

## Mark Your Calendar

Dec. 13, 2016 Christmas in the Barn

June 3, 2017 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Horse Show

Sept. 23, 2017 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual **BOOTS & BLING**

## Hippotherapy Helps Eden Make Big Gains

When her endocrinologist recommended hippotherapy for two-year-old Eden Duquesnoy, it was to help develop muscle tone in her core. Eden has low muscle tone and scoliosis. The quiet, watchful girl began riding at Exceptional Equestrians in May.

"We were told hippotherapy would help develop her muscle tone," said Eden's mother, Rebecca. After five months of riding, her core is indeed stronger, but Rebecca emphasizes that the impact goes even beyond stronger core muscles.

"Her speech is improving because of it," Rebecca noted. "She says more words, she's saying colors. Her pronunciation is better, and she understands more concepts. The improvements from riding are physical and cognitive. Her overall gross motor is stronger, and improvements in fine motor

followed."

It's fair to say Rebecca is a fan of hippotherapy, but what does Eden think about it?

"Eden is over-the-moon excited to go horseback riding," said Rebecca. "She knows when it's time to go riding. She'll start talking about the horse. She gets very excited. I love it.

"The passion we see from everyone at Exceptional Equestrians is awesome. We appreciate what Lisa, the volunteers, and everyone does," she added.

Eden's most recent riding session stands out as a highlight for Rebecca. "While she was riding, she reached to get a ring from Lisa and became off balance. She was able to correct herself! She had the muscle memory to get herself back into place," she explained.

## The Science of Why it Works

Why is it so important to have a strong core, and why does equine therapy help?

Being able to perform functional movements and activities is dependent upon our core/postural system.

The core is a complex series of muscles including the diaphragm. Its primary function is for anatomical alignment and support. The core is most often a stabilizer, controlling the position and movement of the trunk.

Consider the action of throwing a ball. Your arm completes the action of throwing the ball, but without stabilization from your core, your body would move forward with the momentum. The core maintains alignment of the trunk and sustains a stable force against resistance.

In patients with core weakness, the body has difficulty sustaining alignment against resistance, which can simply be the force of gravity. This can impact the ability to maintain a sitting position, or move effectively. Sometimes individuals with a weak core will recruit the diaphragm as a postural support assist. (Think about how we tend to hold our breath when we attempt to lift a heavy load.) The primary function of the diaphragm is to help with respiration and secondarily, speech. If the diaphragm is busy being a postural muscle, it is unable to perform its true purpose.

Hippotherapy, or equine assisted therapy, uses the movement of the  
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*Pictured is Eden Duquesnoy riding Maverick and receiving her Horse Show trophy from Glen Vannieuwenhoven.*

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horse to stimulate activation of the muscles in the core. As the horse moves forward, the patient must activate muscles or will fall backward. Hippotherapy is the only form of treatment that can provide continuous stimulation of the core muscles over an extended period of time. Repeated activation over time = strengthening. As core muscles are activated and strengthened, the clinician introduces functional activities that reinforce the use of the

core as a stabilizer.

This is one reason that in hippotherapy one hears a significant increase in vocalization and speech sounds. Additionally, with improved core stability the patient can perform

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more functional tasks with greater success such as sitting, walking, and reaching.

To learn more, ask your therapist, hippotherapy clinician, or one of the excellent therapists at Country Kids.

Lisa Kafka, OTR, HPCS



## EXCEPTIONAL EQUESTRIANS

Exceptional Equestrians is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Our mission is to provide therapeutic equine assisted activities that promote physical health and development, communication, community integration, self esteem, and achievement of functional skills.

### \$30,803 Raised for Mounting Lift and Adult Hippotherapy

Thanks to generous donors, we raised over \$30,000 to expand our services for adults by installing an overhead lift for mounting and dismounting riders and adding adult hippotherapy services, which were previously unavailable in Northeast Wisconsin.

In support of this initiative, we received a \$9,373 Quality of Life grant from the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation, a \$5,430 donation from Thomas & Carole Guyette, and \$5,000 grants from the Gordon Flesch Charitable Foundation, Saints Edward & Isidore Church, and the Weyers Family Foundation.

We would like to thank these charitable donors for providing funding which will expand access for adults with disabilities to equine assisted therapies that improve their quality of life.



**Boots & Bling** The EE Drill Team captured hearts at our 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Boots & Bling Sept. 17 sponsored by Schneider National and Cornerstone Foundation of Northeastern Wis.

### 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Horse Show

EE riders sat tall atop their horses as



they showed off their trophies and their riding skills in front of family and friends Aug. 27.



**Volunteer of the Year**  
Darrell Kuntz was named our 2016 Volunteer of the Year for his outstanding service and commitment to EE and the families we serve.

### You Can Help

Donate towards our wish list.

- Become a Horse Sponsor \$3,500
- Therapy bench \$300
- Horse health supplies \$140
- Grooming brushes (8 needed) \$9

### Welcome Hippotherapy Clinician Samantha Berger

Samantha Berger has joined our staff as a certified occupational therapy assistant in our hippotherapy program. Sam provides pediatric and adult hippotherapy.

She received her occupational therapy assistant (COTA) associate's degree at Fox Valley Technical College and is experienced in horsemanship.

*"I help people who face daily challenges by providing therapies that help them function more easily and by providing an experience that they look forward to week after week. The smiles and joy I see on their faces are unmatched."*

—Samantha Berger, COTA

