

Message from our Executive Director on the Impact of Horses on Mental Health and Emotional Well-being

Why are horses such impactful partners in the treatment of mental health and emotional well-being?

Most of us have experienced the comfort a beloved pet can offer in times of stress. Studies have shown that interaction with animals including equines results in a decrease in cortisol levels.

What is cortisol and what does it do?

Cortisol is a hormone that works with certain parts of the brain to control mood, motivation and fear. It can be thought of as nature's built-in alarm system and helps to fuel our "flight or fight" response to stress or crisis. Once the stress or crisis has passed, cortisol levels typically calm down. But what if one is constantly under stress and this alarm button stays on? Continuous elevation of cortisol levels can cause anxiety, depression and sleep issues.

Incorporating the horse into a treatment session can help to reduce cortisol levels thereby turning down the "alarm system" and allowing the participant to potentially move out of the "flight or fight" mode.

Equine interaction has many additional benefits.

Horses are like "emotional mirrors" and can read a person's mood from movement and body language. They will react to a person's behavior and emotion without fear of bias or judgement.

This allows individuals to attain a sense of self-awareness, using feedback from the horse's interactions to "check in," process what is happening, and adjust.

Bonding with a horse is a singularly uplifting experience that gives people of all ages the opportunity to develop effective outlets for

their fears and anxieties, while promoting leadership, communication, problem-solving skills and responsibility.

Equine-experiential therapy impacts:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Emotional awareness and regulation
- Empathy
- Self-esteem
- Confidence
- Relationship building
- Problem solving
- Impulse control
- Trust in others and self

At Exceptional Equestrians, our Occupational Therapy staff offer equine-experiential therapy through our Taking the Lead program. While we do not provide counseling, activities and interaction with one or more equines provides an opportunity for self-reflection and learning.

For more information, please visit www.exceptionalequestrians.org or contact us via email at info@exceptionalequestrians.org.

Sensory Trail Coming Soon

Exceptional Equestrians plans to break ground on its state-of-the-art sensory trail in 2021. The trail would be the first of its kind in Wisconsin.

Many of the riders we serve have sensory processing disorders, and the new trail system will offer a combination of on- and off-horse activities specifically developed to address the needs of those riders. In addition, it will offer a peaceful space for our families and caregivers as well as much needed variety for our equine partners.

The sensory riding trail will encompass a rich learning environment that includes slopes, turns, carried footings, natural sights and sounds, and personalized "activity stations."

Proven clinical findings from similar trail systems around the country conclude that:

- youth with cerebral palsy, who often struggle to stay balanced, will be able to sit taller when on a horse.
- youth with sensory seeking tendencies are soothed by the rhythmic sensory input they got from the horse's gait.
- children struggling with anxiety find a relaxing outlet and begin opening up about their feelings.

If you are interested in learning more about the sensory trail or would like to contribute toward its construction, please visit www.exceptionalequestrians.org to make a donation. To learn more about sponsorship opportunities, please contact Aaron Geitner at ageitner@exceptionalequestrians.org.



Artist's rendering of the EE Sensory Trail Project



Horsepower for Horses

Exceptional Equestrians is excited to introduce our new Horsepower for Horses vehicle donation program.

By donating your vehicle, you can support our mission to better the lives of people of all abilities through the healing power of horses.

Here's how it works...

Step #1: Submit the form online

Visit exceptionalequestrians.org and click on the license plate at the top of the page or visit www.ncsvehicledonations.com/nonprofits/exceptional-equestrians.

We accept cars, trucks, SUV, RVs, motorcycles, trailers, boats, campers, off-road vehicles, and most other motorized vehicles – whether they're running or not.

Step #2: Schedule your free pickup

Choose the time that works best for you! Our Donor Support Representatives can arrange for a licensed tow company to pick up your vehicle almost anywhere in the U.S. within 72 hours.

Step #3: Enjoy the tax benefits

Most vehicle donations qualify for a tax deduction. When your vehicle is picked up, the driver will provide you with an initial donation receipt. You may claim as a tax deduction the fair market value of your vehicle up to \$500 on your donation even if your vehicle sells for less. If your vehicle sells for over \$500, we will provide a 1098-C IRS form which will allow you to claim the full sale price of your donated vehicle.

You might think of your vehicle as nothing more than a "junk car," but to the riders at Exceptional Equestrians, your donation can help fund a life-changing experience.



Rider Profile: Chloe Jones

Six-year-old Chloe Jones has been riding with us for three years, and her favorite horse is Froya.

Chloe's mom, Andrea, reports that since Chloe began riding, she has made significant strides in speech, independence and self-confidence.

Chloe's favorite activity at Exceptional Equestrians is playing baseball with Ms. Lisa while she rides Froya. She loves hitting the ball really far!

When asked what she would tell others in our community about Exceptional Equestrians, Andrea recommended that everyone in our community visit EE because it's such a wonderful, caring place that positively impacts the lives of hundreds of families.

Andrea also expressed her appreciation for our amazing volunteers and everything they do to support the programming available at Exceptional Equestrians.

Lastly and perhaps most importantly, Andrea loves that Chloe can't wait to come to Exceptional Equestrians every week.



Exceptional Equestrians is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization providing hippotherapy, adaptive riding and equine-assisted learning services to individuals with disabilities.

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

We are governed by a Board of Directors.

Elizabeth Moberg-Wolff, MD – President

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UPCOMING EVENTS!

EE Apparel Sale: June 11-28

Our summer apparel store will be open June 11-28. View and order the newest in EE summer fashion at ee.logosandpromos.com.

Timber Rattlers Night: June 5, 6:35 PM

Exceptional Equestrians will be featured in the evening's Community Spotlight. Join us for some amazing baseball and learn more about EE.

Exceptional Equestrians Summer Celebration: August 14

This event will have a Walk-Wheel-Run option that will begin and end at Exceptional Equestrians. There will be food and drink, a performance by the Exceptional Equestrians Drill Team, and an award ceremony for all riders. Stay tuned for more details.