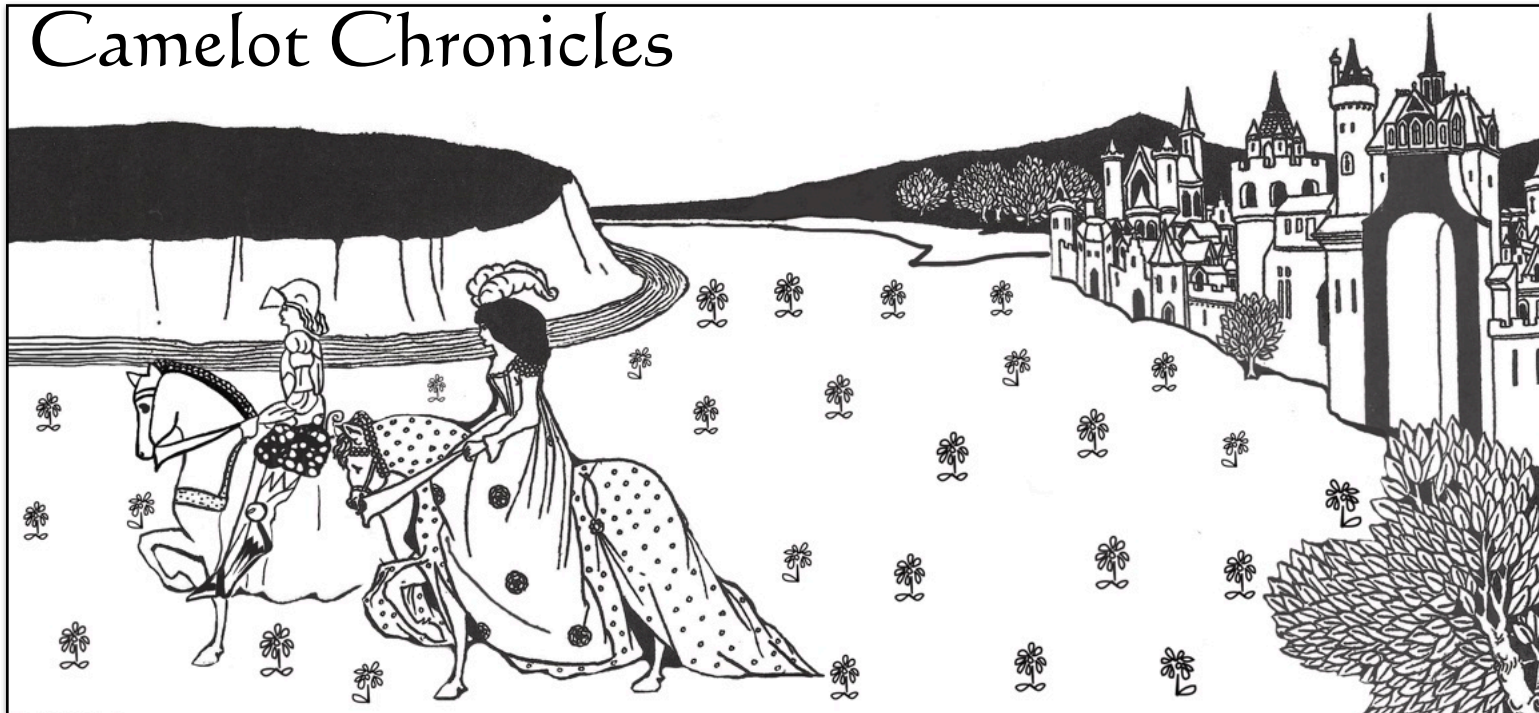


# Camelot Chronicles



Celebrating 43 Years of Camelot...Where Heroes are Born



## Merlin's Muse

By Mary Hadsall  
Executive Director

Recently, I had the great pleasure of catching up with Kristyn Moore, a longtime friend of Camelot's who moved to the Midwest 14 years ago. She was a volunteer in the program when I first came on staff in the summer of 2002. Not only was it wonderful to reconnect and catch up with a dear friend, but it also turned into a tremendously meaningful experience for both of us.

Just a few minutes into our visit, Kristyn sighed deeply, and I saw her shoulders relax. We were standing in front of the barn chatting, and she had a peaceful smile on her face as she gazed across the property. She looked me

in the eye and said, "The ranch still feels so good." Honestly, her expression said it all, but her sincere words were music to my ears.

During her visit, we reminisced about days gone by, sharing stories about Camelot's beloved schoolmasters—Scout, Bravo, Paladin, and Cayanna. These therapy horses changed the lives of our students through their extraordinary service to the program. Each of them was worth their weight in gold.

Kristyn's time at the ranch reminded me how unique the Camelot program is. There is no other place quite like it. The forethought, planning, and attention to detail that went into Camelot's curriculum and into the construction of our accessible barn and educational center create freedom and opportunity for each student. Our services are unparalleled in the adaptive therapy

industry because we make each individual rider and their personal goals our highest priority.

Today, just as in the "early days," Camelot continues to emphasize quality over quantity.

Thank you, Kristyn, for spending time with an old friend and reminding this cowgirl how deeply grateful she is for all this program is and all it will continue to be.



*Kristyn holding Frisco.*



*Michelle G. adjusting Alicia's reins while mounted on Scout. Circa 2010*

## Building a Dream

By Alicia Draper, Camelot Alumna

*Editors note: Alicia Draper has a long and meaningful history with Camelot. She was a student of our founder, Eileen Szychowski, from 1994 to 2000 before leaving to attend college. After graduating from the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism, Alicia reached out to me in 2010 because she missed the horses and the barn.*

*She returned to the ranch as a volunteer, and that renewed connection soon evolved into a strong desire to become a PATH Intl. Certified Riding Instructor. Over the next eight years, Alicia's role transitioned from volunteer to returning student to mentee, as she gained valuable experience and training in preparation for attending a PATH Intl. workshop and certification clinic in March 2019.*

*Alicia successfully earned her PATH Intl. teaching credentials and accepted a riding instructor position at Camelot. She remained on staff until May 2023, when she announced her resignation to devote her full time and energy to becoming a Certified Recreational Therapist.*

*Alicia's impressive journey is a story of deep drive, dedication, and perseverance.*

I am different. I love wearing weird sunglasses and speaking in public. I am different and yet I am the same. I am the same in the way I wanted to be legally married to the love of my life, Daniel, and have a full-time job like most Americans. But, as a woman with a physical disability, achieving my goals meant losing my Social Security income as well as my state healthcare. If I got a full-time job, I knew that my income would go over the limit to keep qualifying for these benefits. I needed a plan.

I was tired of income limits and tired of not being legally married. I wanted to be self-sufficient, a dream that was planted in my mind in 2017 after Daniel and I had our non-legal commitment ceremony. It was performed by our then pastor, and we were surrounded by our family and friends. We originally planned to get legally married within a couple of years, however between my own health struggles, Covid-19, and finishing my Master's degree in Recreational Therapy it took us seven.

On December 9th, 2024 Daniel and I got legally married in San Diego, California! It was a dream come true. We had accomplished one of the biggest goals of our lives together. After I passed the national exam in January of 2024, the next step was to gain employment as a recently Certified Recreational Therapist. After finishing school, a wonderful opportunity arose to work part-time as a contracted Recreational Therapist at Ability360 Sports and Fitness Center. This is also where I did my on-site internship during the summer of 2024. I've had so much fun as a Recreational Therapist there! I get to teach a class called Coffee, Crafts and Communication (a class I created during my internship) where every week my students and I have coffee, make a craft, and practice public speaking skills by speaking about our crafts. In addition to this, I see a few clients for one-on-one treatments throughout the week.

In addition to working at Ability360, I accepted a job offer in September of 2025 from Banner Rehabilitation Hospital Phoenix campus as a full-time Recreational Therapist. They are a Inpatient Rehabilitation Hospital that serves a wide variety of patient diagnoses. On a typical day, I might see patients diagnosed with a variety of conditions from broken hips to traumatic brain injuries, as well as strokes and other conditions. During treatments I take into account a patient's cognitive, physical, emotional, social and spiritual domains and their leisure interests and use recreational interventions and activities to help them heal. It is an honor to be alongside someone who is going through their healing journey and to be able to use modalities such as art, music, games, or being out in nature as part of their treatment. It's a different type of therapy.

I am different and yet the same. Today I am legally married, have a full-time job and healthcare benefits through my employer. Dreams can come true, but sometimes bigger dreams take longer like my journey to become a PATH Intl. Certified Riding Instructor. It's okay. It does not matter how long a dream takes to be fulfilled if it's important to you. You'll find your way of accomplishing it. You can! You will! It will be amazing, just like you! And I will be your biggest encourager.

Alicia Draper

M.S., CTRS  
PATH Intl. Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor

# Instructor Spotlight

By Mary Hadsall



*Regan and Gunner*

The best teachers blend strong character, professional expertise, and genuinely care for their students. At Camelot, our riding instructors, Regan Mays and Ipek “Beck” Hinshaw, embody these qualities in abundance. What truly sets them apart, however, is their deep—rooted passion for the horse and their exceptional horsemanship. They love what they teach, and that enthusiasm shines through in every lesson.

Both Regan and Beck have had horses in their lives since childhood—a lifelong connection that fuels their dedication and shapes their teaching. Their experience goes beyond instruction; it reflects years of partnership, learning and respect for the horse. That foundation brings authenticity, energy, and confidence to their work with every student who enters the arena.



*Beck and Amber*

It feels especially fitting to celebrate them during the Year of the Horse in the Chinese zodiac. The horse symbolizes energy, freedom, confidence, and forward momentum; beautiful qualities that Regan and Beck inspire in their students each day. Through their guidance, those same qualities take root and grow, both in and out of the saddle.

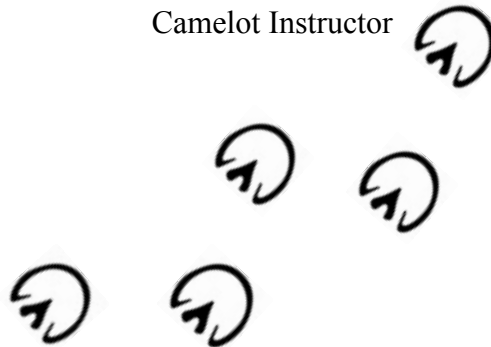


*Gracee and Louie*

## Heroes' Heroes/Mentees Gracee & Emma

### Mentoring the Mentees

By Regan Mays  
Camelot Instructor



*Emma and Aiden*

This lesson season, two dedicated students of mine, Gracee and Emma, joined us at Camelot as volunteers and mentees. It is exciting to have their energy in the barn. The Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies industry is growing rapidly, and more instructors are needed to meet the demand. However, getting certified to teach lessons like ours is not simple. The Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor (CTRI) is a nationally recognized certification offered through Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.). The certification process is long, rigorous, and rewarding. It requires documented volunteer and teaching hours, professional references, a written exam, and a filmed assessment that evaluates horsemanship, instructional technique, and safety awareness. The certification is required by insurance and ensures that instructors are competent in safety measures and teaching skills for adaptive riding to individuals with diverse physical, cognitive, and emotional needs.

As a PATH Intl. Premier Accredited Center, Camelot provides an ideal learning environment, demonstrating the highest industry standards for safety, horse welfare, and program quality. Mentees observe and participate in lessons as horse leaders and coaches, while gaining hands-on teaching experience under experienced instructors. Additionally, Camelot is one of the only riding centers in the state equipped with a Sure Hands lift, allowing mentees to work with riders and develop teaching skills they may not otherwise encounter.

Over the course of this lesson season, both Gracee and Emma have worked tirelessly to learn the Camelot ways and support our students and horses. Their dedication and curiosity even inspired a few others to pursue CTRI certification (ahem, Casey and Addison!), reminding me that mentorship is not just for building skills — it's for building community, and the future of our profession.

Camelot welcomes **Tanner M.** back to the student roster and **Amber B., Christian B., and Ann J.** to their first lesson season!

We are delighted to have joining the ranks of morning ranch hand: **Jordan H., Kristin R., Sheryl R., Christie S., Sheryl S. and Kenan T.** and instructor assistants: **Emma B., Gracee B., and Tanner M.**

## Memorial Gifts

Memorial gifts in any amount are a beautiful way to honor a beloved friend or family member, be they human or otherwise. We also welcome gifts in honor of birthdays or other special occasions. All such donations are acknowledged with a special card or email and a mention in our newsletter. When sending in your gift, please include a brief note designating whom it is memorializing, and in which category you are submitting it. If you would like an acknowledgment card sent, please include the recipient's address.

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Roz Tayne  
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