



THE BARNYARD BULLETIN

January 2026

2025 Recap

This has been a monumental year for Cooper Ridge!

- We added a 3rd session instructor, opening up even more spots for participants.
- We celebrated our 5th anniversary, complete with special treats for all of our animal partners.
- We had our biggest Family Fun Day and Santa Drop-In Event to date.
- We brought home a 5 day old Qiwi, raised and released butterflies and praying mantis.
- Ms. Jo was awarded WJBF's Woman To Watch
- Got into the community through partnerships with The Harris Literacy Center and Your Pie, attended events like Special Olympics and Night To Shine, and were able to sponsor events like Girl Scouts Smorevivor and Upside of Downs Buddy Walk!



Animal Adoptions

Do you or someone you know have a heart for animals? Our symbolic animal adoption kits are a great way to support the farm and learn more about our beloved animal partners. With different adoption levels available, you can receive certificates of adoption, animal pictures and facts, and even Cooper Ridge merchandise!



In this issue:

- What's Happening at Cooper Ridge?
- How Can I Help?
- Beyond the Barn
- Meet The Team
- Upcoming Events



<https://www.facebook.com/CooperRidgeFarm>



<https://cooperridgefarm.org/>



<https://shorturl.at/zSiL1>



January 2026

NEWSLETTER

What's Happening at Cooper Ridge?



Winter Wonderland

With winter sessions underway, the temperatures have dropped! Our animal partners adapt to cooler weather in different ways, often spending time near hay. The pigs and Zeus the goat stay warm by burrowing into their hay beds, while the cows eat extra hay to help maintain body heat!



Success Story

One of our favorite success stories began with a participant who simply loved helping out around the farm. He started attending sessions, and over time his passion for the animals and the work we do continued to grow. As Cooper Ridge expanded, we received a grant supporting adults with special needs in the workforce, which allowed us to create a farm hand position just for him. With guidance from our session instructors, he learned essential farm responsibilities—keeping the farm clean and healthy and caring for our animal partners in a variety of ways. Along the way, we discovered that he especially enjoys connecting with participants during their sessions while working around the farm, and that meaningful interaction has become an important part of his role. We are incredibly proud of the dedication and growth we see in him, and in all of our participants, every single day.



"Our pet companions provide a source of pleasure, connection to the outside world & for some people the promise of hope & a reason to live".

-Dr. Aubrey Fine



Did you know?

Hens and their hatching chicks can communicate through their egg shell, which allows the baby chick to recognize their mom's voice!

How Can I Help?

Donate Now!



<https://cooperridgefarm.org/donate>



Amazon Wishlist

<https://shorturl.at/zSiL1>

Tractor Supply Wishlist



<https://shorturl.at/zrJR9>



January 2026

NEWSLETTER

Beyond The Barn

Cooper Ridge is excited to step *Beyond the Barn* and into the community to share the power of Animal Assisted Therapy and the human-animal bond. You'll gain an inside look at Cooper Ridge and the world of Animal Assisted Therapy, while learning how our work creates meaningful change through education and outreach.



What is Animal Assisted Therapy?

The definition of Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT), as described by Fine (2025), is a formal, goal-directed intervention in which a therapy animal is an integral part of the treatment process. Unlike casual animal visits, AAT is structured and purposeful. Activities are guided by trained professionals and designed to help individuals work toward specific goals, such as improving communication, reducing anxiety, building confidence, or developing motor skills. (Fine, A. H. (2025). *Handbook on animal-assisted therapy: Foundations and guidelines for animal-assisted interventions* (5th ed.). Academic Press.)

Who can benefit from AAT?

At Cooper Ridge, we believe that anyone can benefit from AAT and the human animal bond. Animal Assisted Therapy can be especially beneficial for a wide range of individuals which can include the following:

- Individuals with developmental or intellectual delays
- Children and adults with autism
- People experiencing anxiety, trauma or emotional challenges
- Individuals working on social, emotional, behavioral or physical skills

What's an AAT session like at the farm?

Each session begins in the barn with the participant's individualized schedule. This schedule includes a variety of activities such as interacting with our animal partners through grooming, feeding, and training; completing academic tasks like reading, writing, and spelling; participating in gardening activities including planning, planting from seed, weeding, and harvesting crops; and engaging in gross and fine motor activities such as pasture hikes, leading animals with halters, farm chores, and puzzles. Every session is customized to meet each participant's unique needs and interests. Certified session instructors collaborate closely with parents and guardians to establish meaningful goals, which are continuously monitored and documented to track progress.

Golf Classic Info

Website



<https://cooperridgefarm.org/golf-tournament-2026>



Tickets/
Sponsors

<https://cooperridgefarm.betterworld.org/events/1st-annual-cooper-ridge-farm-gol>



January 2026

NEWSLETTER

Beyond The Barn continued...



CEO Chat

Josephine Fuller opened the “barn doors” of Cooper Ridge Farm over 5 years ago. She received her specialized certifications in Animal Assisted Therapy and became the sole therapist for all participants, while simultaneously running this nonprofit. We sat down with her to ask her our burning questions about AAT for a segment that you can listen to in full in our newest adventure, “Beyond the Barn”, a podcast highlighting AAI and the work done at Cooper Ridge!

What made you want to start this?

“I personally recognized the power of the human-animal bond in my own life and knew how transformative that can be in the lives of individuals. Cooper Ridge Farm began because I wanted to create a place where people of all abilities feel supported, understood and encouraged to grow, while connecting with animals.”

What does Cooper Ridge mean to you?

“Cooper Ridge is more than a farm to me. It’s a place of connection, healing and growth. It represents the importance of meeting people where they are, and the belief that meaningful learning happens when individuals feel safe, supported and valued.”

What has been your biggest challenge to overcome as an Animal Assisted Therapist?

“Predicting the weather for our sessions haha...just kidding. Truly the biggest challenge is helping people understand that our work goes far beyond simply interacting with the animals. It’s purposeful, structured programming, focused on self development, education, growth and meaningful connection with our animal partners.”

What is your goal for Cooper Ridge in the future?

“My goal is that as Cooper Ridge grows, we will continue to provide the highest industry standard for Animal Assisted Therapy in a farm setting without losing the beauty, intention and connection at the heart of the work we do.”

What is on the horizon for Cooper Ridge?

“First off, we are at the beginning stages of creating a podcast to help educate the public about Animal Assisted Interventions. We are also preparing to launch a capital campaign for the build of our new facility. Finally, our team is working to standardize industry best practices and guidelines for Animal Assisted Interventions in a farm setting.”

Around The Farm





January 2026

NEWSLETTER

Meet The Team



Participant Spotlight: Evan Schel

Meet Evan! Evan has been coming to the farm for almost 5 years and has grown with every session. Evan loves to work in the garden and his favorite animal partners to work with are the chickens. If you have been around Evan, chances are you have gotten one of his bright smiles and a silly joke that he came up with!

Animal Partner: Chip

Meet Chip! Chip is one of our fan favorites here on the farm for her beautiful speckled colors and her big personality. Chip was the first chicken that was clicker trained, meaning that she will touch a target, hear the click of a button and receive her reward. She even will follow the target to get into a dump truck, go through a hoop or even through a tunnel!



Board Member Spotlight: Joann Denemark, EdD, CCC-SLP

Meet Joann! Joann has served for 2 terms on our board and has been instrumental in helping structure our individualized sessions and in growing our partnership with Augusta University. Joann states: "I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as a CR board member supporting individuals and families who deserve access to meaningful resources and therapy. I am committed to helping further their mission and ensuring the community continues to grow stronger together." To read more about Joann's amazing achievements, visit our website!



Upcoming Events

**December 22–
January 2
Closed for Holidays**

**January 5
Farm Reopens**

**January 30–
February 2
Farm Closed**

**May 4
1st Annual Golf
Classic**



<https://www.facebook.com/CooperRidgeFarm>



cooperridgefarm.org

