

School Days at the Barn

The excitement is palpable when students from Pulaski and Freedom schools get to ride horses with their classmates. One Friday each month, they visit Exceptional Equestrians for class in the barn.

"They are always excited to come," said Freedom special education teacher Dana Reader. "It's a highlight."

"When it's riding week, the kids start asking about it on Monday," said Pulaski adapted physical education teacher Kare Goodness. "It's become an incentive for good behavior in the classroom."

Riding at Exceptional Equestrians has been a great experience for his class, said Kare. "One of our goals for this group has been to break down barriers to trying new things. We heard a lot of 'I can't.'" Kare brings students ages seven to 11. "Before our first visit to Exceptional Equestrians in May, half of the kids were excited, and half had apprehension. Now they all can't wait for each visit. And when we introduce other

new things, there is less anxiety. They are more open.

And that carries over at home. Their parents are more likely to try things as a whole family. Riding has made a big impact on these kids."

The Freedom students, who are in 6th to 12th grade, have had a similar experience



since they started riding in September. "This was a new experience, and we wanted to see how they responded," said Dana. "They all did well, and one 8th grade student surprised everybody. His mother had said there's no way Cole would sit on a horse. "At school we can't get him to sit for five



minutes. Now he's riding for 20 minutes," she smiles.

"The staff knows how to handle kids of all different abilities and ages," said Kare. "They have a nice variety of activities that they can adjust for different skill levels. They are very accommodating. And the volunteers are very loyal. It's good for these kids to see the same team of volunteers each time we're here. They develop a good connection."

"Their families are thrilled that we are doing this," said Dana. "We would recommend it. The people at Exceptional Equestrians are wonderful. We didn't know anything about riding or how it would work, and they walked us through it.

"It's hard to find something each student can all be successful at," she added. "They can all do it." And they are proud to tell their peers back at school.

Pictured above, left: Freedom student Andrea Carpenter meets Tia. Pictured above: Pulaski student Elysia VanDerPerren rides Maverick.

A Sweet Mare



American Quarter Horse Stella was purchased thanks to a \$5,000 grant from the Weyers Family Foundation, and is becoming a great therapy horse. "She has a sweet disposition," said trainer Sarah Ankersen.

Pictured on Stella is Evelyn Scheider.

From Lisa Kafka, Executive Director

We have just completed our third year in our renovated facility. In 2012 our capital campaign raised nearly \$2 million to build our beautiful facility with a heated indoor arena to be able to provide equine therapies year round. We have exceeded our goal to double the number of families we serve, from 75 then to 175 today. And our team of volunteers has grown from 65 to 233.

We are Northeast Wisconsin's sole hippotherapy provider and the only therapeutic riding center that operates year round.

Largely responsible for these achievements are the dedicated people who have served on our board of directors as our advocates in the community. To ensure the sustainability of Exceptional Equestrians for decades to come, we seek to strengthen and expand our reach in the community. Our board development committee is in the process of identifying individuals who would like to help us in this endeavor.

I am sincerely grateful to everyone who has invested their time to help us throughout the years. I am proud to be able to serve the individuals and families who inspire the work we do.

Meet Riding Instructor Kristina Bink



Therapeutic riding instructor Kristina Bink leads therapeutic riding groups for children ages four and up.

"I enjoy working with children with disabilities because they can do amazing things," she said.

Her background in 4-H, love for children, and interest in a career in therapy drew Kristina to Exceptional Equestrians. She is certified with the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) International, holds a degree from Fox Valley Technical College, and is in the process of earning a Physical Therapist Assistant degree from Northeast Wisconsin Technical College.



Our Volunteer Banquet in February was a celebration of community service. In 2015, 233 volunteers logged 4,868 hours to help 136 exceptional riders. Pictured above, right: EE volunteers Dioni Wheeler, Hannah Johnshoy, Birgit Dierberg, Betsy Sprout, Darrell Kuntz, Grace Vecchie, Leo Skarlupka, Jenna Dais, Jerry Heim, Grace Rundquist, and Samantha Merkel. Pictured above, left: veterinarian Dr. Brian Darkow and EE staff members Sarah Ankerson, Lisa Kafka, Kristina Bink, and Catherine Bergmann.

Dates to Note

April 15 Scholarship renewals due

May 23 Summer registration due

You Can Help

Donate an item on our wish list.

Sponsor a child	\$5,600
Sponsor a horse's annual care	\$3,500
Help us heat our riding arena	\$1,000
Work saddle	\$850
Therapy saddle	\$500
Scholarship sponsorship	\$350
Winter horse blanket size 82	\$150
Pay for hay	\$75
Riding helmets	\$50

Our riders thank you.



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.

Christmas in the Barn. Pictured left, above: Katerina Hruska on Dakota with Chris Peterson and Sarah Wehling. Pictured left: Ethan De Zwarte and Lisa Kafka on Dakota with Kristin Griesbacher and Pam Mazur. Photos by Dan Meinhardt.

Helping with Hippotherapy

Volunteer Rod Leadley spends two mornings a week helping with hippotherapy for children at Exceptional Equestrians. He uses his horsemanship experience to prepare and lead therapy horses.



"I was born and raised in a barn," said Rod, smiling. Grooming, tacking, and feeding are some of his many tasks. As a hippotherapy volunteer, he understands the importance of his role during a riding session. "A horse leader has to constantly monitor the horse," Rod explains. "Horses have moods. They can have good days and bad days."

Rod is the longest serving volunteer at Exceptional Equestrians with 13 years of service. As retired teacher and track coach from Edison Junior High and Preble High School in Green Bay, he has always loved working with young people.

"People did things for me when I was young," he said. "It's important to give back. And I've always had a soft spot for kids with real struggles. Helping these kids ride each week, I get to see them as people, rather than their handicaps. I get to know their personalities and how to interact with each individual.

They do a lot for me too," Rob added. "There's a real sense of fulfillment and accomplishment. I would encourage people to get involved. Regardless of whether you have experience, if are available and reliable, you can contribute."