



Oklahoma State University's equine program is benefiting from the Charles and Linda Cline Equine Teaching Center.

Making it happen: Linda Cline continues impacting OSU equine program

Some nice horses, a piece of land and a rusted stall barn.

These components were all the Oklahoma State equine program had at its disposal until 2016, when donor Linda Cline unveiled the [Charles and Linda Cline Equine Teaching Center](#).

Cline said she thought about doing something to update the aging facility. After a few conversations with her liaison at the [OSU Foundation](#), the idea continued sticking with her. Cline approached a few professors, including OSU professor Steven Cooper, proposing the idea.

She let the program do what they needed on the project. She had heard the students would sleep outdoors on hay during foaling season (when mares give birth), giving her one request for the facility.

By Jacob Sturm

“The only thing that I insisted upon was that they would have a room next to the foaling barns that the students would have a comfortable place to watch over those mares,” Cline said.

The request isn’t unusual. Foaling centers are common among commercial breeding farms, ideally getting the horse inside, and caretakers out of the weather when they are monitoring the mares.

Once the project started, Cline did not want her name on the teaching center’s sign. Instead, she wanted it to be named after her husband, Charles, who died in 2012.

“We had to basically go behind her back to put her name on the facility,” Cooper said. “She was adamant that her name would not be anywhere on the new facility because she doesn’t like the limelight. She doesn’t like the attention. She doesn’t like the notoriety.”

Cline’s contribution doesn’t stop at the building. She is responsible for an internship opportunity at the OSU horse barn, and is providing horse judging team and chair endowments.



The equine center is primarily used for teaching purposes.

“In the horse program, she’s the only person that’s ever done something of that magnitude,” Cooper said.

“It’s all about students,” Cline said. “It’s all about education (of) students anyway.”

Blind Faith

In Claremore, Charles Cline attended Oklahoma Military Academy when Linda lived in town. The two met on a blind date, eventually getting married in 1957.

The Cline family owned Cherokee Lines, a trucking company reaching the 48 contiguous states. As they began closing the company, the Clines bought [Char-Lin Ranch](#) between Ripley and Cushing.

Then, the Clines took the next leap. They traveled to Dewey, Oklahoma, participating in a property dispersal. Of the items involved, the horses caught the Clines’ attention.

“He bought 17 horses that day,” Cline said. “And he also bought six saddles. We didn’t even have a saddle. At that time, we’re talking about 35 years ago, jeans were not that popular. I didn’t even have a good pair of jeans to get up and ride the horse.”

By Jacob Sturm

The only problem? Neither of the Clines had much knowledge about the challenges they would face in the horse business.

OSU's equine program got the opportunity to help, teaching the Clines through the information they could provide. Multiple professors visited Char-Lin Ranch, helping steer the Clines toward success.

Primarily, that success occurred in horse shows.

Since beginning to show horses, the Clines have won enough awards that they lost count. Both Cooper and Cline estimate the total is over 200, with a majority happening in the halter classes.



Char-Lin Ranch is home to myriad buckskin horses.

Not all horses are meant for people to ride. Halter horses fit that distinction. At Char-Lin Ranch, halter horses are raised for shows and not for work.

On the ranch, the Clines foaled C.L. Buckley in 1989. He became the leading halter horse sire (father) in the Buckskin Association, while serving as the foundation to the Clines' horse program. At first, the Clines didn't know what they had.

"He was a Buckskin," Cline said. "When he was born, we didn't even know what we had. Quite honestly, he was palomino all over everywhere, legs (and) everything except for the very tips of his ears."

That added a new dynamic to the Clines' competition at horse shows. They competed, pitting Charles' horses against Linda's within each contest.

Both found success. When one didn't win, the other usually did.

"Nobody ever got mad or anything, but it was serious competition," Cline said. "We were serious about it. So, we had a lot of fun that way, too."

When C.L. Buckley died in 2019, the Clines' ranch had been lifted to a new height. He had produced more Buckskin World and Reserve Championships than any horse, essentially establishing a reputation for the Clines' success.

"He really got things going for us in the show part because he was a producer," Cline said. "His disposition was unbelievable. He was a very loving horse."



The American Buckskin Registry Association inducted C.L. Buckley into its hall of fame in the past year.

By Jacob Sturm

Judgment days

As the relationship between the Clines and the OSU equine program further developed, the Clines started letting the [OSU Equine Judging Team](#) practice at the ranch.

The horse judging program is a two-semester commitment, meaning the team is completely different each season. The team judges a variety of horse classes, making practice critical. With the Clines a mere 25 minutes away from campus, Char-Lin Ranch is an obvious location to utilize.

“Some of the classes that we have to judge in the contest are halter classes,” Cooper said. “And that’s their specialty out there. They raised hundreds of world champion halter horses in both the AQHA ([American Quarter Horse Association](#)) as well as in the Buckskin and the Palomino Association.”

In horse judging, Oklahoma State’s national championship is held at the AQHA World Championship Show. It’s designated as the World Championship because people could come from other countries to compete in the event.



Horse Judging winners receive a championship belt buckle.

Usually, Linda and her daughter, Amy, are at the shows where the judging team competes. Linda shows horses in the events, making it challenging to see the judging team in action.

That challenge doesn’t stop the Clines from supporting the team. Linda supports the program by attending the announcements for placings, where OSU continues being successful.

Since the OSU Equine Judging Team formed in 1979, the program holds claims to 22 championships in its competitions. In 2016, the program achieved its first undefeated season.

“Linda always takes special interest in all of those teams,” Cooper said. “We took that team and worked out at Linda’s a couple (of) times getting ready for our big competitions.”

The Clines also pitch in before the trips.

“They’re obviously in Stillwater a lot and come by and look at the horses,” Cooper said. “If we are getting ready to go on a trip, they’ll come by and bring goody bags for the kids for the trip. Like snacks and stuff. And Amy makes cookies all the time. That’s her big thing.”

By Jacob Sturm

Another purpose



Overlook Lodge near Cushing. Picture by Jacob Sturm.

Horses at Char-Lin Ranch have multiple uses. The ranch sits next to Overlook Lodge, a veteran's center the Clines built to help veterans dealing with post traumatic stress.

When at the facility, veterans participate in [equine therapy](#) sessions. The equine therapy on Char-Lin Ranch involves caring for the horses through brushing and communication with them.

Recently, the Clines hired Richard Hansen to be the Veteran Services Coordinator. He said the group of veterans using the facility meet once a week, with the first hour dedicated to working with the horses.

"It's really unbelievable how intuitive these horses are because they can really sense how the veteran is doing," Hansen said. "And if they think the veteran is doing ok, sometimes they get a little cantankerous. It's funny to watch them."

The veteran center sessions host 8-10 veterans a week. There are four bedrooms, providing veterans with a place to stay for events meant to last several days.

"If it wasn't for them (the Clines), it wouldn't happen," Hansen said.

The Clines' generosity toward their community continues to be noticeable. The [Oklahoma Quarter Horse Hall of Fame](#) inducted their ranch in 2019. Linda Cline also received a nomination, and later won the [2017 Women for OSU Philanthropist of the Year award](#).

"The Women for OSU award means a lot to me," Amy Cline said. "I do belong to Women for OSU. And so, it meant a lot to me that an organization that I think highly of nominated my mom."

Now, all parties are benefiting from Linda Cline's involvement at OSU.

"She does stay involved in OSU," Amy Cline said. "All of the things she's involved with at OSU are to try to help students or benefit students. That makes me proud that she tries to help people."