

Upcoming Events

April 27	Tornado safety week
June 2	Registration deadline for summer TR groups
Aug. 29	Horse Show
Sept. 12	Boots & Bling fundraiser

From Lisa Kafka, Executive Director

As equine-assisted therapy becomes more popular, people often ask, "What should we look for in a hippotherapy or therapeutic riding program?" There are several forms of equine assisted therapy that can be beneficial to children and adults with special needs. The most important aspects to consider are staff qualifications, program certification with a national entity such as the American Hippotherapy Association (AHA) and Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) Intl., and safety awareness both in terms of equines used in the program and that the facility meets ADA accessibility guidelines.

Next, consider what your goals are for your child, or for yourself if an adult participant. Can the program meet those needs? To find information on any programs in the United States or elsewhere, visit the PATH Web site to look for Center Members. I can tell you what makes EE a positive choice for equine assisted therapy and what makes us one of the most comprehensive programs in the Midwest. We are the only center north of Milwaukee that meets the following standards:

- hippotherapy clinical specialist with AHA and PATH certification
- PATH center member
- professional equine specialist selects, trains, and conditions all of our therapy horses

With over 20 years of experience, EE provides a variety of progressive horseback therapies, which allows us to accommodate riders of varying abilities. EE has its roots in pediatric therapy, and we have a pediatric therapy clinic, Country Kids, on our campus.

Making Time to Help



High school senior Jake Ganther has been volunteering with our therapeutic riding groups for over four years. He enjoys his role helping kids during class as a side walker, keeping them safe on their horse, and encouraging them in class activities.

Arriving early, Jake often helps clean stalls. His idea of being a good volunteer is to, "help where help is needed." Sometimes that means wearing a cow costume, usually it involves picking up horse manure, and for Jake, it always comes with a smile.

He is the longest-serving youth volunteer at Exceptional Equestrians, with over 475 hours logged. For his outstanding service to Exceptional Equestrians, Jake was nominated for the 2015 WPS Volunteer Awards.

When asked why he gives so much of his time, Jake responds, "I enjoy hanging out with the kids, making them laugh. It's entertaining. It's fun to give back to the community by helping people that need help. It makes me smile to be able to help these kids as much as we can."

"I also really enjoy the staff and the other volunteers," he adds. "It's a great bunch of people. I meet a lot of nice, cool kids."

Wish List

Item	Cost
Sponsor a Rider	\$5,616
Purchase a therapy horse	\$2-5,000
Fuel assistance for heating arena	\$2,500
Adopt a Horse (annual care)	\$2,100
Reface monument sign	\$1,400
Saddle	\$800
Specialized bareback pad	\$575
Industrial hose reel and hose	\$450
Scholarship Sponsorship	\$350
Heavy duty vacuum cleaner	\$180
Rider safety belts	\$160
Under-saddle pad	\$125
Riding helmets	\$50-60

Your generosity funds horseback therapy for children and adults in need. Thank you.

Summer Programs

June 15 - August 21

Hippotherapy for children ages 2 & up. 30-min. sessions are \$50, Mondays & Wednesdays.

Therapeutic Riding group classes for children ages 4 & up. 10-week summer session is \$300. 1-hour weekly classes available Tuesdays 1:30-5:30 and Thursdays 9:00-2:30.

Adaptive Equestrian Skills for ages 8 & up. 10-week session is \$300. 45-minute lessons available Fridays 10:00-2:00.

Intensive Therapy OT and/or PT summer opportunities include hippotherapy and more, available through Country Kids.

You are Invited

We are excited to announce our major fundraiser for 2015:

BOOTS & BLING

Saturday, September 12 at Exceptional Equestrians

This is the barn dance you've been asking for! Mark your calendar for a memorable night of music, food, and fun to benefit Exceptional Equestrians. Visit our Web site to learn about sponsorship opportunities and for the latest event updates.



EXCEPTIONAL EQUESTRIANS

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

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.



Volunteer Awards and Christmas in the Barn (above, center and right) were celebrations of a great year at Exceptional Equestrians. We celebrated 135 volunteers who gave 5,241 hours of service, helping 133 people receive horseback therapies. For their dedication, Sam Jones, Birgit Dierberg, and Rod Leadley (above, left) as well as Jake Ganther and Jonathan Anderson received nominations for the WPS Volunteer Awards.

Tall and Proud

Thirteen-year-old Connor Gersmehl has been riding at Exceptional Equestrians for three years and always looks forward to his "Thursday horse riding day" with eager anticipation. He is especially proud that he gets to ride the biggest horse.

The tall, smiling Connor is very social. He knows and interacts with all the staff and volunteers.

"He's having so much fun, he doesn't realize how much benefit he is getting," his father, Randy, remarks. "He's working muscles he otherwise would not be using," Randy adds.

"It strengthens his core muscles, which improves his posture," he explains. "A stroke at birth caused paralysis on one side, which makes him twist at the hip. We see a noticeable difference when he rides versus when he takes time off. He holds himself more upright, and his hips become square, which straightens his gait."

"There are psychological benefits too," says Randy. "This is something he gets to do on a regular basis." Connor is the youngest of four boys, including his twin, Garrett. "He sees his brothers go to bowling and wrestling, Randy explains. "Horseback riding is Connor's thing. His brothers understand how important it is to him. The whole family gets involved." His oldest brother, Kevin, volunteered at EE, and they all enjoy the family days when siblings get to ride and can appreciate the challenge it is.

Connor's very first day of riding stands out as a highlight, his dad recalls with a smile. "Afterward, when he got home, he called his brothers around the table and told them all about it. He was very excited. He got to ride Josh, the biggest horse. He described for them how he had to be careful not to lean, and how he got to shoot baskets while riding."

Three years later, now in middle school, Connor is all the more proud, "Josh is the biggest horse, and I'm the biggest guy." And his beaming face speaks volumes.

