



Heaven's Gait Ranch Therapeutic Riding Center

Summer 2017 Newsletter

Dear Family and Friends,

We hope you're enjoying summer as much as we are at Heaven's Gait Ranch! Since our summer session is underway, we have exciting news to share with you, as our programs are steadily growing with your continued prayers and support.

Equine-Assisted Activities & Therapies: EAAT Education

Our EAAT Education program primarily includes unmounted activities that teach the basics of horsemanship, working from the ground up. For instance, individuals can learn how to groom, lead, and tack their horses -- activities that help participants develop gross and fine motor skills while focusing on an animal instead of themselves.

Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor Micah Keshenberg facilitates all the lessons based on the individual's needs and goals; therefore, we have the opportunity to get pretty creative when the horse becomes a large motivator for learning. Participant Andrew Duszynski offers a perfect program highlight.

Meet Andrew

Andrew Duszynski was born with metopic synostosis, a skull deformity that interferes with the brain's development within the first year of life. Surgery after surgery, Andrew's skull slowly made room for his brain to grow, but his speech and language suffered. For years, he tried speech therapy in a clinic, but after much fuss and little progress, his mother Jaci sought other options.



That's when Andrew started coming to Heaven's Gait Ranch -- along with his speech therapist from the clinic. He now practices consonant blends to enhance fluency while riding his horse Ellie. The eight year old willingly ends every riding lesson by reading his horse a story out loud.

Here Andrew is reading Ellie a chapter of *Koko's Story* -- a fitting selection considering it's about the gorilla who learned to communicate using sign language. Andrew only paused twice during this reading session: the first time to show Ellie a picture of Koko and the second time to tell her that he too learned sign language just to be understood.

Therapeutic Riding

Since our spring session, we've added a variety of participants to our therapeutic riding program, including individuals with ataxia-telangiectasia, apraxia of speech, and autism spectrum disorders, just to name a few. On Tuesdays a group of adults with developmental disabilities take a shuttle together from Balance, Inc., a community organization out of Grafton, WI, and the participants just love interacting with the horses.

Equine Services for Heroes

Free to U.S. Military Veterans, this program has also become highly individualized for the participants enrolled, although they share some common experiences and abilities. It is no surprise that the veterans have established meaningful bonds with their horses, which makes the ranch a place they look forward to visiting each week.

Heaven's Gait Ranch
Therapeutic Riding Center

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Joining Forces

Thankfully we have increased the number of volunteers who regularly come to the ranch, considering almost all of our riders currently need a lead walker and two side walkers. Because our programming demands continued to grow in June, we were grateful to officially add Ashley Navis to our team as the Assistant Equine Manager on site. In addition, this summer we welcomed Elizabeth Munao to our Board of Directors as our new Social Chair. Elizabeth joins us bringing a long history of equestrian experience, having shown American Saddlebreds competitively for over 20 years. Needless to say, we are blessed to have Elizabeth's support, as she brings a fresh perspective to our Board and programs.

Volunteer Highlight

Thanks to our handy volunteers, Operation Gettin' Dirty was a smashing success. The installation of electric, vinyl, and wood fencing along the east side of the property enclosed another beautiful pasture for our therapy horses, just in time for summer.

A Kind Word Goes A Long Way

Although many people cautioned us of the challenges that we'd face as a new nonprofit, we will always remember the people who believed in our mission from the very beginning. Now, we appreciate your kindness more than ever as you've genuinely become our biggest advocates to help us network. Therefore, while I personally don't want to bombard your mailing list, I want to inform you of your impact on our organization, near and far.



Because many of our family and friends are permanent residents outside the state of WI, they have enabled us to expand our reach in ways we never thought possible. For example, in March we were introduced to a friend of a friend's friend (whose name will remain anonymous), who inquired about our programs, and after learning more about how they positively affect our riders with physical, mental, and psychological impairments, this person generously donated \$10,000 to Heaven's Gait Ranch in support of our mission.

I share that story with you to sincerely thank you for all of the personal touches you have facilitated directly and indirectly throughout the last ten months. You are positively changing the trajectory of people's lives more than you know, and you are the reason Heaven's Gait Ranch is becoming an extended family to those in need.

Together we have built a solid foundation that is ready to take on a bright future. So we ask that you please keep our riders and horses in mind this summer as you consider ways to make a meaningful difference.

You're Invited!

To show our appreciation, we invite you to Heaven's Gait Ranch for an Open House Grill Out on Saturday, July 22nd from 11:00 am-2:00 pm. This event is free and open to the public, so all are welcome rain or shine. Join us in thanking our volunteers who have made our program possible! Please RSVP by Thursday, July 20th to (920) 400-0628.

Thank you again for all your prayers and support, and we look forward to seeing you again soon at Heaven's Gait Ranch!

Sincerely,

Margaret Mary McClaren
Founder, Executive Director



If you prefer to receive our eNewsletter, please email us at info@heavensgaitranch.org.

Visit our website at www.heavensgaitranch.org or call (920) 400-0628 for more news and updates from Heaven's Gait Ranch!