



2020

Annual Report



SPIRIT

OPEN EQUESTRIAN PROGRAM, INC.

SPIRIT Open Equestrian Program

www.spiritequestrian.org

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Like every other aspect of our lives, SPIRIT faced unprecedented and historic challenges in 2020. The SPIRIT family's mettle was tested first by a global pandemic, then by the overdue social reckoning of the Black Lives Matter movement, and finally by the international relocation of our beloved friend, founder, and leader. Through each of these trials, SPIRIT turned to the strength and resilience of our community – our staff, our volunteers, and our riders – to understand each situation and develop a way to get by. While none of these issues have gone away, we have learned how to adapt and grow from them. SPIRIT's ability to endure and evolve is a testament to the purpose we serve and the conviction of our supporters. We won't leave the challenges of 2020 behind anytime soon. However, despite the devastating loss, change, and uncertainty in the world around us, SPIRIT has emerged strong enough to face these issues while continuing to deliver on our mission. Now, more than ever before, the world needs organizations like SPIRIT to provide healing, humility, and growth.

Robert Mennell, President of SPIRIT Open Equestrian Program, Inc.

OWNERS

OUR PERFORMANCE

PROGRAM	NUMBER OF STUDENTS AND PROGRAM HOURS		REVIEWS
Therapeutic Riding	71	825	"The instructors are very encouraging, welcoming, and talkative. They made the environment feel completely inclusive. They work to build the self-confidence of each child. They built an environment that the children really looked forward to each week."
Beginner Riding	45	508	
Equine Assisted Learning	19	2,512	"My daughter loved spending the evening learning to ride. The small class sizes, and safe procedures during Covid-19 made for a great activity for us."
Therapeutic Horsemanship	11	170	"We always love to see the creative activities the staff and EALs come up with for students to do in the indoor arena when it is too cold and is too dark to work outside."
Equine Assisted Psychotherapy	4	84	

CLASSES WITH COVID-19

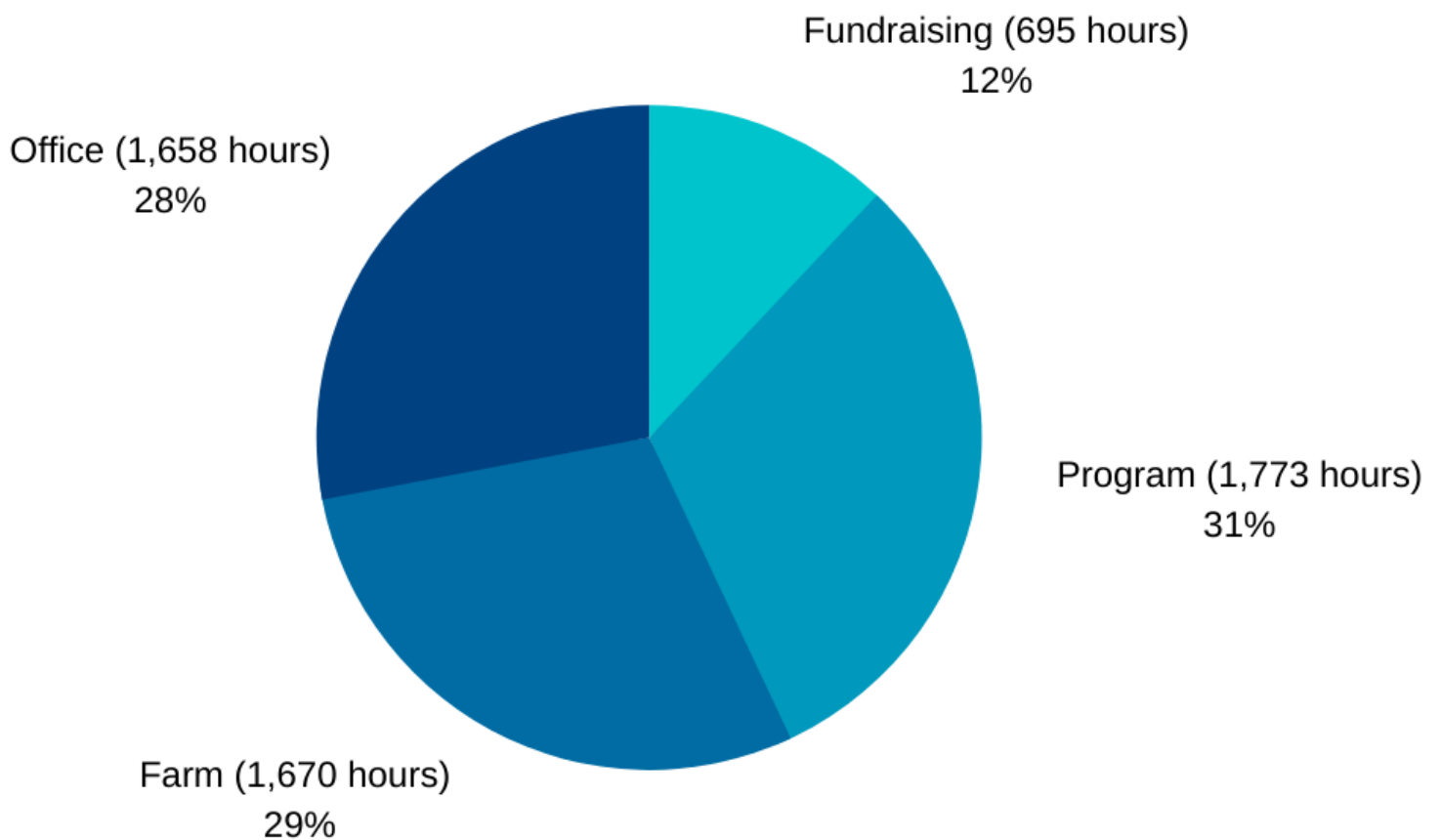
SPIRIT started 2020 strong with a full winter class. Due to COVID-19, there were no operations from March 13 through August 1. SPIRIT was able to resume classes through the end of the year after implementing policies and procedures to ensure the safety of our staff, volunteers, and students.

SPIRIT Team is proud of the improvements, accomplishments and success of our students in all programs. In 2020 we served 150 young people providing over 4,000 service hours, in all programs, despite lock down of 4 months due to COVID. See [HERE](#) how it has been recognized in media

VOLUNTEERS

SPIRIT is thankful for the support of our amazing volunteers. We depend on our volunteers to assist us around the farm, office, and with our horses and students during programs. In 2020 we had 238 volunteers with 5,796 total hours volunteered.

SPIRIT Volunteers in 2020



THE HORSES

During the many trials this past year has brought to SPIRIT our horses have been here to support and carry us all into a new year. We owe them much love and care. Unfortunately, age and poor health took two of our oldest.

Infinity the Queen had the brightest mind and was clever beyond anyone's imagination. She could open most any door or gate, hence the three locks on the feed room door! (No more feed parties for the herd!!) In her youth she was a gorgeous Morgan mare who could master anything. As she aged, she graciously taught our young riders lessons in appreciating boundaries and empathy for the elderly. She left us gracefully and we miss this wise lady.

Samson, our big draft, was a former Amish plow horse who found a loving, caring and well-fed home with SPIRIT. He loved the attention, carrots and adapted quickly to the saddle and riders and was favored by all who came to know him. He was wise, patient and our Psychotherapist loved working with him in their sessions. Samson became SPIRIT's guardian and the herd's protector. He is greatly missed by so many.

As we know life goes on and we have been able to offer a home and second chance to Luna and Ellie. They each are adjusting and demonstrating what good additions they are to the SPIRIT family. We look forward to watching them blossom in their new jobs.

DADA'S MESSAGE:

After many years, building SPIRIT in the Northern Virginia area, at several homes in Great Falls, Purcellville, Aldie, Yellow Farm neighboring Frying Pan, and today, at Frying Pan Farm Park in addition to Sully Farm, our forever home to grow and be safe, it came a time to move on and move to Croatia. Boris, the most loyal SPIRIT volunteer, and I, as founder and Executive Director until the end of October 2020, are 6,000 miles away but always with SPIRIT in our minds and our hearts.

We are thankful for the opportunity to be a part of such a great organization that SPIRIT has become over the past 13 years. So many wonderful things happen, and so many special and impressive people we met and worked with following SPIRIT's mission to improve the lives of every participant or otherwise involved community members.

The best thing in my life is to see that SPIRIT is continuing its services and mission under skilled leadership of the young and professional new Executive Director. Thank you, Michelle Gnozzio for approaching our organization at the right moment and jumping in to make sure that SPIRIT keeps going strong. Looking forward to staying involved as Director of the Board, to help and enjoy the continued growth of "my baby."

Davorka Suvak, "Dada"
Founder and ex-Executive Director

SPIRIT OPEN EQUESTRIAN PROGRAM

Our mission is to foster healing and teach life skills through interactions between humans and horses

2020 EQUESTRIAN STAFF:

Michelle Gnozzio, Executive Director & Instructor
Meagan Hosker, Instructor
Jocelyn Jones, LPC, Equine Assisted Psychotherapy
Jenna Klein, Instructor
Vesma Montvillo, Therapeutic Instructor
Elizabeth Phillips, Therapeutic Horsemanship
Abigail Schwall, Instructor
Davorka Suvak, Former Executive Director & Instructor
Lauren Wong, Therapeutic Instructor
Cynda Zurfluh, Therapeutic Horsemanship

2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Jennifer Cibula, Director
Barry Dresdner, Director
Werner Dreesen, Director
Douglas Gaibler, Director
Chuck Gumas, Director
Claire Hosker, Director
Robert Mennell, President
Vesma Montvillo, Treasurer
Louise Peterson, Director
Diane Pires, Director
Samuel Schwall, Director
Patricia Sullivan, Director
Davorka Suvak, Founder & Director
Leslie Vernon, Director
Lauren Wong, Secretary
Cynda Zurfluh, Vice President

2020 KEY VOLUNTEERS:

Ed Brinberg
Barry Dresdner
Doug Gaibler
Kevin Golla
Robert Mennell
Kris Montagne
Candace Sturdivant
Huey Sullivan
Boris Suvak
Jeff Wallace
Cynda Zurfluh
Bastien Jacquet

2020 FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE:

Nina Eidelberg
Doreen Gumas
Claire Hosker
Diane Pires
Maria Sickinger
Candace Studivant
Patricia Sullivan-Coordinator
Davorka Suvak
Leslie Vernon

2020 OFFICE STAFF:

Elizabeth Phillips- Volunteer Coordinator
Kris Montagne- Volunteer Coordinator
Patricia Sullivan-Volunteer
Davorka Suvak, Executive Director
Leslie Vernon- Bookkeeper

Thank you to our donors and those whose services continue to support SPIRIT

2020 Top Donors:

Individuals:

Cynda Zurfluh & Keven Golla

Diane Pires

Jennifer Cibula

John Sears

John Stubbs

Maria & Ralph Sickinger

Patty & Huey Sullivan

Samuel Schwall

Thomas Dombrowsky Jr.

Business:

Syntertex LLC

Employee Gift

Matching:

Harris Foundation

Grants and

Foundations:

Commonwealth Charitable Fund

Facebook

Fairfax County Government

First Nonprofit Foundation

PayPal Charitable Giving Fund

Veterinarian care is provided by Hoof and Paw
Veterinary Services

SPIRIT thanks the Fairfax County Park Authority for the opportunity to provide our services and for accommodating our horses at Frying Pan Farm Park, Herndon Virginia.

SPIRIT thanks the community for its ongoing support.