When Winter Turns Green

A season of renewal unfolding in our pastures.

Winter in Nicasio doesn't always look the way people expect. Instead of bare trees and frozen ground, the Ranch has been glowing green. Fresh grass stretches across the hills, nourished by steady rain, and the landscape feels alive in that quiet, winter way that only West Marin can offer.

It's a season of contrast and comfort. Shaggy winter coats keep our horses warm as they graze contentedly between lessons. Riders arrive bundled up, cheeks pink from the cool air, and leave smiling after time spent in the saddle. Volunteers trade weather stories while brushing muddy boots and sharing laughter in the barn aisle.

Even on gray mornings, there's a steady hum of connection. Horses breathing softly, the rhythm of hooves in the arena, and the simple joy of being outside together remind us why this place matters.

Winter may be slower, but it's far from quiet. Lessons continue, friendships deepen, and the Ranch remains a welcoming space where growth happens in every season.

Right now, Nicasio feels especially generous, lush fields, misty hills, and a herd of shaggy horses happily doing what they do best: bringing people together.

And that feels like a pretty wonderful way to spend the winter.

A Glimpse of Winter at Halleck Creek!

IN THE ARENA

Creekside Spotlight

Take a moment to get to know our HCR community.

Volunteer: Meet Anna

Name: Anna G.
HCR Started Date: April 2024
Current Role: Horse Leader

Favorite Thing About Volunteering:

From day one, I felt that I joined a supportive and caring community. In the past month, I was trained as a horse leader, and the community has been just as supportive as I learn the new role.

A Recent Highlight:
I have side-walked with a student who is both eager to ride and also can have moments of needing frequent, gentle reassurance as she is on the trail. Just last Saturday, she showed up so assertive and ready that she freely sang for the first part of the ride and clearly communicated what she needed for support through the ride. Her song and smile that day stayed with me all week. I feel lucky to be a part of a community that grows together. Volunteering at Halleck Creek Ranch is often the best part of my week.

Herd Member: Meet Apache

Age: Approximately 25
Years at HCR: 3 yrs
Breed: American Paint Horse
Favorite Treats: Carrots and German Horse Muffins

Interesting Facts About Apache:
Apache gets the zoomies in his paddock fairly often and is a bit of a wild man in the morning and the evening.

He is also recently retired from the riding program but will continue to offer value to our students through ground work sessions.

HCR News

AN ew Community Benefit

Did you know you can create a free will online today?

Most of us put off this important task for another day. Thinking through your intentions can feel complex and emotionally loaded. Fortunately, we've partnered with FreeWill to unlock a valuable new benefit for our community.

FreeWill makes it easy to create a free will in minutes. It works well for individuals with simple estates, or it can serve as a draft to bring to an attorney as a starting point for more complex planning.

Best of all, the process allows you to easily include a legacy gift to Halleck Creek Ranch, ensuring your generosity continues to nourish and support riders for years to come.

Ready to finally check this important task off your list?

Make a FreeWill

Have you already left Halleck Creek Ranch a legacy gift? We would love to thank you. Please let us know.

We're Hiring: Join Our Team!

If you or someone you know is passionate about horses and helping people of all abilities thrive, we'd love to connect. We're expanding our team to support our riders, volunteers, and equine partners.

Open positions include:

Site Manager (Full-Time) We are seeking an experienced, mission-driven leader to oversee daily ranch operations and support the success of our instructors, volunteers, and equine partners. This role helps ensure safe, organized, high-quality programming while fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment for participants and their families. A strong equestrian background, comfort working with people with disabilities, and collaborative leadership style are essential.

Therapeutic Riding Instructor (Part-Time) We are looking for an instructor to teach safe, engaging therapeutic riding lessons and activities for riders of varying

abilities. The instructor will develop lesson plans, monitor rider progress, and work closely with volunteers and horses to support meaningful growth for each participant. Strong horsemanship, teaching ability, and a heart for inclusion are key.

Learn more and apply **here**.

Thank you for helping us share this opportunity and strengthen our community.

Community Spotlight: A Valentine's Celebration at RockRose Ranch

In early February, RockRose Ranch was filled with warmth and handmade love as volunteers, participants, families, and staff gathered for a Valentine's celebration. We crafted Valentines for our horses, shared a potluck meal, and ended the evening with a cozy showing of *The Princess Bride.*

Beyond the fun, the heart of the evening was connection. Gatherings like this create belonging, strengthen relationships, and offer a welcoming space for those who may otherwise feel isolated. Moments like these remind us that RockRose is more than a program space. It is a community where people come together to support one another and build meaningful bonds. Thank you to everyone who made the evening so special.

Save the Date: Horse Show & Open House - May 16, 2026

Our annual Horse Show and Open House is coming this spring, and it promises to be better than ever. Mark your calendar now for **May 16, 2026.**

This special event celebrates our riders of all abilities through a fun and supportive competition that highlights individual skills and personal progress. It's not about being the best rider. It's about recognizing how far *you* have grown over the past year.

The Horse Show is also a celebration of community. Everyone is invited. The day becomes truly memorable when friends, family, and supporters come together to cheer on our riders and share in the energy and joy of the Ranch.

Please save the date and start thinking about who you'd like to invite to discover the magic of Halleck Creek Ranch.

Upcoming Horse Education Workshop for Volunteers

March 1419:00 AM-12:00 PM and 1:00-4:00 PM

Join us for an interactive, behind-the-scenes workshop designed to deepen your understanding of how and why we work with our horses the way we do. This session provides volunteers with additional skills that support instructors and strengthen the quality of each lesson.

Participants will rotate through a series of demonstration stations, exploring topics such as how horses move, why we select certain horses for specific riders, and the purpose behind the exercises we use in lessons. Each station is designed to build observation skills, encourage thoughtful questions, and expand your understanding of horse behavior and movement.

Through hands-on learning with the herd, you'll gain insight into how horses think, communicate, and respond, helping you become a more confident and effective part of the lesson team. We will also demystify the therapeutic aspects of our lessons so you can better understand why and how we approach working with participants.

This workshop is one event in a five-part volunteer education series, offering ongoing opportunities to grow your knowledge and skills.

All volunteers are welcome to attend. Horse handlers and horse leaders are invited to fully participate, while sidewalkers are encouraged to audit to build awareness and observational skills.

Sign Up

COMMUNITY NEWS

Welcome to the Year of the Horse!

This year marks the Year of the Horse in the lunar zodiac, a symbol long associated with strength, freedom, energy, and forward movement. Horses represent perseverance and spirit. They remind us that progress is not always fast or flashy, but steady, grounded, and guided by trust.

At Halleck Creek Ranch, these qualities feel especially meaningful. Every day, we witness riders building confidence step by step, volunteers showing up with dedication and heart, and horses offering patience, presence, and partnership. The spirit of the horse lives in our community through resilience, connection, and the courage to keep moving forward.

As we embrace this Year of the Horse, we celebrate the qualities our herd inspires in all of us: determination, joy, teamwork, and growth. It's a reminder that meaningful progress happens when we move together with intention and care.

Here's to a year of strength, connection, and riding forward - together.

Looking to Celebrate? Here are some fun events to attend coming up:

In Marin County:

- **Downtown San Rafael Lunar New Year Art Walk & Scavenger Hunt (Feb 1-28, 2026)**
  A festive month-long "Horse Hunt & Word Scramble Challenge" celebrating the Year of the Horse in downtown San Rafael. Event Details (Downtown San Rafael Lunar New Year)
- **Lion Dance Performance - Fairfax Library (Feb 28, 11:30 AM)**
  Celebrate Lunar New Year with a performance by the Marin Chinese Cultural Association Lion Dance Team. Event Info (Marin Library Lion Dance)
- **Lion Dance - San Anselmo / Town Plaza (Feb 21, 11 AM)**
  Traditional lion dance performance celebrating the Year of the Horse. Event Info (San Anselmo Lion Dance)

In San Francisco:

- **San Francisco Chinese New Year Parade (Mar 7, 2026, 5:15 PM)**
  One of the largest Lunar New Year parades in North America with floats, performances, and lion dancers. Official Parade Info (San Francisco)
- **Flower Market Fair- Chinese New Year Festival (Feb 14-15, 2026)**
  A vibrant weekend street fair in San Francisco's Chinatown with flowers, cultural goods, and more. Event Details (Flower Market Fair)

In Oakland:

- **Oakland Chinatown Lunar New Year Parade (Feb 28, 2026)**
  A beloved community parade and celebration in Oakland's Chinatown. Event Info (Oakland Chinatown Parade)
- **Oakland Museum of California Lunar New Year Celebration (Feb 21)**
  Family-friendly cultural performances, storytelling, and activities celebrating the Lunar New Year. Event Info (OMCA Lunar New Year)

Our Mission is
Life Without Barriers

Support Our Herd