



# Blue Rider Messenger

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## Year End Report 2015

**25 YEARS OF BLUE RIDER! WHAT AN ACCOMPLISHMENT!** So many people, so many memories, so much good will.

Here are a few memories from the years of work we have done....Charles (Chip) Carlson III had the idea for Blue Rider Stables in 1989, when he moved to Great Barrington from New Hampshire with his trusty horse Nell. It took two years for him and his friends to make this “dream” real. During this time he completed the paperwork to become a not-for-profit, found a space (Sunways Farm in Housatonic, now home to Project Native), and got two more horses to start this business. One was an 18-year old retired race horse named Jolie, the other a little 3-year old Morab named Ramona, who was to be a companion until a good therapy horse was found.

Blue Rider officially opened on June 1st, 1991, with four students and Nell as the only rideable horse. Chip was the instructor, with help from Christine Sierau, who was asked to come on board as a consultant. Ramona had to be trained, and Jolie would only run. Two new horses were bought, and by the end of the year we had 47 students and four rideable horses. Jolie was retired to a new home.

In 1992 Chip left the business, and Christine’s daughter Anna was born. Many days were spent ringside juggling horses, babies and students. We added some horses, some left again, and the spirit of Blue Rider was ingrained. The biggest thing on our wish list in 1992 was a business phone!!



*Chip and his horse Nell, who inspired this all*

1993 saw us looking to move from Sunways to South Egremont, as we were not able to get a long term lease in order to build a barn for the horses. We got a loan from Berkshire Bank that allowed us to build a 40’ by 60’ barn, with the dream of expanding in the future. Our barn at Farm Lane was built the winter of 1993/94, with our first vaulting workshop in this space in May of 1994 with 23 students.

1994 through 1996 we were running two places. This was exhausting, and ended when Christine was confronted by a black bear on Division Street racing to meet the vet at Sunways after teaching in South Egremont.

In 1998 we were able to buy 8 acres of land adjacent to the Blue Rider barn on Farm Lane, making South Egremont the permanent home of Blue Rider. That day, Ramona’s foal Bella was born.

In 2000, we got running water and electricity into the barn! We felt like kings and queens, being able to flick switches and plug in plugs and everything worked.

In 2001 we received a challenge grant to raise the money for the hay shed and the annex (the back of the barn). No more bringing the hay by truck in horrible weather! And a place for

the older horses to enjoy quiet time, or for one-on-one cuddles...

2002 we added our bunny mansion. This has housed chickens, rabbits, guinea pigs and goats in the years it has been in existence.

In the next years, horses and people came and went.

**END OF YEAR REPORT** Continued on page 7

# *Celebrating 25 years...with a few stories!*

## *Robin Parow*

*1994 -2001 Apprentice therapeutic riding instructor  
and NARHA (PATH) candidate 2015-present Outreach Coordinator*



Who remembers Becky? The wonderfully comfortable, always reliable mare with a big back and even bigger heart. She had a kind of motherly way about her, in fact she was Mona's companion out in the field when she delivered Bella. All was well when Becky was around. Becky taught me to trust again, after several childhood experiences left me fearful of cantering bareback. "She will help you," Christine urged. So, one summer evening after lessons were done, we "helpers" were riding and I was on Becky. My heart was pounding, I knew it was time to give cantering a try again. How do you stay relaxed when every cell in your body is in panic mode? Focused on the hill, we came off the arena track and after about five steps of trot were into a rolling canter up the field. Joy! Victory! Success! That is therapeutic riding. I will always be thankful to Becky for this."

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## *Cate Crowley*

*At BRS from 2002 - 2008 as a helper, intern, instructor*

I am so grateful to Blue Rider Stables for the work you do and especially, how generously you passed it along to me. From my first day at Blue Rider, at nine years old, Christine instilled interest, commitment and passion in not just myself, but each and every person who passed through the barn doors. I have yet to encounter someone who is as dedicated to the horses and people of their equine community as Christine. I appreciate every moment I had at Blue Rider from being a camper, rider, helper and eventually instructor. These roles gave me the knowledge and skills to continue into other programs and confidently use my own expertise, which I had developed under Christine's thoughtful watch. I can wholeheartedly admit that because of my involvement with Blue Ride I have found myself pursuing an equine career in large



animal and equine veterinary medicine. Even after leaving Blue Rider, attending college, traveling and working with other people's animals, I knew that somewhere and somehow I would find myself working with horses – I just didn't quite know in what capacity. I had a massive turning point earlier this year while taking care of someone else's injured horse. I was asked 'Why are you not a vet?' I had no legitimate answer... Why am I not a vet? – the physiology, pathology, prevention and/or treatment of equine anatomy and function, both in the traditional medical sense and the holistic and therapeutic, has always been a huge interest of mine; all the way back to Saturday helper meetings with diagrams of the hoof. There is not a doubt in my mind that all the hours put in by Christine, myself and every

other passionate participant in Blue Rider's community made it the incredible place that it is. The skillset I developed is one of the very few things I am extremely proud of. Now that I have recently begun taking the steps towards attending (and applying to) veterinary schools, I am even more grateful and aware of the honor I had to learn the foundations and skills from such a remarkable person and place. Being one week into the throes of my pre-veterinary course work, I just have to remind myself of the love and dedication I found in working with horses, and every struggle becomes worth it. Working at Blue Rider started the fire, and with every opportunity I have to be around animals (especially horses), that intense interest is rekindled. So once more I would like to say thank you, thank you to Christine and Blue Rider for all of the hours and knowledge you shared with me and the confidence I gained to use what I had learned for a purpose all my own.

## *Stories (Continued)*

### *James 2015-present - Student*

James is an almost three year old, who was born prematurely. I work as his special needs nanny, and first met him in January of 2015. This spirited little guy gave me a huge smile, pointed his finger at me and won my heart. On Oxygen, a G tube for feedings, unable to talk and not yet crawling at almost 24 months, it was clear his journey had been a challenging one.



In the summer of 2009, my daughter, who had also experienced trauma, participated in a program at Blue Rider Stables through the riding stable where she rode in CT. I came along to observe and was taken with the approachability and gentleness of the horses at the stable, along with the expertise of Christine. As I worked with James that first winter I thought often of Blue Rider.

Summer time arrived and James' parents agreed to let me take him to visit the horses. James was fascinated as soon as we entered the barn. Christine put him on a horse and his entire being was infused with joy and determination. He began riding weekly when his health permitted. When I say riding, I do not mean just sitting

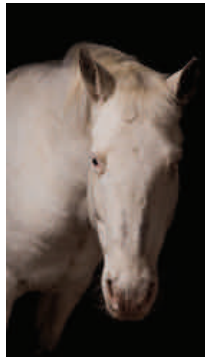
on a horse. James had to sit tall and straight. With the support of Anna he had to use his core for balance and his legs for gripping the horse. He started out with little muscle tone and needed a pillow around him support him as he sat. Now, 6 months later he is sitting with little to no support. James points which way the horse should go and says "Walk on." James has a very limited vocabulary due to issues with his vocal cords. He has approximately 20 words he says on a regular basis and very few 2 word phrases. It is obvious that he takes riding very seriously. Full of laughter and babble on the way to the barn and on the return, he is quiet and focused while on the back of a horse. James has had a major break through EVERY time he has ridden. The first time he was off oxygen for a ride in the car was after a lesson. This was a huge milestone, as his pulmonologist felt he would need to remain on oxygen until he was 5. This was the first step towards showing he is going to be on "room air" full time sooner than projected. He was crawling, with many falls when he started riding, yet within one week of his first ride, he had mastered it. I truly cannot express what a gift Blue Rider Stable has been for James.

The respect given and the gentle, firm guidance motivate him in a way that does not happen outside of the stable. The horses, in their gentle, wise and loving ways bring out the very best of James. The team of therapists (PT, Speech, OT, Developmental Specialist, Trauma and Music), who work with James all note his remarkable progress over the past 6 months. They know of his riding and credit much of his progress to Blue Rider.

Tears come to my eyes as I write of James's experience at Blue Rider Stable. This stable is a unique treasure that I wish were available to all who struggle with physical, emotional or mental health. The day we walked in the barn was the day James embraced his body rather than just accepting it.

*Written by Julie Schwindt*



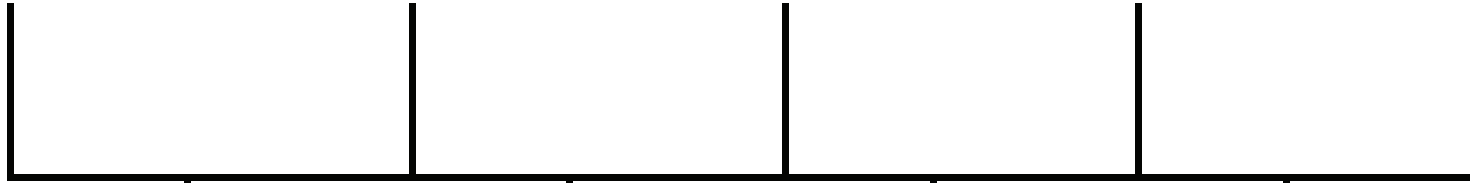


**Ramona  
1990**

**Taquito and Rhythm  
1995**

**Bella  
1998**

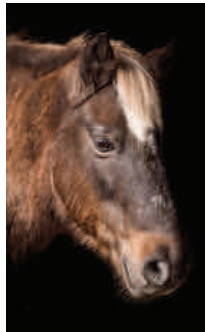
**Twist  
2005**



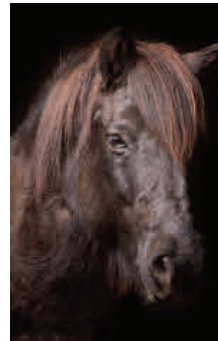
**1993  
Billy Boy**



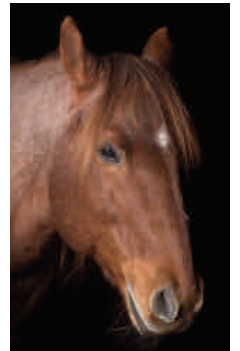
**1997  
Willie Wonka**



**2002  
Falcur**

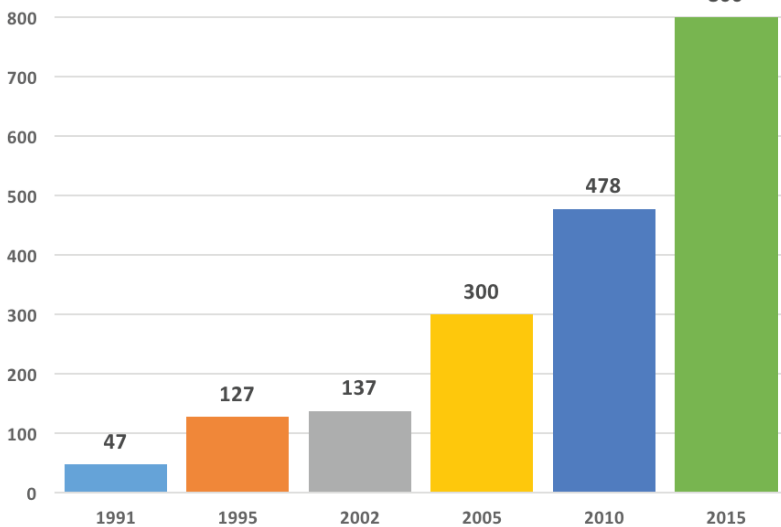


**2007  
Romeo**

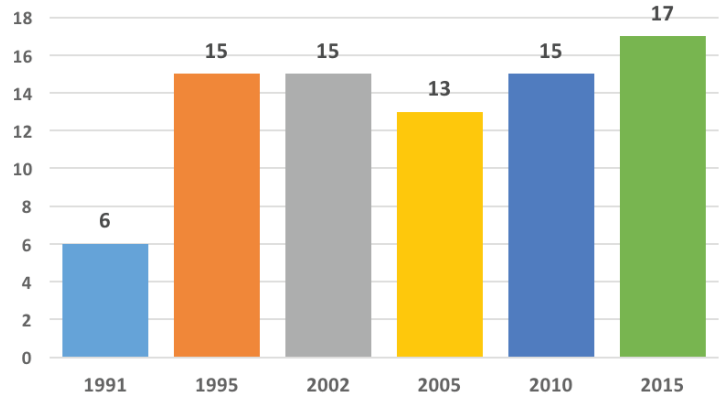


*25 years of growing!*

students



horses





Rose & Mia  
2008

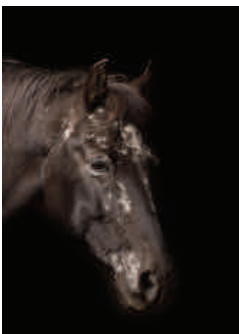
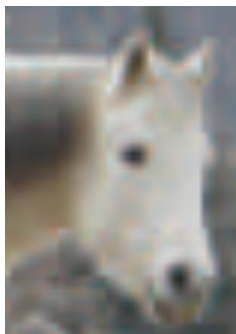


Juniper  
2009

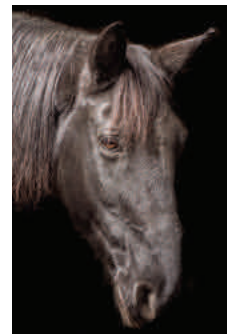


Fritz  
2014

2008  
Cilla & Oskar



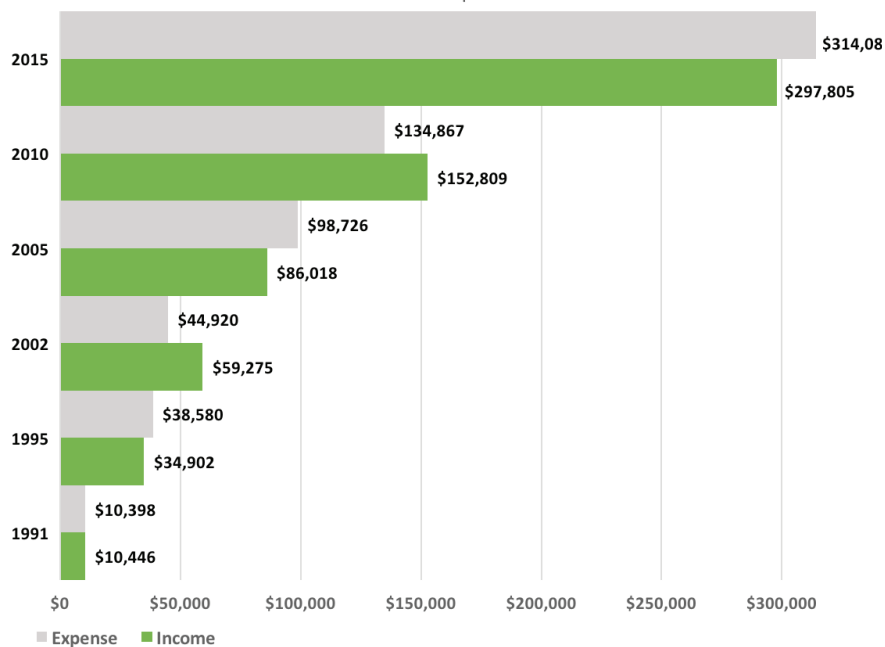
2010  
George & Ebony



Rico  
2015



Income vs Expense



- 1991 - BRS received a \$4000 loan from Great Barrington Savings Bank to create a riding ring
- 1995 - Christine started receiving a stipend and had expenses for two sites - Sunways in Great Barrington, and our current location at 15 Farm Ln.
- 2002 - Our current fundraising events and campaigns were all up and running
- 2005 - BRS started paying instructors a stipend; we were boarding 3 horses to supplement our income
- 2010 - expenses increased as we raised staff wages and the facility needed more maintenance; we formalized our summer and helper programs and began charging for them
- 2015 - we increased rates (the first time in 10 years!); The office at 133 Jug End plus our first administrative position drove up expenses

## *Stories (Continued)*

### *Jade Hogan 2002-2014 - Helper*



My name is Jade Hogan. I am 20 years old. I spent twelve years at Blue Rider Stables growing up. I have many wonderful memories of my time there. One memory I have is when my brother Malik and I took Twist and Romeo to our first horse show at French Park in Egremont. Another memory I have is when Anna was teaching my brother and I to jump. I was on Rhythm and Malik was on Misty. It was the funnest thing I did when I was younger. Another memory I have is that Malik, Lily and I all were riding and we wanted to race up into the field so we did. I was on Oreo, Malik was on Misty, and Lily was on Willie. Malik and Lily may have been the fastest but I as able to get Oreo to canter a few strides up into the field and that was awesome!

Over the years at Blue Rider I have been able to learn to speak up and say what I want. I have also learned to be able to project my voice so everyone could hear what I have to say, and be able to yell at the horses when it was needed.

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### *Caitlin Blau*

#### *Helper 2003-2006; Intern, Summers 2008 & 2010*

I knew from my first day at Blue Rider that something special was happening there. Christine threw me on a horse and put her hand on the curve of my low back, showing me how to relax and let my hips move with my horse. I had been riding for a few years before that, but that was the first time anyone had ever made me feel like I was working with my horse rather than against it.

Working with Sugar taught me about the importance of commitment in relationships. It took months of mucking her stall (She had been kicked and broke her splint bone, so was on stall rest), grooming her, and showing up consistently before she began to trust me. One summer day I walked out to the field to greet her. After rubbing her neck for a while, I turned to leave. Without a halter or lead rope, she fell into step beside me to and we walked back to the barn to get ready for our lesson. I was so touched that I cried.



Over the years I worked at Blue Rider, I gained an appreciation for the work Christine does with the human body and its interaction with the horse. This sparked my interest in the musculoskeletal system and my eventual pursuit of osteopathic medicine. I'm pleased to say I will graduate from medical school in May of this year. In June, I will move to Montana to start my residency in Family Medicine. I'm grateful to Christine, the horses, and the helpers for being part of my journey, and I'm proud to be part of the Blue Rider family.

*If you no longer wish to receive these mailings, please let us know at [admin@bluerider.org](mailto:admin@bluerider.org)*

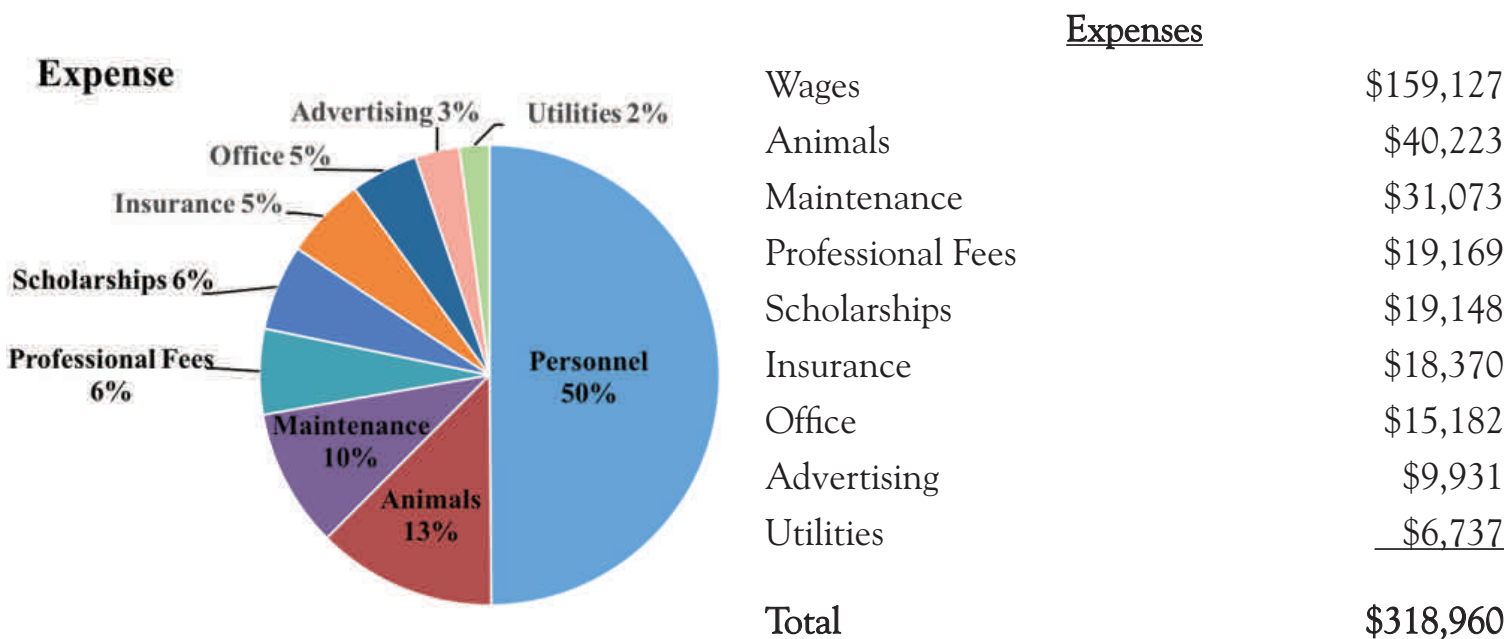
# Year End Report 2015 (Continued)

Each year brought changes that were as diverse as the weather and nature around us. Many, many friends were made and kept. Our energy was spent giving good care to the horses that came, finding homes for the ones that could not stay, and making our programs fun, educational, safe, and exciting.

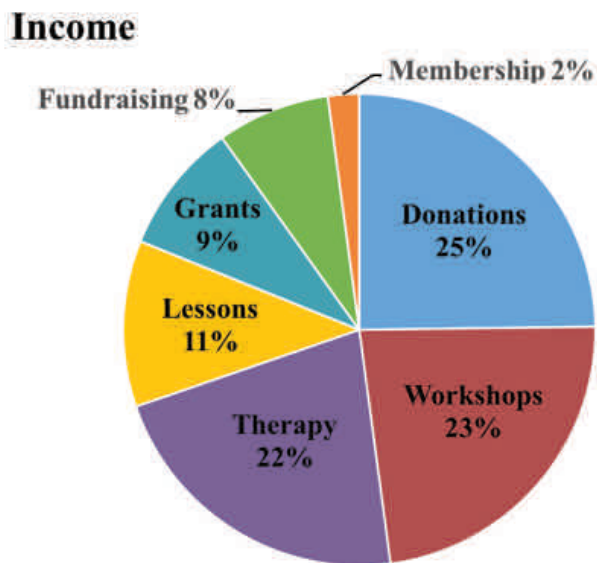
In 2014 we purchased the land adjacent to ours at 133 Jug End Road. Our office moved there at the end of the year, and we hired our first ever operations manager and have a fully functioning office! All of our resources for fund raising and office were pulled out of homes and cellars to finally have one place to work from.

We are excited to see what the next 25 years will bring for Blue Rider Stables!

## 2015 Spending Overview



| <u>Expenses</u>   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Wages             | \$159,127        |
| Animals           | \$40,223         |
| Maintenance       | \$31,073         |
| Professional Fees | \$19,169         |
| Scholarships      | \$19,148         |
| Insurance         | \$18,370         |
| Office            | \$15,182         |
| Advertising       | \$9,931          |
| Utilities         | \$6,737          |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>\$318,960</b> |



| <u>Income</u> |                  |
|---------------|------------------|
| Donations     | \$75,054         |
| Workshops     | \$69,875         |
| Therapy       | \$66,113         |
| Lessons       | \$34,502         |
| Grants        | \$27,250         |
| Fund Raising  | \$23,433         |
| Membership    | \$6,450          |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>\$302,677</b> |

To request a full financial overview, email [info@bluerider.org](mailto:info@bluerider.org)

# Calendar of Events for 2016

## June 4 Saturday.....CIRCUS!

See what our students accomplish on horseback. Drills set to music, refreshments. \$10 parking, but no admission charge. Held regardless of weather!

## June 13, Monday.....SUMMER CAMP STARTS!

Learn about horse care, riding and vaulting. Many different experiences and skill levels are available. Ends August 26.

## July 30, Saturday.....HOEDOWN!

Dance the evening away in our barn. Bonfire, refreshments, good times - everything one could wish for! \$5 per person

## Aug 27, Saturday.....FUN DAY!

Our big fund raiser at French Park in North Egremont, Music, pony rides, food, games, storytellers, face

painting. Great fun for the whole family. There will be a small silent auction and lots of goodies from the Hippy Hop Shop for sale.

## September 17, Saturday.....A HORSE OF A DIFFERENT COLOR

Blue Rider's 25th Anniversary Celebration. This elegant evening event hosted at Chesterwood in Stockbridge, MA will bring together a quarter century of Blue Rider supporters to celebrate our accomplishments over the past 25 years. Music, dancing and a silent and live auction are just a few highlights of the night.

## October 9, Sunday....HORSE SHOW!

Everyone who rides at Blue Rider has a chance to be in our horse show and win a few ribbons!

We have composted manure for sale throughout the year; either for you to pick up in buckets, or by trailer load. It is very beneficial for gardeners, and has no bedding or chemicals. Please call ahead for availability; if we're out, don't worry, we'll be getting more!

**CAN & BOTTLE DRIVE - Ongoing at the barn, collecting nickels for the horse medicine fund.**

**Board of Directors**  
Michael Fernbacher - Chairman  
Anna Stanton  
Carla Sadoff  
Christine Sierau  
Laurie Lindner  
John Green  
**INSIDE:**  
Celebrating 25 Years!  
Stories  
Time Line

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