

Mark Your Calendar

December 19, 2017 Christmas in the Barn
January 11, 2018 Volunteer Banquet
April 15, 2018 Scholarship renewals due

Learning through Experience

Marjorie Farias participated in Girls Rule to help with her patience, social skills, and communication. "She struggled with communication. Instead of trying, she would just get mad," said her mother Dorothy Williams. "She has a wonderful school therapist who told us about Girls Rule."

Girls Rule is a program at Exceptional Equestrians that utilizes horses to teach early-adolescent girls the practical importance of communication skills, body language, teamwork, and problem solving.

Marjie is a friendly 9-year-old with a dominant personality. "She has always been outgoing," said Dorothy. Group social behavior is a challenge for the 3rd grader. Her approach can be overly aggressive.

In Girls Rule, activities promote patience and teamwork. The horses provide a big motivation to learn. The class is led by occupational therapist Carol Klak. And the first thing the girls learn is that in order to be around the horses, they must practice safety, be calm, and learn boundaries.

"Marjorie was very eager to participate," said Dorothy, "She was excited to talk about what she did in class." The blindfold activity had a big impact on her. "She didn't like it at first," Dorothy explained. The activity entails being blindfolded and having to lead a horse through an obstacle course using only verbal instructions from a partner.

"She didn't like being blindfolded. But

she learned that she was okay," said Dorothy. "And she learned to trust."

The blindfold activity demonstrates for both partners the importance of good listening and the real challenge of clearly articulating one's thoughts.

"Marjie's listening has improved," noted Dorothy. "She listens more to directions."

Dorothy lists a multitude of improvements since Marjorie's Girls Rule experience. Improved transitions, better teamwork. "She's able to be a leader and not be a bully."

Marjorie agrees. "I liked working with my classmates as a team," she said.

"The biggest thing we noticed," said Dorothy, "is her communication. She's

"Girls Rule has taught her to approach things more calmly," explained Dorothy. "The energy of a horse is calm yet strong. Energy plays a big role in Marjie's life. She is on the autism spectrum, and she picks up whatever energy is in her environment. The therapy horses help her learn to focus on positive energy."

Girls Rule received a \$6,549 grant from the Women's Fund of Greater Green Bay of the Greater Green Bay Community Foundation. Grant funding supports scholarships for girls in Brown, Oconto, and Kewaunee counties to participate.

"It's a great program. I would recommend it for anyone," said Dorothy.

"When I get bigger, I'm gonna come here and help out," Marjorie remarked.



Pictured left: Marjorie leads horse Tia as her Girls Rule class enjoys a rainbow sky. Pictured above: Marjorie Farias, age 9.

gained the ability to stop and try again instead of getting mad."

How does Interaction with Horses Promote Learning?

Attention is key to so many things in life and is critical to learning new skills and behaviors. Relationships are more satisfying if we pay attention to one another. For example paying attention to non-verbal cues such as body language and facial expression makes communication more effective.

Attention can be greatly influenced by motivation. We all know that it is much easier and more rewarding to learn a skill important to us. And what do

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the horses at Exceptional Equestrians offer? Motivation!

Motivation energizes, directs, and sustains behaviors. The environment can enhance motivation and promote long-term success. In our Taking the Lead Program, the horses provide motivation to listen and engage in instructor-facilitated activities. Interaction with the horses is the environmental enhancement that helps participants pay attention and retain the skills learned. Because the horse is such a strong motivator, the activities

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For example, participants learn how to approach and engage the horse as a "new friend." They learn that aggressive, loud, or dominant behavior causes the horse to move away from them and that attending to non-verbal cues from the horse and being sensitive to these results in the horse drawing near. The memory of this horse-human interaction is retained and can be evoked when the person is engaging in interpersonal communications with peers and family.

Lisa Kafka, OTR, HPCS

Donations from Corporate and Community Foundations Support Hippotherapy

Exceptional Equestrians would like to thank the charitable businesses and foundations that support the work we do.

Expanding Access for Adults

Exceptional Equestrians received a \$10,000 grant from the Funds for Greater Green Bay, a collection of funds of the Greater Green Bay Community Foundation and a \$10,000 grant from the Hesprich Family Fund, a fund of the Greater Green Bay Community Foundation to expand hippotherapy services to adults. Grant dollars are being used to fund a therapy horse, outreach, and other startup costs for adult hippotherapy, a service that is otherwise unavailable in Northeastern Wisconsin.



Schreiber Foods

Exceptional Equestrians received a Schreiber Community Fund grant in support of hippotherapy for children. Grant dollars fund programming expenses and need-based scholarships for families who would otherwise not be able to afford services.

Procter & Gamble

Exceptional Equestrians received a \$5,000 grant from the P&G Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation to fund hippotherapy for children and adults.

Pictured left, adult hippotherapy client Christopher Nyson with therapist Lisa Kafka, OTR, HPCS, horse Dakota, and Michelle Nyson. Pictured lower left, pediatric hippotherapy client Abby Behnke rides Dakota with Lisa backriding and Amanda Neilson side walking.

Arketype, Inc. Donates Powerful Promo Video

To help grow community awareness of Exceptional Equestrians, Arketype, Inc. donated the production of a powerful promotional video.

"Arketype likes to reach out to people and organizations in our community that we can help support or share our services for improvement," said Brittany Franciosi, Arketype, Inc. Creative Production Manager. "The facilities, the expertise, and the people at Exceptional Equestrians are such great resources to have in our community. We were thrilled to help share their story to help spread the word so more people can get involved and support what they are doing."

Watch the video at exceptionalequestrians.org and on social media. Like it, share it, tweet it, and you can help us reach new audiences.



Boots & Bling Raises \$67,000 Thanks to Donors and Volunteers

Boots & Bling, Exceptional Equestrians' major annual fundraiser, raised \$67,000 to fund services. Over 230 people attended the September 23rd event which featured a performance by the Exceptional Equestrians Drill Team, Chicken S#!t Bingo, and the Charlie Bucket Band.

Schneider Foundation and US Venture Schmidt Family Foundation were major sponsors for the event.



Exceptional Equestrians Drill Team performs for Boots & Bling guests. From left, Megan Mielke rides Dakota with Brian Darkow leading, Myles Welnatz rides Cole with Beckah Wilbert leading, Kristen Albers rides Tia with Ellen Gourley leading, Justin Green rides Josh with Susan Endries leading, Lisa Kafka rides Buzz, and Sarah Ankerson rides Cooper.



Pictured above, left, featured speaker Aliyah Zietler gives her inspiring remarks. Above, right, guests share a laugh at Chicken S#!t Bingo. For more photos, visit our photo gallery at <http://www.exceptionalequestrians.org/events/photos>.

"Our committee volunteers did an extraordinary job, and they each deserve many thanks for their hard work that made Boots & Bling a great success," said Nancy Williquette, Exceptional Equestrians Director of Marketing and Development.

Kudos to our 2017 Boots & Bling committee members:

- Sarah Ankerson
- Nicole Curran
- Jenna Dais
- Sarah Dworak
- Susan Endries
- Lori Eparvier
- Nancy Jacobe
- Lisa Kafka
- Carol Klak
- Amy Murphy
- Lisa Stark Jones
- Amy Stirk
- Nancy Williquette
- Teriann Van Sistine



Pictured above, smiling riders Lillian Schneiderwent and Charlie Frielund toss a ball to one another with therapist Diane McInnis, PT. Pictured upper left, Micaela Diedrick rides Dakota; and right, Elysia VanderPerren rides Stella as Andi Krawczyk leads.

Volunteer of the Year Sees Impact of Service

Volunteer Nicole Curran is passionate about helping Exceptional Equestrians. She spends a good part of her week in the riding arena, office, and stables. Of her many volunteer roles, her favorite is sidewalking for hippotherapy riding sessions because it means getting to know clients.

"It's amazing to see their progress after a short period of time," she remarked. "It's very satisfying to see the impact of our work."



Nicole Curran leads horse Dakota for hippotherapy.

"All the parents are so thankful and show their appreciation," she said.

Nicole's personal experiences contribute to her affinity for Exceptional Equestrians. "We have a granddaughter who has Down syndrome," she said. "And I've always been a horse nut. My father bred Standardbred horses when I was growing up," she added. "When I learned about Exceptional Equestrians, I knew that's where I wanted to volunteer."

Retired executive director for Unity Hospice, Nicole lends her healthcare nonprofit leadership expertise, serving on a number of committees for Exceptional Equestrians. She uses her background in finance to provide accounting support.

"To see the work that's being done here and all the people that make it happen," she said, "it's everything that's right with community."

When asked to describe an experience that stands out, Nicole recalls one of her first times volunteering. "I'll never forget it," she said. "Aliyah rode her horse to the middle of the arena, Lisa handed her a microphone, and she sang the Pochahantas song "Colors of the Wind" in a voice clear and beautiful in front of everyone in the arena."

*If you walk the footsteps of a stranger
You'll learn things you never knew, you never knew*

Nicole was named Exceptional Equestrians 2017 Volunteer of the Year. She was also nominated for a WPS Volunteer Award for her service to Exceptional Equestrians. She has logged 737 hours in her first two years as a volunteer.



EXCEPTIONAL EQUESTRIANS

Exceptional Equestrians is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization governed by a board of directors.

Our mission is to better the lives of people of all abilities through the healing power of horses.



Youth Volunteer of the Year Andi Krawczyk, pictured with Lori Eparvier, receives recognition for her outstanding service.



Our 19th Annual Horse Show was a time for riders to shine in front of family and friends. Pictured above, Bree Nowak rides Josh. Pictured far left, Abby Dorn balances on Cooper; and left, Kira Lucht rides Tia with special guest side walker Sean Hamill from the Green Bay Police Dept. Mounted Police Unit.



Wish List

Item	Cost
Riding helmets—3 needed	\$50
Round pen	\$1,320
Fencing improvements	\$6,000
Heavy duty pickup truck	\$40,000

Visit exceptionalequestrians.org to donate today and to learn more.