

## **Bridles and Blue Jeans fundraiser makes me ask, “What am I supposed to learn from horses?”**

Posted on May 11th, 2011 by Cynthia Moxley



Joy and Chip Miller pet Kandy, the largest of all the horses in the STAR stable.

**What is it with horses and me all of a sudden? I’ve already admitted I’m afraid of the huge things. ([Click here](#) to read about my last encounter with them.) And now it seems I’m being thrust into contact with them all the time. Usually when this kind of thing happens, it’s for a reason. And it will keep on happening until I learn whatever it is I’m supposed to learn.**

I think I’m starting to get it. More on that later.

My most recent encounter with horses was at the annual Bridles and Blue Jeans fundraiser that raises money to benefit the [Shangri-La Therapeutic Academy of Riding \(STAR\)](#). Wow. What a great program. Its mission is to provide positive horse-related experiences for people with disabilities or other special challenges. Participants learn to relate to the horses by caring for them and they learn physical skills, as well, by riding them. The horses are very special. They are all screened to be sure they have the temperament for this kind of program.

The evening was divided into three distinct parts. The first was a cocktail party and silent auction held in the stables. The horses were all there and attendees were encouraged to walk around and meet them. The second was dinner in the riding arena. And the third was a live auction of trips, meals, art and a horse!



This is Timone, a Gypsy Vanner said to have a sweet and calm disposition. I think he was sleeping. At least his eyes were closed.

During cocktails, Mary Johnson, whose son attended STAR for several years, introduced me to Edie and Fred Klimas, the folks who started STAR, along with their daughter, Lynn Klimas Petr, who is the executive director. The program began in 1987 as part of Lynn Petr's [therapeutic recreation Master's](#) thesis at the University of Tennessee. After several moves over the years from various rented farms, STAR's board of directors decided in 2002 to purchase 63 acres of beautiful pasture land in [Loudon County](#). That's where this fundraiser was held. All the buildings on the property today have been paid for with donations.



Mary Johnson, center, with Edie and Fred Klimas



From left, Morton Massey, Alan Carmichael and Pam Jordan during cocktails



This "horse" is Bucky! Instructor Jenn Gerard uses him to train beginning students. (I'm not afraid of Bucky!)



I suppose this is a donkey. Or a mule. I don't know the difference.



Well, hello! He seemed curious about me, as well.



Pam gets up close and personal with him.



Oh, my goodness! Isn't this miniature horse the sweetest thing?

Most of the items in the silent auction had horse themes, of course.



Like this purse with horses and horse shoes on it.



And this horse statue.

Then it was time to go into the huge riding arena where tables were set up. The china had a blue jean pattern on it! I just loved that.



Great china pattern for this event!



Look what kind of wine they served!



A crowd of several hundred was on hand.



David and Pam Jordan invited us to join them at the Clayton Homes table. David is an executive there.



Lynn and Larry Petr. She's executive director and founder of STAR.



Kelly and Jonathan Mayfield hosted the Home Federal Bank table.

We had several clients involved in this event, by the way. [Pilot](#) was a “Gold Stirrup” sponsor, the second highest level. [Home Federal](#) was a “Bronze Stirrup” sponsor, also quite impressive. [Cherokee Distributing](#) provided all the beer that was served throughout the evening.



At the Pilot table were, from left, Missy and Drew Graham and Jeff and Crystal Roberts.



David and Sandy Martin



Here are Alan and Rebecca Williams. He's with WVLT-TV and was the emcee for the night.

After all the trips and meals were sold in a short live auction following dinner, this pretty filly named Patches was brought in. Donated by Eric and Mechelle Barton of [LexLin Gypsy Ranch](#), the Gypsy Vanner was valued at \$18,800 with a minimum bid of \$4,600 required. Unfortunately, even though the price included a month of training with horse trainer Mike Branch, there were no takers. If you might be interested in Patches, call (865) 988-4711 to discuss. [Click here](#) for a video of Patches.



No takers for Patches.

At one point toward the end of the evening the lights were dimmed and everyone who had any affiliation with STAR or knew anyone with disabilities was asked to crack a glow stick and hold it up. Here's what that looked like.



Lots of glow sticks!

So, what did I learn about horses? Well, I was struck by this little bit of “horse sense” I saw on a sign where the riders get ready to get on the horses. Of course, it applies in many situations not involving horses at all.



To remind myself of the “horse sense” and the fact that there are lessons to be learned from horses — even if I’m afraid of them — Alan and I purchased a piece of artwork offered in the silent auction. This small painting is by a 54-year-old man participating in STAR’s [“Horses for Heroes”](#) program that is directed to veterans who have physical or psychological injuries. Do you like it?



I met all the horses in this painting!

Well, I've gotta go now. Time to tell the folks at [Moxley Carmichael](#) how much I appreciate their hard work!