



# Region 3 Conference

## March 21-23, 2025

**Hosted by:  
Shining Hope Farms  
Charlotte, North Carolina**

**PATH Intl. Region 3 welcomes you to an educational and fun weekend with your friends and colleagues in North Carolina. Your registration fee includes dinner on Friday, light breakfast and lunch on Saturday and light breakfast on Sunday.**

### CONFERENCE LOCATION

#### **Shining Hope Farms - CHARLOTTE LOCATION!**

***\* If you put "Shining Hope Farms" in your GPS - BE SURE to select the Charlotte location – their home farm will be the first option and it is in Mt. Holly, NC which is about 17 minutes from the conference's Charlotte location. \****

3701 Kidd Lane  
Charlotte, NC, 28216

Parking is available just inside the gated entrance and to the right just after the paddock gate.

### LODGING OPTIONS

#### **Hampton Inn & Suites by Hilton**

7911 W W.T.Harris Blvd, Charlotte, NC 28216  
As low as \$108/night  
(704) 395-9433 or reserve [online](#)

#### **Holiday Inn Express**

7230 Smith Corners Blvd, Charlotte, NC 28269  
As low as \$129/night  
(704) 790-1700 or reserve [online](#)

#### **Hilton Garden Inn Charlotte North**

9315 Statesville Rd, Charlotte, NC 28269  
As low as \$113/night  
(704) 597-7655 or reserve [online](#)

## **PATH INTL. REGION 3 CONFERENCE REGISTRATION**

Online registration will be available January 10, 2025, through March 7, 2025. After March 7, 2025, registration will need to be completed on-site.

**IF YOU ARE A PRESENTER OR CONFERENCE COMMITTEE MEMBER, REMEMBER TO REGISTER WITH YOUR CODE!**

### **Registration January 10, 2025, through March 7, 2025:**

Full Conference      \$175 members      \$235 non-members

### **Registration on-site after March 7, 2025:**

Full Conference      \$225 members      \$285 non-members

### **Refund Policy:**

**No refunds due to weather unless the conference is canceled.**

**Written cancellation request is required for refund. Email [manderson@pathintl.org](mailto:manderson@pathintl.org)**

**Deadline for Full Refund** – Request received in PATH Intl. office by **March 7, 2025**

**Deadline for 50% Refund** – Request received in PATH Intl. office by **March 23, 2025**

**Individuals who do not submit a written request to PATH Intl. by March 23, 2025, will not get a refund.**

**Education:** This conference satisfies up to **10** hours of continuing education requirements.

## **AGENDA**

All times are eastern

### **Friday, March 21, 2025**

12 – 1 p.m.

#### **Registration and Welcome**

#### **Session A**

1 – 2 p.m.

#### **A1, AC/DC About Connection, Dynamic Centers and Charities CE**

Approximately 12% of new charities typically don't make it past their fifth year and some therapeutic riding programs did not survive the pandemic. This session will include first-hand experience in the development of a new center and taking the reins of a center that has been in existence for 40 years. Attendees will gain knowledge about healthy board development and management, resources on identifying team talent and building rapport, and community integration strategies for recruitment and retention of volunteers and donors.

*Nicole Pioli has spent 20 years dedicated to the disability industry working in a variety of settings including schools, universities, and charities. Much of her professional and recreational endeavors have been in creating connections between humans and equines. She has a bachelor's degree in public health from Coastal Carolina University and a master's degree in social work from the University of South Carolina.*

#### **A2, The Game of Research CE**

Research can be fun and feel like a game, requiring players to analyze evidence, form hypotheses and solve questions. This interactive session will explore how research can enhance outcomes in EAS. Using real-world scenarios inspired by EAS and equine research, attendees will be challenged to think critically and collaborate effectively. A hands-on activity will foster curiosity and creative problem solving, allowing attendees to uncover insights into horse welfare, rider dynamics and the interplay between the two. This session is perfect for those working in the EAS or equine fields and will inspire new perspectives on improving outcomes in EAS while keeping research principles front and center.

*Pebbles Turbeville, PATH Intl. Advanced Instructor and CTRI is the CEO of the Horses and Humans Research Foundation (HHRF). Pebbles holds a doctorate in sports management with a leadership emphasis, a master's degree from NC State, and a BA from Columbia College. She previously chaired the Equine and Sport Studies Department at St. Andrews University in Laurinburg, NC, where she served as an associate professor teaching therapeutic horsemanship, equine studies, and sports management courses while also directing the therapeutic horsemanship program. A leader in equine-assisted services (EAS), Pebbles received the prestigious PATH Intl. James Brady Professional Achievement Award in 2022. She is a PATH Intl. advanced instructor, CTRI and mentor. She served on the NARHA/PATH Intl. board, multiple PATH Intl. committees, and as a faculty member for PATH Intl. workshops. Pebbles has presented a wide array of topics in EAS at international, national, regional and state conferences.*

2 – 2:15 p.m.

#### **Break**

## Session B

2:15 – 3:45 p.m.

### **B1, DEI: How Horses Help in EAL CE**

Embrace addressing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) through EAL. Attendees will learn key concepts, terminology and how to facilitate meaningful discussions based on EAL activities. Addressing youth and young-person suicide (the second leading cause of death according to the CDC) and being a part of saving the lives of children through an educational approach will also be discussed.

***Nancy Paschall, PATH Intl. ESMHL** has a plethora of program experience in EAS as the executive director of several EAS centers during her career and developing multiple EAL programs for three centers. As an EAL practitioner she has been working with various populations including People of Color (POC), and the LGBTQ+ community. She partners with other community organizations to deliver EAL services to various groups. She created a partnership with My Brother's Keeper of South Carolina for youth of color, and Uplift, for LGBTQ+ youth. Nancy is on the board of directors for the Horses and Humans Research Foundation (HHRF), has served as the chairperson of the Virginia Horse Industry Board and is the former vice-chair of the Virginia Horse Council. She was the key member who developed the HHRF Research Readiness Checklist for EAS centers.*

### **B2, To Spook or Not to Spook CR All** (Limited to 18 participants)

This session will be an interactive, hands-on approach to understanding equine responses, how to troubleshoot and mitigate problems when things don't go as planned, and working in and out of comfort zones within horsemanship. Learn about horse vision, how to develop a confident prey animal to do an EAS job and how to be a fearless leader. Discuss staffing and volunteer boundaries, confidence and comfort levels and how to choose and educate your team, including the equine, for better collaboration.

***Jessi Culbertson, PATH Intl. CTRI®** is a USPC Graduate H and USEA-ECP candidate that has spent the past 23 years being the equines' spokesperson at three different locations of Shining Hope Farms. She is an avid eventing rider and coach with experience in multiple disciplines. By utilizing combined training methods she has helped many both on the ground and in the saddle develop real working relationships with horses. Jessi has a passion for analyzing and troubleshooting equine and human interaction in an educational format and has a method of breaking down barriers between disciplines and biases while unifying a diverse audience. She also has an engineering background and has developed a systematic approach to problem solving for the purpose of goal attainment. Jessi focuses on helping both horse & rider become partners in a turnkey approach.*

### **B3, How to Incorporate Thoroughbreds into an EAS Program CE**

This session will explore why Thoroughbreds, despite not being the "typical" equine-assisted services horse breed, can excel in EAS. This session will examine strategies for building partnerships between EAS programs and aftercare organizations to facilitate the transition of these horses from the racetrack to therapeutic environments. By the end of the session, attendees will be equipped with practical knowledge on selecting, training and integrating Thoroughbreds into EAS programs, ensuring a successful match for both horses and participants.

***Diana Bezdedeau** is an equine facilitated learning (EFL) advanced practitioner through The HERD Institute® and a certified Horse Powered Reading® facilitator. She has extensive experience volunteering for several adaptive horseback riding programs, as well as assisting in PT and OT sessions incorporating horses. Diana has always formed a greater connection with horses outside of the saddle. As someone who has both a visual and a hearing impairment, Diana is committed to providing whatever adaptations are necessary for her clients' success. Diana is the proud owner of two OTTB mares, Coffee (7) & London (19).*

3:45 – 4 p.m.

**Break**

## Session C

4 – 5 p.m.

### **C1, Communicating with Participants DE**

In this presentation, attendees will learn the difference between speech and language, identify the five domains of language and recognize barriers to communication. Attendees will also learn strategies that can be implemented in a variety of communicative settings including how to be a better communication partner with those who utilize augmentative and alternative communication, and how the concepts of presuming competence, autonomy and privacy play an important role in being an effective communicative partner.

**Melanie Dominko-Richards, MS, CCC-SLP, HPCS** is a New Jersey-licensed speech-language pathologist with a certificate of clinical competency from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Melanie has a BS in education and a MS in speech-language pathology. During her graduate studies, she completed clinical internships in an elementary school, a traumatic-brain-injury-outpatient rehab and a clinical externship at two facilities that provided therapy services utilizing equine movement as part of an integrated plan of care. In addition to working at Our House, Inc., Melanie works part-time at Mane Stream, Inc. in Oldwick, NJ where she incorporates equine movement into her speech-language pathology plans of care. Melanie is a PATH Intl. CTRI®, ESMHL and Registered Therapist. When not at work, Melanie volunteers her time with AHA, Inc. as board president and serving on numerous committees.

## **C2, From Outputs to Outcomes: Measurement Strategies in EAS CE**

Identifying the difference between outcomes and outputs is essential to gathering meaningful program information needed for grant writing, communicating with donors and ensuring program effectiveness. Strategies for making measurements attainable for any EAS program through building partnerships with universities and examples of how and what tools were used to help measure change across various populations who engage in EAS programs will be provided. An example of an existing practice-research collaboration will be used to help explain how, collectively, we can improve organizational stories of outcomes. Learn why, how and what measurement can help you tell your EAS stories. This interactive session will provide a research readiness checklist, a description of evaluation approaches and tools for effectively communicating success for participants, volunteers and programs.

**Nancy Paschall** see bio in session B1.

**Kimberly Tumlin, PhD, MS, MPH** serves to advance asset-based resilience in populations with trauma histories. Her research builds on the growing evidence that development of strengths outcomes contributes to transformative healing in specialized populations including Indigenous communities, persons with disabilities, and those with history of trauma exposures.

**Sarah Newman, MD, PATH Intl. CTRI® and ESMHL** is the program coordinator at HALTER and responsible for administering and obtaining all the assessments, including those used in research. Sarah has mentored PATH Intl. CTRI® candidates successfully and teaches HALTER's instructor course.

5 – 5:15 p.m.

**Break**

5:15 – 6 p.m.

**Facilitated Networking**

6 – 6:30 p.m.

**PATH Intl. Region 3 Meeting and Field Test Standards Update**

6:30 – 8 p.m.

**Dinner and the PATH Intl. Region 3 Awards Ceremony**

## **Saturday, March 22, 2025**

7:30 – 8:30 a.m.

**Registration and Welcome**

Light Breakfast

### **Session D**

8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

#### **D1, Silver Hair and Horseshoes DE**

This session will discuss how people over the age of 65 can be included in EAS, whether as a participant in an unmounted or mounted program, or as a volunteer! Learn about different diagnoses and conditions that are relevant to EAS and what benefits EAS can provide for different diagnoses, and what precautions and contraindications may exist. For unmounted work, discover the differences whether participants are coming as a group from an assisted-living facility, or as an individual seeking services independently. Discussion of mounted work will include goals and activities that can help participants safely meet their goals. Senior citizens in volunteer roles and the benefits for the program and the volunteer as well as how to recruit and support these volunteers will be shared. Learn precautions or contraindication relevant to volunteers over 65.

**Evelyn Crumb, PATH Intl. CTRI®** started working with people with disabilities at the age of 14 and has been working in education, non-profits and healthcare for over 15 years. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in agricultural businesses with a minor in education from SUNY Cobleskill, Evy interned at Equest in Dallas, TX. Evy has worked in a public school's special education department, taught therapeutic riding and worked as a vocational specialist for Developmental Workshops Inc. In 2017 Evy moved to Winston-Salem to work as an instructor at Riverwood TRC, helping develop programs serving as the volunteer coordinator. In 2023 Evy started as a full-time student at Winston Salem State and will graduate with a master's degree in OT in 2025. As a student OT she works two days a week at pro-bono clinics treating a variety of patients including many patients over age 65.

**Michele Carter, PATH Intl. CTRI® and ESMHL** started riding at the age of four and has continued pursuing her horse passion for over 35 years. After graduating with a biochemistry/pre-physical therapy degree from UNCG, Michele interned at Horsepower in Colfax, NC as an assistant riding instructor. Michele then worked full-time with individuals with special needs and autism and became a supervisor in social work for the next seven years. She opened her own equestrian center south of Asheville and specialized in hunter/jumper and dressage competition and training competition horses. Michele has been the equine manager at Riverwood TRC since December 2022.

## **D2, Recruiting, Retaining and Developing Your Human Resources CE**

Staffing continues to be a challenge throughout the country. Most industries are struggling to find people to fill a variety of roles. It can be particularly challenging in this climate, where unemployment remains low and competition for employees remains high. In addition, many of the roles at EAS centers are specialized, with even fewer qualified people available. This session will share the best practices for recruiting, retaining and developing human resources. The topics will include defining an organization's culture that attracts and retains staff, where and how to recruit, how to build a team and get the right people on the bus, prioritizing competitive wages and staff development opportunities, and employment law considerations. Leave this workshop with next steps.

**Kathy Alm** began her service as chief executive officer of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.) in August 2014. For the previous 16 years she served as executive director of Little Bit Therapeutic Riding Center in Woodinville, WA. She grew the previous grassroots organization from a \$280,000 annual operating budget to a professional \$2.1 million organization. Kathy served as the PATH Intl. board president in the 2010-2012 term, first joining the board of trustees in 2005. She has facilitated numerous workshops and presentations on board, staff, fundraising and strategic planning and enjoys the opportunity to share her experience as well as learn from others. Her dedication to the field of EAS spans over 19 years with a passion that was ignited the moment she walked through the door at her first EAS center.

10:30 – 10:45 a.m.

**Break**

## **Session E**

10:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

### **E1, Obesity and Eating Disorder Recovery through EAL CE**

EAL is an alternative approach for engaging therapy-resistant youth with eating disorders and obesity. Follow some youth through their journey in a program that focuses on solution-based learning tailored to individual goals. These goals help them develop new, healthy relationship patterns, overcome toxic feelings, recognize and manage triggers, build resilience, self-esteem and confidence and improve communication skills, emotional regulation and problem-solving abilities. This comprehensive approach empowers youth to overcome eating disorders and obesity by fostering growth, healing and personal development.

**Jo Anne Miller, PATH Intl. CTRI® and ESMHL** is the executive director of a fully accredited equine rescue, and a PATH Intl. PAC. Brook Hill Farm is home to a full-time school for youth at-risk, combining equines and academics. Jo Anne is a retired professor of equine science and was a previous co-chair of the PATH Intl. equine welfare committee. She currently serves on boards and committees for HETI, the EQUUS Foundation, HHRF and the Virginia Horse Council.

### **E2, Troubleshooting Equine Issues CR All**

This session will share methodical approaches for troubleshooting equine issues in-house utilizing a combined training approach to keep EAS equines happy, healthy and sound. Learn how to identify geriatric equine needs, budgeting, and the life cycle of the EAS horse. Examples of differing levels of soundness in both mind and body and when to call the vet or other equine experts will also be discussed.

**Jessi Culbertson, PATH Intl. CTRI®** see bio in session B2.

12:15 – 1:45 p.m.

**Lunch and the PATH Intl. Update 1 CE**

## **Session F**

1:45 – 3:15 p.m.

### **F1, Horse Sense – The Horse Brain Explained CR All**

Discover how horses see their world and how their brain functions, processes sensory input and translates it into behavior. See what happens to the horse's brain when we push too hard versus when we allow them to learn and process. Explore how these experiences influence behavior, how they learn and how predator/prey dynamics shape interactions with them. Learn the significance of groundwork and partnership.

**Anna Baucum, PATH Intl. ESMHL** is a veterinary technician and currently works at Brook Hill Farm as a supervisor. She graduated with a degree in psychology and works with youth at-risk at the farm. She has spoken at both national and regional conferences and has been a coach at the United States Pony Club Championships in show jumping. Anna is a proud member of the equine well-being committee for the Humans and Horses Research Foundation.

## **F2, The PATH Intl. CTRI® Mentor and Candidate Relationship CE**

The importance of the quality of the mentor/mentee relationship between PATH Intl. CTRI® candidates, mentors, and others is vital for the success of aspiring candidates and EAS centers. The new PATH Intl. CTRI® process can be frustrating for both candidates and mentors, especially when candidates have a physical disability and/or already have a tremendous amount of knowledge in EAS. This presentation will address the frustrations and provide ways to make the process a positive one. Attendees will learn the crucial skills for both the candidate and mentor to build a positive relationship and adaptations to help candidates with physical disabilities be successful and safe. Strategies for preparing for the exam will also be provided.

**Sarah Newman, MD, PATH Intl. CTRI® and ESMHL** see bio in session C2.

**Katie Bell, PATH Intl. CTRI®** is a newly minted PATH Intl. CTRI® with a degree from Lander University in EAS and a lifetime of horse experience.

**Emma Jameson** is a PATH Intl. CTRI® candidate who started at HALTER as a participant at the age of 3. She is a graduate of Converse University with a degree in child and family studies. She has also been named an emerging athlete by the Para Dressage Team of the USA.

3:15 – 3:30 p.m.      **Break**

## **Session G**

3:30 – 5 p.m.

### **G1, Resiliency and Center Sustainability CE**

Greek philosopher Heraclitus, said, "change is the only constant." Everyone who leads a center providing EAS knows that adaptation to change is an everyday occurrence. Change and growth (not necessarily bigger, but better) are critical to center sustainability. One of the enduring challenges of the pandemic is the increase in external changes that have an impact on center operations and the people involved.

**Kathy Alm** see bio in session D3.

### **G2, Navigating Emotions and Behavior: Creating a Supportive Learning Environment DE**

Helping riders regulate their emotions is one of every instructor's most challenging responsibilities. Strong emotions are intimately connected to disruptive behavior and can easily derail the learning process. Understanding emotions and the connections to learning and behavior is key to transforming how we approach students, to improve both their learning outcomes and overall well-being. This presentation will explore the nature of emotions. The neurological underpinnings of emotional regulation from the perspective of polyvagal theory and affective neuroscience will be discussed. The crucial links between emotions, behavior and learning will be explored. Particular focus will be on practical strategies that create optimal learning environments, foster increased emotional regulation and help overcome common emotional and behavioral challenges in lessons.

**Paul Heafner, Ph.D.** is a VA Licensed Clinical Psychologist with over 35 years of experience as a psychologist, mentor and educator. He is the founder and owner of Riding Far, LLC, established in 1998 to provide psychotherapy incorporating equines, professional development and sport psychology services tailored to the unique needs of riders. Dr. Heafner has served on the board of directors for the Loudoun Therapeutic Riding Foundation and as board president for the Horses and Humans Research Foundation, where he also served as a scientific advisor. Additionally, he played a pivotal role in establishing the research committee for the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association.

**Heather Henken, PATH Intl. CTRI® and Mentor** brings more than 20 years of professional equestrian experience, including a decade devoted to adaptive and therapeutic riding instruction at Sprout Therapeutic Riding and Education Center, a PATH Intl. PAC. As founder of Instructor Half Halt, she is committed to empowering, educating and inspiring riding instructors through comprehensive mentoring and educational resources. Heather holds level II certifications in both dressage and hunt seat from the American Riding Instructors Association.

## **Sunday, March 23, 2025**

8 – 8:30 a.m.

### **Light Breakfast**

#### **Session H**

8:30 – 10 a.m.

#### **H1, Behavior is Communication DE**

All behavior has a purpose, and it has been learned because it accomplishes that purpose. Therefore, it is communication about the individual displaying the behavior. Behavior is common to all disabilities, but some problem behaviors may be more prevalent in individuals with certain disabilities. Attendees will learn the functions of behavior, the ABC's of behavior, how to perform a functional behavioral assessment and how to implement a behavior intervention plan. Attendees will also be invited to give examples of problem behavior in EAS and the group will then discuss strategies to manage the behavior during a lesson.

**Sarah Newman, MD, PATH Intl. CTRI® and ESMHL** see bio in session C2.

#### **H2, Fostering Inclusion in Equine-Assisted Services CE**

Equines provide a haven for people experiencing marginalization because they are a unifying opportunity to bring people together in the barn. Yet, intentional education and training remains absent, difficult to obtain, or infrequent at best. Though there are limited scholarly publications, racism and non-inclusive practices in the equine industry are prevalent. The significance of horse-human relationships for underrepresented minorities must be centered in our shared efforts. This session is an explicit conversation about diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) within EAS and PATH Intl. specifically. While relatively new within the equine industry broadly, and our shared PATH Intl. community, this is an important conversation that includes us all. This session will be led by members of the PATH Intl. DEI committee that is comprised of PATH Intl. members; thus, this is a shared opportunity and challenge. The conversation will review the current action plan, highlight accomplishments, share current efforts and discuss challenges. Attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions, share thoughts and engage in conversation. Resources for continued learning, on-going research and opportunities to get involved will be shared.

**Diana Bezdedeau** see bio in session B3.

**Kathy Alm** see bio in session D2.

10 – 10:15 a.m.

### **Break**

#### **Session I**

10:15 – 11:45 a.m.

#### **I1, Fun in the Saddle and Out CE**

This session will be in a game show format - attendees will come up and make a series of choices and based on those selections must either build a lesson or share a similar lesson they have already taught. At the end, all the lesson ideas are made into a deck and shared with attendees.

**Gloria Gonzalez, PATH Intl. CTRI®** has been a CTRI for over five years and with her creative background as a graphic designer and marketing specialist, her passion is combining horses and creative thinking. From icon designs, to branding consultation and now to inspiring others in their lesson planning, Gloria strives to make sure everyone leaves with a little bit more knowledge.

#### **I2, Your Questions Answered- Connection, Inspiration and Education about Research in EAS CE**

This highly interactive discussion will share the perspectives and experiences of EAS center executives, program coordinators, funders and researchers focused on getting the audience's questions answered and encouraging them to get involved with researching the outcomes of their EAS services. Attendees will be provided with a specific process they can use to create the relationships necessary to become actively involved in research and information on how to identify potential research partners.

**Pebbles Turbeville, PATH Intl. Advanced Instructor and CTRI** see bio in session A2.

**We look forward to seeing you soon in North Carolina!**