



123 WALK ON!



EQUICENTER: Where Horses Help Heal Body, Mind and Spirit

Ask anyone who's been to the EquiCenter about why horses provide the perfect therapy for many with disabilities, and they'll tell you straight out: horses are healers. Whether it's the muscle strength that comes with riding; or the caring and connection that grooming offers; or the simple peace and wholeness that envelop you as you look out over our beautiful pastures as they graze -- nothing compares to their healing gift.

From the EquiCenter's early days in our first facility (purchased with the help of the Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation), to our 2010 move to the magnificent William and Mildred Levine Ranch, our staff, volunteers and healing horses have given their all: helping hundreds of children and adults with physical, intellectual and emotional challenges find the strength and courage to reach their fullest potential.

Today, the constraints of our facilities limit the number of participants we can serve year round, the continuity of their progress, and the scope of programs we can offer. With carefully phased planning, and community support, we are stepping ahead toward a broader vision of the EquiCenter, building on all we have achieved thus far.

1, 2, 3... WALK ON

At the start of each riding lesson ... when the rider is securely mounted and the horse leader and side walkers are in place all are ready for the words that tell the horse it's time to move. At the instructor's signal, the team begins the countdown: "one, two, three" ...and then pauses for the rider to give the final command: "Walk On".

Some participants shout it with glee; while others, challenged by disabilities that compromise their understanding or speech, say or signal it as best they can. Regardless, the joy is universal as the team – both human and equine – moves forward, taking new steps on the student's life-changing path. A similar countdown represents the EquiCenter's progress ... with measured steps, great enthusiasm, and a clear path forward.

It's almost a miracle. No, that's not right. If you knew how far Justin's come from riding at the EquiCenter, it IS a miracle.

Julie Presciutti



1 Our countdown began in 2004 when Stacy and Jonathan Friedlander founded EquiCenter, Inc., recognized early on as one of only two programs in New York State achieving both Premier Accreditation from the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) and certification by the New York State Horse Health Assurance Program. The program's early success outpaced the capacity at our first location, and with the generous and visionary support of the William and Mildred Levine Foundation the EquiCenter was able to move to our current magnificent Levine Ranch.

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EquiCenter works with many community agencies on behalf of our participants including:

Al Sigi Community of Agencies
Autism UP
Hillside Children's Center
Golisano Children's Hospital
Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ABVI)
Lifetime Assistance
Ontario ARC
St. Joseph's Villa
The Norman Howard School
Veterans Outreach Center

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Participants with varied health challenges benefit from the EquiCenter including:

ADD and ADHD	Multiple Sclerosis
Autism Spectrum	Post Traumatic Stress
Cerebral Palsy	Spinal Cord Injuries
Developmental Delay	Stroke
Down Syndrome	Traumatic Brain Injury
Epilepsy	Tourettes Syndrome
Freidreichs Ataxia	Visual Impairment
Hypotonia	
Intellectual Challenges	



2 Since our move in 2010, we have been getting fully established in our new home. We've updated facilities, expanded our staff, special horses, and program offerings. In 2012 we successfully completed a 5-year re-accreditation as a Premier Center by Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, Int'l (PATH formerly NARHA) including full international certification of all our instructors. We introduced our *Horses for Heroes* program (with initial funding from the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation and the Bob Woodruff Foundation) to help wounded veterans and their families heal from the physical and emotional wounds of war; and recently started a horticultural therapy pilot program (with initial funding from the Max and Marian Farash Charitable Foundation and the Rochester Area Community Foundation).

More than 250 volunteers of all ages -- assisting with lessons, encouraging participants and families, grooming and exercising horses, raising funds and creating special events, participating in governance, gardening, and helping to maintain our facilities, – make our programs possible.

We've forged connections with many community leaders, agencies and institutions, and gained significant local and national philanthropic support.

We have seen improvement in Cailin's communication skills and her teachers have noted improvement in attention and behavior. There has also been improvement in posture and balance. The EquiCenter is enriching not only the life of our daughter who has special needs but also the lives of our whole family.

Jean and Stuart MacKenzie

The EquiCenter experience has also been full of valuable lessons for Veronica. She has felt the success and accomplishment achieved from her hard work.

Mary Petti



Peer Reviewed Studies Confirm the Benefits of Equine Assisted Therapy

- Improves muscle stimulation, strength, coordination, flexibility, posture and balance
- Increases communication, social and organizational skills
- Helps enhance self-confidence, trust, cooperation, teamwork and independence



3 The challenge we face going forward is twofold: In order for the EquiCenter to expand to more fully serve the families who turn to us, we need to be able to provide multiple services simultaneously, and we need to be able to do it year round. Our current indoor riding arena is inadequate to meet either of these needs, and we need an optimal outdoor riding arena as well.

YEAR ROUND PROGRAMMING

Because of the nature of their disabilities, many of our participants are unable to ride in our unheated arena during cold weather. In fact, our level of participation drops a regrettable 70% in winter. Since the greatest gains are achieved through consistent therapy, this limitation has a profound effect on those we serve.

Not only are they disappointed that they cannot ride their favorite horses, but the therapeutic benefit is also compromised, leading their doctors, therapists, and families to note a setback for those who must take the long winter off from riding.

To meet this need as quickly as possible, our Step Three is to insulate and heat our current indoor arena so that it can be fully utilized during the winter of 2013 and beyond. With that accomplished, we can provide the maximum number of sessions possible in our current facilities to keep our participants working toward their goals year round.





SIMULTANEOUS SERVICES

A second limitation is that our current indoor riding arena is too small to accommodate more than one private or one small group lesson at a time. Horsemanship (non-mounted) programming needs to be scheduled in and around lesson times as they utilize the same arena. We also need this space for training and exercising our horses to keep them in peak health and condition so they can meet the challenges of their varied roles. As we are currently unable to meet these multiple demands on our facility, we often have a waiting list for both mounted and non-mounted programs.

We are ready to “Walk On” toward the realization of the EquiCenter Vision:
A Complete Therapeutic Equestrian Complex.

WALK ON ... Possession of the splendid Levine Ranch offers the EquiCenter tremendous opportunities to expand therapeutic riding, vaulting, and horsemanship programs, including those for veterans, to many more participants, while offering additional programs – including hippotherapy, equine assisted psychotherapy, horticultural and canine assisted therapies – to create a national model of a fully integrated therapeutic environment right here in our community.

We have wonderful land for horticultural therapy and organic farming.. We have beautiful pastures and barns for our special herd. We have a property that could serve in a variety of ways to support our programs: hosting retreats and continuing education programs, serving as a community resource for other not-for-profit organizations, and a center for coordination of new peer reviewed research.

It's time to take the next step to realize all that the EquiCenter can be!



PROPOSED HEATED INDOOR RIDING COMPLEX

WALK



OUR IMMEDIATE NEED: A NEW HEATED INDOOR RIDING ARENA

Phase I Because the size of our current indoor arena places significant restrictions on our ability to grow, our most immediate need is for a second, larger, heated arena that can be divided with retractable walls to enable private and group lessons, Horsemanship programs, and equine training and exercise to operate simultaneously year round.

This arena will incorporate green building design and technologies including renewable energy sources. It will share a common mounting area with our present arena, maintaining a safe, comfortable and well-controlled traffic flow for our participants and the two and four-legged teams who support them.

Phase II Design for this new facility will include therapy rooms, classrooms, office and meeting space and special viewing areas. This phase can either be built simultaneously or added on later as resources determine. With the completion of Phase II the EquiCenter will realize its full potential as a multifaceted therapeutic center for enriching the lives of participants and their families.

HOW YOU CAN HELP THE EQUICENTER WALK ON

Helping the EquiCenter expand our facilities and thus our ability to help more individuals in need will require a financial commitment from all who share in this vision. The EquiCenter's success to date has been supported by the generosity of visionary individuals, foundations and corporations— both in our community and on the national scene – who believe in our ability to harness the healing power of horses and nature on behalf of those we serve.

As we embark on our goal to raise the funds for this important work, your generous support is needed now more than ever. These are exciting times at the EquiCenter, as we strive to realize our program potential while planning for our organizational sustainability. Together we can secure our future and the lives of individuals in need for decades to come.

For information about how YOU can help the EquiCenter Walk On, please call Jonathan Friedlander, (585) 624-7772.

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