

Each issue *Hoof Beats* asks its readers to share personal stories of their favorite horses in "Winner's Circle." This month, **Matthew Sommer**, with the help of his mother, **Ronni**, writes about what his Standardbred experiences mean to him.

To make a submission to "Winner's Circle," send it via e-mail to [nkraft@ustrotting.com](mailto:nkraft@ustrotting.com), fax 614.222.6791, or write to Winner's Circle, c/o *Hoof Beats*, 750 Michigan Ave., Columbus, OH 43215.

**FAST FRIENDS:**  
Matthew Sommer  
and retired trotter  
Kaiserkrone share a  
moment at Sunshine  
Meadows in Florida.



a Standardbred racehorse!

Kaiserkrone, known as "Krone," is a 22-year-old trotting mare, and is one of the therapy horses of the Children's Foundation for Equine Assisted Therapy, Inc., located in Sunshine Meadows Equestrian Village in Delray Beach, Fla.

When I went to Children's FEAT for my first therapy lesson and met Krone, I knew that she would be my friend. She

---

I know that I can do something a lot of other 17-year-olds never did. I can drive a Standardbred racehorse on the track—and it is the **best feeling in the world** for me!

---

never tells me what to do. She never tells me that I talk too much or that I don't make sense, and she never whispers things about me behind my back. She just looks at me with her big brown eyes and puts her nose in my hands and I know that I have a true friend.

My mom is so excited when I put my jeans and boots on without complaining before I go to ride Krone. And for some reason everyone was amazed that I knew that I had to take her saddle off before giving her a bath (like that wouldn't be logical?).

School seems to think that I am not able to put things in the right order, but when I am at the stable everything seems to be clearer to me.

When I am sitting on Krone, I like it the most when she trots. But because

## Florida Standardbred opens a whole new world to autistic boy

**M**y name is Matthew and I am a 17-year-old boy diagnosed with Autism and Fragile X Syndrome. The reason my mom has to write this letter for me is that I can't write a whole sentence. I

can't read a book and I am not able to stay at home by myself. I have no friends who are my age and I am not attending parties or sleepovers.

But I can do something that kids without disabilities can't do. I can drive

of my low muscle tone, I am not able to hold myself up for too long, so my therapist had a great idea. Being an ex-racehorse, Krone knows how to pull a cart, and with my therapist on my side and split reins (one set for me and one for her), we can go on the beautiful racetrack at Sunshine Meadows, and I can let her go fast for as long as I want.

When I am sitting behind her and the wind blows around my face, I know that I can do something a lot of other 17-year-olds never did. I can drive a Standardbred racehorse on the track—and it is the best feeling in the world for me!

It makes me really sad when I hear that a lot of ex-Standardbred



**OUT FOR A JOG:** Sommer said he loves driving Kaiserkrone alongside his therapist.

racehorses have no future after their racing career. They are the perfect therapy horses. They have a convenient size, a great personality and have a wonderful, large gait which helps children like me to deal with our physical issues.

I don't really know where my future path will lead me and I know that my parents are scared, and sometimes I am scared, too, but I know, with Krone on my side, I have something everyone needs: hope.

---

To comment on this article, e-mail us at [readerforum@ustrotting.com](mailto:readerforum@ustrotting.com).

***“Maurice, many thanks to onGait. I have sold at least 8 horses in the past year and 3 in the past month and all of those within a week! The reaction time of your staff to my listings and questions I’ve had is second to none. The prospective buyers have been fair, reasonable and very professional. I wish you continued success.”***

**— Donald Hawk  
North Carolina**

***“Glad to help.”***

**— Maurice Chodash  
onGait.com**

## Visit onGait.com

or if you're without a computer, call Maurice at

# 1-866-240-RACE (7223)

### **ADOPT A HORSE!**

Horses for adoption from companions to competitors, horses of all ages and abilities for trail riding, pleasure driving and therapeutic riding programs to loving homes. Visit our Web site to see our horses that are available for adoption and to learn more about our organization.

**STANARDBRED RETIREMENT FOUNDATION**

(609) 324-1500 • Fax (609) 324-1526

[www.adoptahorse.org](http://www.adoptahorse.org)

108F Old York Rd., Hamilton, NJ 08620

