

# Blinging Out With Brow Bands For Charities

By **Kelsey Baker**

Photo Courtesy Of **Leslie Raulin**

**S**ome people are practically born in the saddle. For Leslie Raulin, the path was a little longer and, starting in 2020 at least, has been dotted with rhinestones.

She'd taken a few riding lessons when she was a child, but she got sidetracked from horses with a 24-year dental career in the U.S. Army. After enlisting in 1978, Raulin found her way into specializing as a periodontist and is now retired.

"When I was 48, I thought about how I've always wanted a horse, and I'm getting old. If I don't do it now, it's never going to happen," she said. "When I bought my first horse, I barely knew the front end from the back end."

But competing her own horse Birch TF, an 11-year-old Hanoverian (Belissimo M—Reiki TF), and helping with local dressage efforts—she's a show secretary, coordinator of local shows and hosts a few competitions annually at her farm—aren't enough to keep Raulin, 70, busy.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, Raulin, Jefferson, Maryland, began making browbands after becoming frustrated she couldn't find the style she wanted.

"I was always looking for a royal blue browband with lots of bling and big stones, but I couldn't find one," she said. "And so I got the idea, 'Well, why don't I make one?'"

She made the perfect browband for herself then couldn't stop, so she began making browbands for friends too.

"She makes stock ties and gives them as gifts to some of our [Potomac Valley Dressage Association] members too," Raulin's longtime friend Donna Maranto said.

Then Raulin realized she could use her talents beyond friends and barnmates. Now her efforts are formally known as "Brow Bands For Charities." Shoppers can purchase pre-made browbands or request custom orders—online or in person when Raulin sets up a table at local shows. But she doesn't profit from her efforts; her local charities do instead. Shoppers pay between \$15-\$35 for the cost of materials in addition to a \$30 minimum donation to one of four charities.

One of those is the Catoctin Chapter of the Potomac Valley Dressage Association, of which Raulin is a member.

In 2020 Leslie Raulin started sewing browbands and selling them to benefit local charities.

She also supports the Frederick County 4-H Therapeutic

Riding Program and the Frederick Health Hurwitz Breast Cancer Fund. Her sister died of breast cancer in 2011, after a five-year battle, and their mother fought breast cancer too. Her fourth charity of choice, Maryland Equine Transition Service, is a safety net for horses that need new homes and also helps owners rehome horses in need.

Most of Raulin's browbands are made with Beta BioThane, an alternative to leather. Using a leather sewing machine, she sews on leather strips, which create a channel for the bling, and she attaches snaps to the ends of the Beta BioThane to create the browband. The snaps allow for easy swapping—there's no need to take apart a bridle to change browbands.

She strings the beaded bling herself and then handsews it onto the browband.

For her leather browbands, Raulin purchases browbands with empty channels in the middle, then handsews beads onto the channel.

"Some of us ladies like to be matchy-matchy and have browbands that match our saddle pads or our outfits," Maranto said. "She made it very affordable for people to have multiple browbands."

Her Halloween-themed browbands are popular with buyers, as are Christmas-themed ones.

"She's very artistic and creative, and she's very community-oriented," said Maranto.

To purchase a browband from Brow Bands For Charities, visit: [frederickdressage.org/brow-bands-for-charities.html](https://frederickdressage.org/brow-bands-for-charities.html) 📍

