

# HORSE PEOPLE GET A LEG UP FROM EQUESTRIAN AID FOUNDATION

BY CARRIE WIRTH

**A**T THE CORE of equestrians are the connection, joy, and freedom that comes from the horses they love. But when horse people become critically ill or injured, their world can unravel. Facing the inability to work or participate in the industry they love can be devastating and lead to a downward spiral against what seem like insurmountable odds.

For 21 years, Equestrian Aid Foundation has helped catastrophically injured or ill horse people, from all walks of life and equestrian disciplines, rebuild their lives with financial assistance. To date, the organization has granted over \$2.7 million to equestrians in 30 states across the U.S.

Linda Andrisani, a well-respected hunter trainer and judge, was one such grant recipient. “We never think anything will go wrong,” she said. “But the truth is, especially in the horse world, if something does go wrong, your world can come crashing down. I found that out when I got cancer in March 2011.”

When Linda’s partner, Jack Stebbing, also had a series of strokes, they were

forced to downsize their operation while facing the unknown.

“Thankfully, Equestrian Aid Foundation has helped with financial assistance to keep us going,” she said. “I can’t thank this organization enough. The wonderful thing is that they help many people like me—judges, stewards, trainers, grooms, farriers, exercise riders, horse show personnel—anyone in the horse world.”

Talented Western rider and rodeo queen Alena Weida was active in 4H and competed in barrel racing. To pay her way through college, she worked as an animal technician in the theater industry.

Her fearless nature landed her projects working with horses, zebras, and camels.

Alena began to experience mental fogging and headaches after a riding accident, but disregarded her symptoms. She pushed on with work, riding, and school. Then, a horse spooked as she was mounting. She was thrown to the ground and had a full-on seizure. Traumatic brain injury (TBI) was the diagnosis. Alena’s doctors prescribed no riding, no computer screen time, and no reading. With her life seemingly falling apart, Alena battled depression along with her TBI symptoms.

Through grants from Equestrian Aid Foundation, Alena is receiving specialized therapies for TBI. She is confident that this leg up will help her get back on track.

Christine Campbell is a lifelong horsewoman and primary caretaker to her son who has Asperger Syndrome. She has trained field hunters to grand prix jumpers and has worked in some of the country’s most prestigious stables. But in

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—MOHAMMAD ALI

2016, a series of illnesses and injuries left her unable to work enough to make ends meet.

“I’d recover from one issue, then literally get knocked down again,” Christine said. Facing financial devastation, she applied to Equestrian Aid Foundation and was accepted as a grant recipient.

Permanently disabled but remaining positive, Christine is confident that she can get back on her feet to provide for her family. “Without this help, I

wouldn’t be standing, let alone have a roof over my son’s and my

head,” she said. With Equestrian Aid Foundation’s track record of helping horse people in need, it’s no wonder that it was selected by the readers of *Equestrian Living* as a Gold List favorite horse-related charity. The foundation is also a recent recipient of an elite Gold Status ranking from GuideStar, the world’s most comprehensive database of nonprofit organizations, for its commitment to transparency and accountability.

**CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT:** Alena Weida; Georgina Bloomberg autographs foundation hats at the Hampton Classic; Linda Andrisani showing a lovely hunter; Christine Campbell and a student.

