May’s Charity of the Month is:

Pal-Ø-Mine Equestrian

- Est. 1995 -

It all started with a good book...
As I sat down with Lisa Gatti, CEO & Founder of Pal-O-Mine Equestrian, Inc., I had the privilege to learn about what her organization does to help those in need, as well as how it all began. Pal-O-Mine Equestrian is a comprehensive therapeutic equine program that uses horses to facilitate growth, learning, and healing for individuals with disabilities and for other vulnerable populations.

Lisa’s mother was a special education teacher and her father worked for a book publishing company. She was greatly influenced by both of their professions. Lisa grew up knowing she loved horses, but she really wanted to become a teacher and work with children in need. Her father would often send her books while she was away at college, and one day she received a book titled Palomino, by Danielle Steel. As she read through the pages, she became inspired by what was written about: a ranch that was formed to help people through equine therapy. From that point on, she was certain that was exactly what she wanted to do with her life. Through persistence, hard work and a passion to serve others, Lisa Gatti opened Pal-O-Mine in 1995 as a 501(C)(3) non-profit.

Pal-O-Mine grew from having two programs, eight horses and 80 students per week to 11 programs, 25 horses and 400 students per week - and they continue to grow today! This organization sits on eight acres, with a 20-stall barn, handicapped accessible bathrooms, a new 100’ x 120’ indoor arena with state-of-the-art footing and a rider hosting system, and three outdoor riding arenas. They help an unbelievable amount of people, and their work is truly heartwarming.

Individuals of all ages are welcome to take part in the programs they offer. They operate with five full-time employees, 35 independent contractors and 80 volunteers a week. Their riding instructors have experience with the following diagnoses: Autism Spectrum Disorders, Anxiety Disorders, Sensory Processing Disorder, Attention Deficit Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Neurological Disorders. Cerebral Palsy, Traumatic Brain Injury, Multiple Sclerosis, Down Syndrome, Spina Bifida, Genetic Disorders and Emotional Disturbances.

Every day, they have a different school drop off children at their location to benefit from their organization; they also offer group programs, individual lessons, corporate workshops and a program specifically designed for military members. If you are someone who faces any sort of disability or an emotional or vulnerable problem, please visit their website to learn more about how they can help you - and don’t hesitate to get help!

Volunteers are the backbone of Pal-O-Mine, and there are many different ways to get involved. All volunteers must be at least 16 years of age, attend a volunteer orientation (orientations are held monthly), complete a training program and be available to volunteer a minimum of four hours per week. Some ways you may volunteer are: working directly with children and adults in lessons, working with therapy horses and performing barn chores, fundraising, and helping with property enhancement and landscaping.

Pal-O-Mine has two major fundraising events that are coming up in June. One is their 16th annual Day at the Races, which will be on June 8th at the Belmont Race Track. This is held the day before the Belmont Stakes and is a wonderful outing, offering lunch, a premium open bar and door prizes. Their 10th annual Golf Outing, Par Fore the Horse, will be held on June 25th at Southward Ho Country Club in Bay Shore. This will include golfing, brunch, course refreshments, an open bar, a cocktail hour, dinner, gifts and prizes. Both of these events have sponsorship opportunities and are open to the public (tickets must be purchased).

Lastly, Pal-O-Mine features a Wish List on their website, which lists items they use every day that you can donate!

If you are interested in donating or becoming involved with this organization, please contact their Program Director, Carol Ann Guerriero, at 631.348.1389 or CGuerriero@Pal-O-Mine.org. Feel free to visit their website at www.Pal-O-Mine.org to learn more about this great non-profit.