharing the resource of animal-assisted wellness with others in the recovery community. Email her at Caitlin.raftis@icloud.com or call 860-882-8536. You can book appointments at www.againstthegrainct.janeapp.



FIELD TRIPS AT THE FARM!

Did you know that you can schedule your field trip to Shepard Meadows for a fun and unique equine learning experience? Field trips are perfect for school groups, human service agencies, homeschoolers, scout trips, and even corporate retreats!

Enjoy our nature-filled environment on a hilltop with 26 acres. The transformative visits can be one-time or over the course of several weeks. We're flexible and so is our herd. We hope to see you at the farm this spring. Contact Emily, our Program Director at 860-314-0007 or email her at program@shepardmeadows.org.



DID YOU KNOW?

At Shepard Meadows, we are committed to the health and well-being of our horses and provide a lot of accommodations during the winter months to keep everyone happy and healthy. We believe that horses thrive when allowed to live as naturally as possible, and our winter care practices reflect this philosophy.

We get asked by many who visit during the winter, are the horses cold? Do they need a blanket? By providing adequate shelter, generous forage, and the right support (when needed) through blanketing, we ensure our horses remain comfortable, healthy, and content throughout winter.

In the winter, our horses have access to shelters that protect them from the wind, rain, and snow. They always have the option of seeking warmth and protection when they need it.

One of the most important factors in keeping our horses warm during the winter is their diet. We provide additional hay during colder months. Hay is not only a vital source of nutrition, but digestion generates heat. By providing hay at least four times daily, we support our horses' energy needs and ensure they stay warm. Horses are grazing animals, so this is truly the most natural way of life for a horse.



For our program horses that require clipping due to sweating during heavier work, we understand the need to adjust their care. Clipping removes the natural insulation provided by their winter coats, which means they require extra assistance to maintain body heat. To make sure they stay comfortable, these horses are blanketed appropriately, with options depending on the severity of the weather.

Winter care is never a one-size-fits-all approach. Some horses may have thicker coats that naturally protect them from the cold, while others, especially those that are clipped, may require additional layers of warmth. Our winter care supports the natural behaviors of horses while offering the necessary assistance to keep them warm, healthy, and happy.



MEET OUR STAFF

This winter we welcomed a new staff member, Julie Bak. Julie joins us as an Instructor and PATH, Intl. CTRI Candidate. You'll see her teaching at the farm on Saturdays! She's an Audiology Resident who studied at UCONN with experience at horse rescues and as a PATH volunteer at a center in MA.

KEEP UP WITH SMEC

