



2025 Year in Review

STIRRUP COURAGE

Equestrian Learning Center

www.stirrupcourage.org

Happy New Year to all our supporters, and HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO US!!! 2025 marked FIVE YEARS since the founding of Stirrup Courage; FIVE YEARS of sharing our love of horses with children in our community! Here is a whole year's worth of great things to CELEBRATE about year #5!

Yearly Celebration Banquet: Starting off 2025 by celebrating 2024!

This February marked the third year of inviting all of our students, volunteers, and their families to gather for a catered dinner and celebrate everything that we accomplished together the previous year. The crowd last year was so large that we decided to move the banquet to a new location with a larger space to accommodate the growing size of our group! With 110 guests in attendance, the fellowship hall at Salem Mennonite Church in Kidron was a perfect space and had lots of positive feedback. 21 students who progressed in the "Star" levels of independent riding received their medals, and 6 large rotating trophies were awarded. A fun tradition started last year with these awards is that the previous winners of each trophy are invited up on stage to help hand off the trophy to the next student being honored.



Award for Growing in Confidence:
Wyatt McDonald



Award for Connectedness in Relationships: Alanna Zemancik (right)



Award for Caring for Others: Maddy Kempf



Award for Positive Coping Skills: Talea Tucker



Top Student Barn Work Volunteer: Carsen Klintworth



Top Youth Fund-raiser: Hunter Kennedy

Along with rewarding student accomplishments, we use the banquet to recognize all of our amazing volunteers who help make the program possible, and give special recognition to volunteers who have given the most time in classes.

Top volunteers recognized from 2024 were Natalie Price (25 class hours), Cherlyn Penrod (26 class hours), Paula Schmid (29 class hours), and Thea Steiner (58 class hours)!

Connectedness: We are BETTER TOGETHER! — Theme for 2025

The banquet displayed the new theme for the year with colorful tie-dye patterns used in the table décor, crafts, and the new t-shirts gifted to every child, representing the way we all come together to create something beautiful at Stirrup Courage!

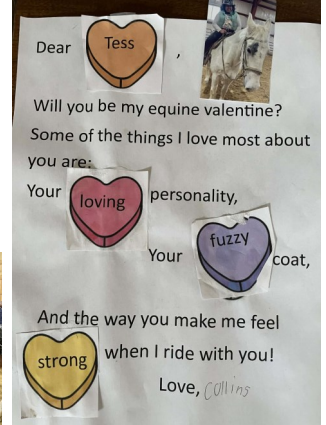
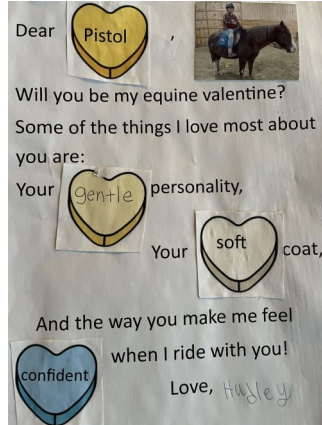
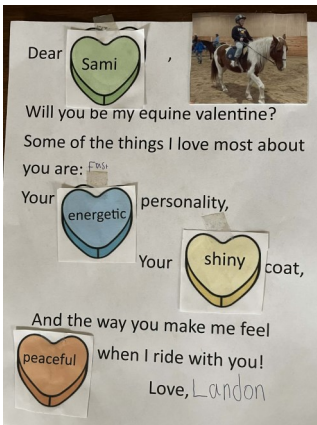




2025 Winter Session Highlights:



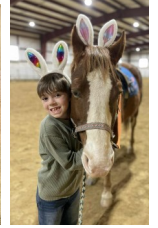
- ◆ 19 brave returning students took on the cold to participate in the February-March winter session lessons.
- ◆ Our “Equine Valentines” activity gave riders a chance to think about and share some of the reasons why they love their favorite horses at Stirrup Courage. ❤️
- ◆ We had multiple theme weeks with games and activities focused on reviewing the 6 common horse colors that they have learned to identify so far: chestnut, bay, palomino, buckskin, black, and gray.
- ◆ Our team accepted our biggest group event challenge yet, when OHuddle Mentoring asked Stirrup Courage to host a field trip event for their group, and told us to plan for up to 80 people! I had such an amazing team of volunteers step right up to the challenge, and we were able to give the OHuddle group an overview of our program through activity rotations that included a hands-on horse grooming station, a hands-on horse leading activity, a self-directed scavenger hunt learning tour around our facility with their mentor, and a ground pole painting art project—and fit all that learning into about an hour and fifteen minutes allotted for their evening event!



2025 Spring Session Highlights:



- ◆ 29 returning riders participated in spring session lessons in April through May.
- ◆ Favorite spring theme activities included: making a windchime craft; competing against their volunteer mentors in beanbag tic-tac-toe; Easter egg delivery game (balancing the egg in an ice cream scoop “bunny paw” as they guided their horse around obstacles to get to the Easter basket); and a spring “Mad Libs” story about a picnic with their favorite horse that required kids to show off their creative vocabulary as they snaked back and forth across the arena with stops to think up nouns, verbs, and adjectives, resulting in stories that brought LOTS of laughter!



A Caring Community!

In May we were thankful to again have a volunteer group come for a morning to help with cleaning and upkeep projects for the 3rd year of the Orrville Area United Way’s “Day of Caring.” This year they sent us a group of 8 employees from Kropf Wagner Law Firm in Orrville, joined by Wayne County Community Foundation Executive Director Melanie Reusser Garcia, and together they worked to spring clean our family viewing room space, sweep down barn cobwebs, wash windows, repair broken fence posts, and put up new fencing for an extended pasture for our retired horses.





2025 Summer Session Highlights:



- ♦ 30 returning students were enrolled in summer riding lessons!
- ♦ Then we added 12 NEW students off the waiting list who were able to complete the Intro to Horse Care class over the summer, learning safety, grooming and leading!



horse, ring toss, basketball hoop, and Skee-Ball game challenges; the much-anticipated horse bath week, which is always reserved for the week when we get a heat wave that makes it too hot to ride and they get to cool off along with their horse; highly competitive games of “Go Fish!” on horseback against their classmates, practicing how to safely pass by another horse on a trail (left shoulder to left shoulder) as they handed off cards to each other; experiencing bareback riding, many for the first time—they always surprise themselves with how well they are able to balance without a saddle!



5th Anniversary Celebration and Cornhole Tournament

Our fifth anniversary year felt like an event that deserved its own special party! So on August 1st we invited the community to join us for a Friday evening of fun including food trucks (Patio 114 Barbeque



and Cinched Coffee were awesome to work with!), children’s carnival games, lots of prizes, face painting, snow cones, and of course the big Cornhole Tournament! The competition was fierce, the snacks kept everyone satisfied, and the guests were an awesome crowd to help us celebrate this milestone!



Representing Stirrup Courage in 4-H and the Wayne County Fair

For the third year in a row, Stirrup Courage student Payshence Stout participated in the Wayne County 4-H horse program, competing in weekly fun shows throughout the summer and exhibiting in multiple events during the Wayne County Fair with Stirrup Courage horse, Buddy. Additionally, student Alanna Zemancik (right) completed the



“Horseless Horse” 4-H project book over the summer and presented her learnings to a judge as a poster about how to groom a horse, using pictures taken during her lessons.





2025 Fall Session Highlights:



- ♦ We started off Fall session in September through November with a total of FORTY students returning for riding lessons! Of those returning students, seven were new riding students who just completed Intro to Horse Care this summer! THEN...I was able to start the last new groups of students off the waiting list in Horse Care class before winter break, with spots for 6 children!
- ♦ WHICH MEANS...The grand total of children coming to our barn this fall for lessons was FORTY-SIX students, which is the largest number of students served during a single season in the history of our program! Whew, it was a BUSY one!
- ♦ Favorite fall themes included the ice cream cone balancing game, back-to-school Scattergories, pumpkin painting while on their horse, and the Breakaway Roping game with our herd of silly loose cows to "lasso"! This year we also had a large enough group of students able to trot and ride patterns independently that I was able to plan a fall "Fun Show" event when our older advanced students got to invite their families to watch them compete in judged classes and timed races, and won ribbons like a real horse show!



WAYNE COUNTY

Hosting the Wayne County Farm Tour!

To add to all the special milestones while celebrating our 5th anniversary year, we received an invitation from the Wayne County Farm Bureau to be one of 8 host locations for this year's Farm Tour event, Saturday and Sunday October 11 & 12.

During this yearly two-day event, hundreds of people make the rounds to tour and learn about the kind farming or agribusiness that happens at each host location.

Many volunteers and student families came together before the event to help clean and decorate our facility beautifully for the fall theme; then took shifts during the long hours of the event to welcome guests and answer questions, lead children's games and races, provide demonstrations of how our Horse Care classes start out, and assist with pony rides for visiting children. Cinched Coffee and Patio 114 BBQ once again set up their trucks to serve our guests. The Farm Tour was an amazing opportunity for our organization to connect with many people in the community who had never heard of our program before, or had been curious but never had the chance to see our facility and find out what we are all about!



**Exciting New Projects to Look Forward to in 2026:
Thanks to a Wayne County Community Youth Foundation
Grant and Additional Donors through the
Wayne County Community Foundation!**

Another dream for expanding the opportunities we can offer to our students will become a reality next year, after a grant proposal for the "Inclusivity Equipment Project" was submitted to the Wayne County Community Youth Foundation (WCCYF).

The project proposal described a wish to add cart driving to our program, in order to provide an alternative way to include children who are not physically and/or emotionally able to manage riding on horseback. The option to ride in a cart can allow a child to still participate in learning a horsemanship skill, with the option for a support person to sit in the seat alongside them as needed. The WCCYF chose to support the beginnings of this project with a grant of \$800, which funded the purchase of our first used pony harness and pony cart. This was exciting enough news; THEN I received phone calls from Wayne County Community Foundation Executive Director Melanie Reusser Garcia, excited to share that other donors at the WCCF had read the proposal and were inspired to support the project as well!

The project was gifted additional grants of \$3,700 from an anonymous component fund; \$3,700 from the Richard D. Gates Fund; and \$2,000 from the Wooster Elks Lodge #1346. All of this funding combined will support the purchase of new, custom designed easy-entry carts in horse and small pony sizes, good quality harnesses sized to fit multiple horses and ponies, and the cost of extra training in cart driving skills for our horse and pony driving prospects and our volunteers!



Along with all we have to celebrate, we also pause to honor two sweet old souls on our horse team to whom we had to say goodbye this year...

In Loving Memory

♥ Randy ♥
Member of the Horse Team since Nov. 2022; Crossed the Rainbow Bridge September 2, 2025

♥ Cricket ♥
Member of the Horse Team since Nov. 2023; Crossed the Rainbow Bridge September 22, 2025

Both SO loved by SO many children... we are grateful for all they gave to our program ♥



Thank you for thinking of us in your charitable giving in the new year!

You can find multiple ways to donate online through PayPal, debit, or credit card, at our donation link:

paypal.com/us/fundraiser/charity/4463055

Or send your donation check by mail to:
Stirrup Courage, 645 S Kohler Rd, Orrville OH 44667. Your year-end gift helps sustain our program through the harsher winter months, and allows us to provide scholarships so that lesson cost is never a barrier for any child in need to share a love of horses!

Stirrup Courage, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, all donations are tax-deductible (EIN 86-2771772).

It has been an amazing 5-year journey so far! Thank you for sharing it with me! Tara Steiner, Executive Director