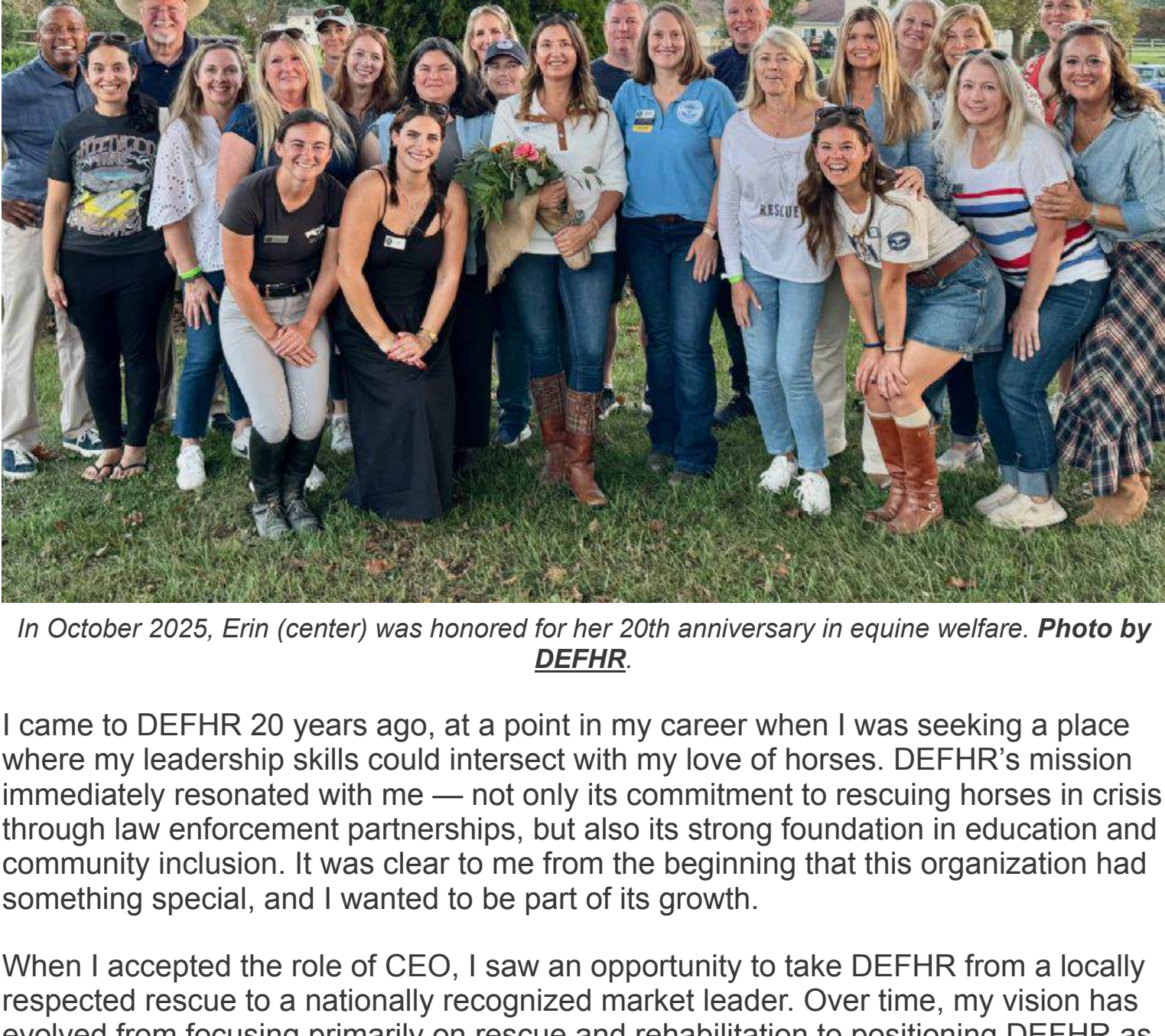


In the News: Horse Network

Leading With Compassion: Erin Ochoa's Vision and the Future of Equine Welfare

For more than three decades, Days End Farm Horse Rescue (DEFHR), in Woodbine, MD, has stood as a beacon of hope for neglected and abused horses, transforming lives through rescue, rehabilitation, and education. Under the leadership of Chief Executive Officer Erin Ochoa, DEFHR has evolved from a respected local rescue center into a nationally recognized authority on equine welfare. Ochoa's vision extends far beyond crisis intervention; she's shaping how the entire industry approaches education, prevention, and sustainable animal welfare. As DEFHR embarks on an exciting new chapter with its planned National Equine Welfare Center, in this [Horse Network](#) article, Ochoa reflects on her two decades with the organization, the lessons she's learned, and the legacy she hopes to build.



In October 2025, Erin (center) was honored for her 20th anniversary in equine welfare. **Photo by DEFHR.**

I came to DEFHR 20 years ago, at a point in my career when I was seeking a place where my leadership skills could intersect with my love of horses. DEFHR's mission immediately resonated with me — not only its commitment to rescuing horses in crisis through law enforcement partnerships, but also its strong foundation in education and community inclusion. It was clear to me from the beginning that this organization had something special, and I wanted to be part of its growth.

When I accepted the role of CEO, I saw an opportunity to take DEFHR from a locally respected rescue to a nationally recognized market leader. Over time, my vision has evolved from focusing primarily on rescue and rehabilitation to positioning DEFHR as a hub for equine welfare education, advocacy, and even tourism. Today, we're not just caring for horses — we're helping shape how the entire industry thinks about equine welfare.

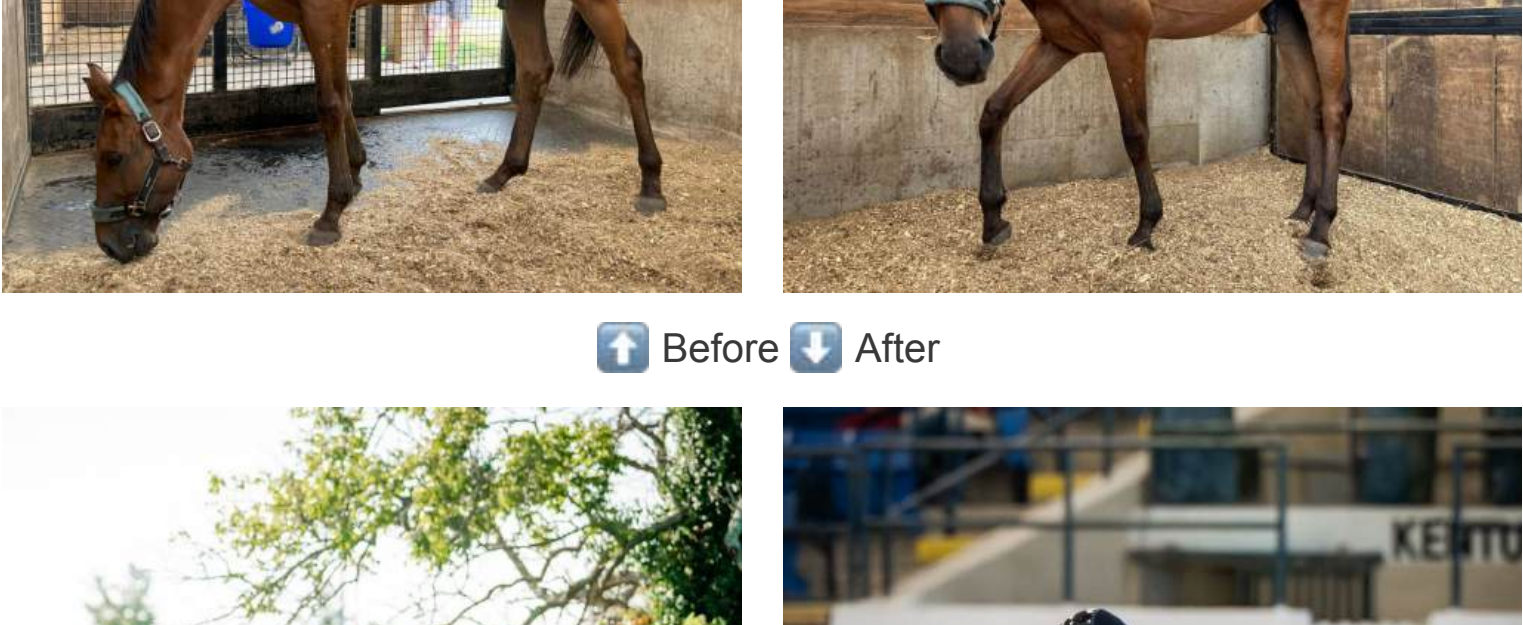
I'm proud of the horses we've saved, the staff I've mentored, the \$6m capital campaign that's now more than halfway funded toward facility improvements, and the foundation of our planned National Equine Welfare Center. But my proudest achievement is seeing DEFHR become a trusted national partner to law enforcement and equine professionals. We've earned a seat at the table in shaping the future of animal welfare, and that's something I'm incredibly excited to see unfold.

[Read the Full Article](#)

Improper Is Anything But

Brite Bodie (passport name Improper), who was featured in our September newsletter after arriving at DEFHR in July 2024 severely neglected, has just returned from competing at the 2025 [Retired Racehorse Project](#) at the Kentucky Horse Park with DEFHR Trainer Leigha Schrader, where they finished third in the championships.

The event showcases the versatile Thoroughbred horse's second career capabilities in all disciplines. We are so proud of the changes in this talented former racehorse and cannot wait to see what he takes on next. The smile on Leigha's face says it all!



Before After



[Visit Brite Bodie's Page](#)

[Donate To Help Fund More Transformations](#)

Internship Deadline Extended



Exciting news! We have extended the application deadline for our [Spring Equine Care and Rehabilitation Internship](#) until November 30. If you're passionate about horses and want hands-on experience in equine care, rehabilitation, and welfare, this is your chance to join the amazing team at DEFHR. Learn from experts, work directly with horses in need, and make a difference in their lives.

[Apply Now](#)

Mark Your Calendar: December 13



On December 13, the 15th annual Great Christmas Parade comes to Lisbon, MD! DEFHR will once again host Santa's Village, so stop by before and after the parade for holiday shopping, magical "reindeer" rides, and to capture memories with Santa. There will be numerous kids' activities, and the farm will be open for self-guided tours. We will also have warm refreshments, s'mores kits, and firepits. Please bring non-perishable food to donate in support of the parade's charity, Farmers Feed The Hungry.

For more information, check out our [dedicated Facebook page](#), visit the [parade website](#), email welcme@defhr.org, or call our office at 301-854-5037.

[Parade Information](#)

An Evening To Remember

DEFHR would like to thank everyone who helped make our annual Benefit Concert on October 4 such a roaring success. From the incredible performances by [The 19th Street Band](#) and [Patty Reese Music](#) to the delicious food trucks, the enthusiastic crowd, and the beautiful sunset over the farm, it was pure magic. Your support helps fuel our mission to protect and improve the lives of horses in need and sustain our programs that educate, inspire, and connect our community through equine welfare.



Showcasing Rescue Horses

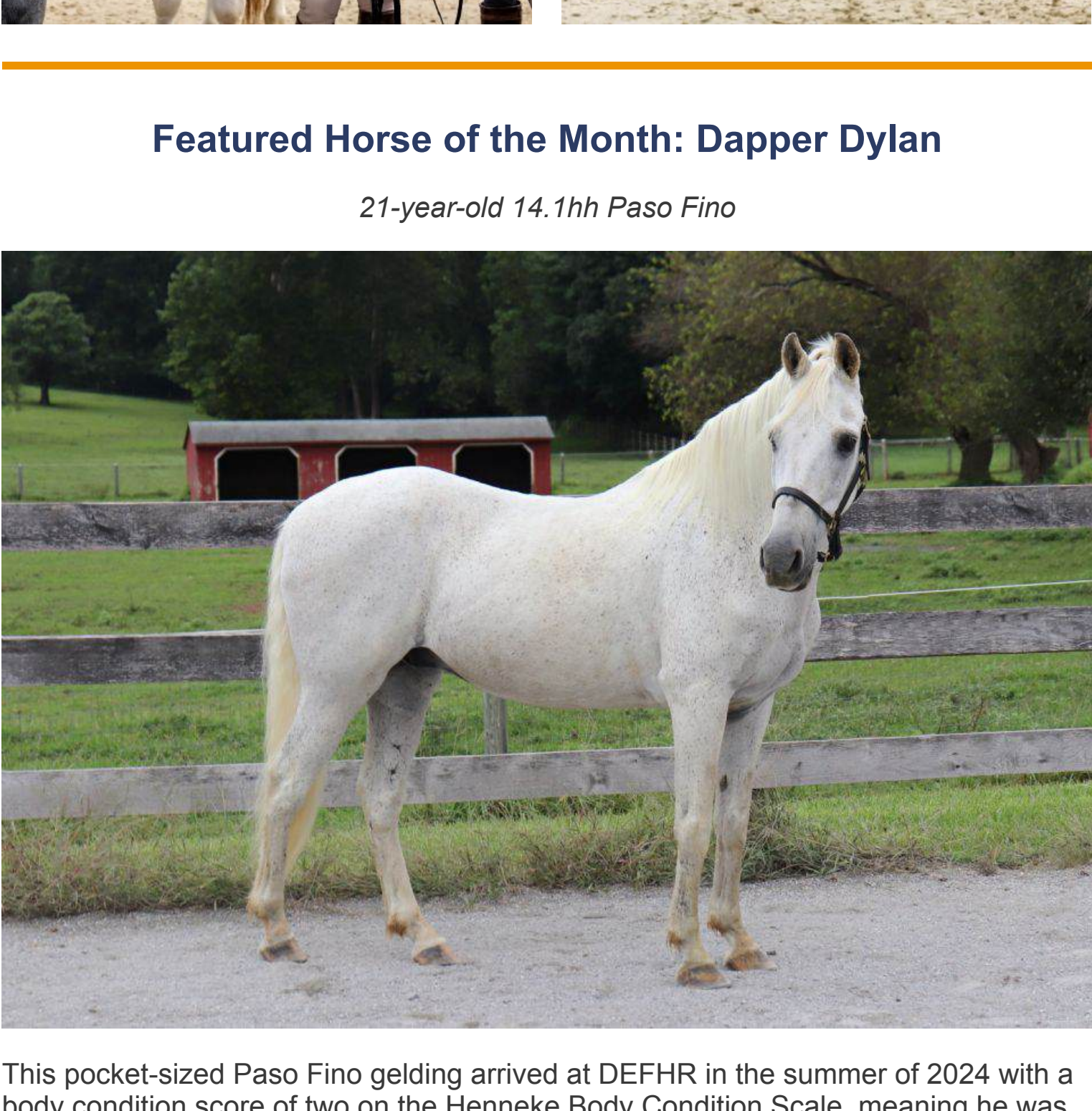
DEFHR trainer Leigha Schrader and equine ambassador Zillow performed liberty displays at the 2025 editions of the [Washington International Horse Show \(WIHS\)](#) and the [Capital Challenge Horse Show \(CCHS\)](#). As the official equine rescue charity of WIHS and the official charity partner of CCHS, DEFHR was proud to showcase rescue horses, including Mini Mick Jagger and Zillow. They did a fantastic job during their demos and interacting with the public to raise awareness around equine welfare.



CCHS WIHS

Featured Horse of the Month: Dapper Dylan

21-year-old 14.1hh Paso Fino



This pocket-sized Paso Fino gelding arrived at DEFHR in the summer of 2024 with a body condition score of two on the Henneke Body Condition Scale, meaning he was very underweight. After his rehabilitation — during which he rediscovered his wonderfully boisterous neigh — Dylan entered our training program, and it was obvious that he had been a trail horse for someone who liked to zoom around the woods. He has been evaluated under saddle, and he may be up for some short pony rides with little kids, but at his age, living in a field with good grass and friends would be ideal. He needs a loving home where his Cushing's can be managed, and he can be fed a daily meal. If you think your home might be the right fit for Dylan, please get in touch.

[More About Dapper Dylan](#)

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Share DEFHR's story! For media inquiries, editorial content, or interviews, please contact alice@jumpmediallc.com.

Photos courtesy of DEFHR and [Erin Gilmore Photography](#).