As we look back on 2021, we are grateful for another successful year for Westwind Riding Institute (WRI). As the pandemic requirements see-sawed between relaxing and enforcing safety protocols, our unflappable team of volunteers was prepared to stop and restart on a dime. And while it might be overstating it to say classes have returned to “normal,” we are happy that they’ve returned to a “new normal.”

Thanks to the extraordinary efforts of our leaders and the resumption of our student volunteer program, we have gone from a skeleton crew to twice a week classes (like the old days!) for the fall, winter, and spring sessions, now meeting on Mondays and Fridays. Adding a class on Fridays allows us to accommodate more riders, and give our ponies and horses more exercise and attention. The summer session was held as usual in July on Monday evenings.

With a waiting list now in place, we look forward to welcoming new riders in 2022, as well as new volunteers.

Also, we have a new instructor! Hanna Merk, who for the past two years has been coordinating the WRI program, graciously stepped in to teach our Friday class. Hanna has added some exciting new activities to Friday’s classes, designed to help our youth volunteers develop as leaders. For example, in addition to managing and leading horses, youth volunteers are actively involved in teaching horse care to their riders. They are also invited to act as assistant instructors and to help organize activities, such as the annual Halloween Ride and Easter Egg Hunt.

The WRI program could not exist without your support. For nearly half a century our volunteers and your generous donations have made this valuable program possible. If you haven’t yet, please join our vibrant community of riders and volunteers by supporting WRI.
This year we have five riders in the Monday program: Cara, Jeffrey, Kenna, Kiera, and Molly; and four riders in the Friday program: Amai, Brielle, Moussia, and Pranay. Thanks to Torie Dye, Westwind Barn manager, we were also able to add two new mounts to classes: Emerson and Olé. You’ll find their sweet faces featured in these photos too.

Kenna maneuvers Steele over pole courses. Steele began his career working on a South Dakota ranch.

Brielle atop Cinders, our blue roan Tennessee Walker.

Olé ridden by Molly. The Fjord horse is relatively small but very strong, and hails from the mountainous regions of western Norway.

Ridden by Kiera, Emerson, is a Welsh pony who once competed in the prestigious USEF Pony Finals. His registered name is Tristan First Edition.

Riders are encouraged to groom their horses before and after lessons.

Instructor Roxanne Raksnys squares the circle!
Pranay, who began riding in our fall session this past September, has difficulty walking. He needs to be supported up and down the mounting block and carried to the car afterwards, fully exhausted from the effort. No matter these challenges, recently Pranay realized the kind of success that parents, instructors, and volunteers all hope our riders will experience.

To improve core strength and fitness, all riders had been instructed for weeks in how to hold jumping position for the length of the arena. Pranay’s efforts paid off richly when he was able to trot for the very first time on November 6th! The lesson ended in jubilant applause from all riders and volunteers—and scored many carrots for their mounts. When one of us succeeds, we all win!

Pranay, riding Cinders led by Lydia, assisted by his mom Shruti and big brother Ojas.
The Westwind Riding Institute (WRI) would like to thank the following foundations, organizations and companies for their charitable contributions.

- Children's Center, United Methodist Church of Los Altos
- Clipped Wings SFO Peninsula
- Flora Family Foundation
- Hills 2000 – Friends of the Hills
- Kiwanis Club of Los Altos
- Kiwanis Club of Mountain View
- Los Altos Rotary Club
- Los Altos Community Foundation
- Menlo Park Live Oak Lions Club
- Northwood Design Partners, Inc
- PARC, a Xerox Company
- Silicon Valley Association of Realtors (SILVAR)
- Symantec
- The Chou Family
- The Kaplan Family
- The LaPlanche Family
- VMware

Westwind Riding Institute would like to acknowledge the significant role played by the Town of Los Altos Hills, both in our founding and our continued operation over the years. Without the Town's continued support both materially and otherwise, this program would not be possible. We'd also like to thank the following: Victoria Dye Equestrian for equine and volunteer resources in our programs; as well as the many individual donors who have contributed so generously over the years.

The WRI Newsletter is published by Westwind Riding Institute and designed and produced by our volunteers. Its purpose is to inform friends and supporters about WRI activities and events.

Westwind Riding Institute is a non-profit charitable organization, exempt under Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3), which is solely supported by tax-deductible gifts and donations from interested individuals, clubs, and organizations.

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