



Volunteers are the backbone of the Grand Equestrian program. Without the assistance of these individuals, the children would not be able to ride the horses and experience the benefits the program aims to provide.

If you would like to help our kids with fundraising or by contributing a tax deductible donation, call:

Dorotha Burgard
517.521.3570



4H Grand Equestrians
Since 1976

To be added to the mailing list as a potential rider or volunteer, contact MSU Extension Livingston County 4-H at:

517.546.3950



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Michigan State University, U.S.
Department of Agriculture

4H Grand Equestrians
Since 1976

Therapeutic Horseback Riding



What is it?

Who is it for?

How do I get involved?

Grand Equestrians is an MSU Extension Livingston County 4-H program

Grand Equestrians

is the Livingston County 4-H Therapeutic Riding Program that provides equine facilitated therapy to children with special needs. It is founded on the accepted principle that horseback riding is a valuable form of therapy for disabled individuals.

History of Horseback Therapy

The concept of therapeutic horseback riding (hippotherapy) dates back to ancient Greece, where it was employed to rehabilitate injured warriors.

Today in the United States, there are over 500 therapeutic horseback programs.

How it's Done

Our students have a wide range of developmental challenges such as: Cerebral Palsy, Spinabifida, Down's Syndrome and Autism.

Riders must wear a helmet with a chin strap. Volunteers walk on one or both sides of the horse and hold onto the riders legs. Another volunteer leads the horse around the arena and the instructor gives the rider directions and exercises



BENEFITS for the RIDER

POSTURE: The stimulation combined with the warmth of the horse promotes normalization of muscle tone and improves posture.

GAIT: Adjusting to the changes of rhythm, speed and center of gravity, as well as the challenge of controlling the horse through those transitions, improves gait.

BALANCE: Equilibrium is improved with the movement of the horse.

COORDINATION: Riding gently and rhythmically moves the rider's body in a manner similar to walking.

STRENGTH: Specific exercises are used during the riding session to increase strength and tone.

FLEXIBILITY: Riding stimulates and relaxes muscles.

SELF-AWARENESS: The rider receives sensory input from all senses.

SELF-CONFIDENCE: Mastering the horse despite a disability can foster self-confidence and a positive attitude.

CONCENTRATION: The rider makes the decisions to guide the horse to move in a specific direction.

SELF-DISCIPLINE: Riders must follow instruction to perform various exercises.



BENEFITS for the VOLUNTEER

Volunteers are an essential part of Grand Equestrians. **No horse experience is necessary.** Volunteers will have the opportunity to:

DEMONSTRATE increased awareness, sensitivity and appreciation of the abilities of people with physical, mental and/ or emotional challenges.

ASSIST riders safely and properly as leaders and side walkers.

LEARN to use appropriate safety procedures and adaptive equipment.

EXPLORE career opportunities in therapeutic riding and other related fields, such as medicine, education and rehabilitation.

INVOLVE individuals with disabilities in other 4-H clubs and activities.

PARTICIPATE in committee activities involving the responsibilities for planning, developing, facilitating, and evaluating Grand Equestrians.

There are many areas where volunteers' efforts are needed, such as fundraising, recruiting other volunteers, helping the instructor, assisting the riders, and public relations. Without volunteers, the students would not be able to ride.

See the next flap for contact information