



THE BARNYARD BULLETIN

February 2026

January Recap

With January's colder weather, the farm has felt quiet and still. While our animal partners enjoy the cooler temperatures, they've been spending extra time gathered near the hay to stay warm. We've had our challenges keeping everyone warm but they are safe and happy. Our winter garden, however, is thriving! It is producing collard greens as big as our faces, much to the delight of our participants (and the goats!).

We also had the honor of attending the Community Foundation for the CSRA Grant Award ceremony, as a grantee. It's local grant programs like these that help us provide individualized therapy programs to our community. We are so very grateful for their support and belief in our mission.



Spring Program Spots Available!

Spring registration is just around the corner (2/16/26), and with our growing staff, we now have spots available! Know someone ages 3+ who enjoys animals and being outdoors? Have them check us out! We offer consultation visits to make sure our programs are a great match.



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



<https://cooperridgefarm.org/>



<https://shorturl.at/zSIL1>



February 2026 NEWSLETTER

What's Happening at Cooper Ridge?



Where Will We Be?

Cooper Ridge is excited to attend Night to Shine on February 13 in support of our participants and the community. Night to Shine is a prom experience created especially for teens and adults with special needs, and it is truly a magical evening to witness. We are honored to be part of a night that celebrates inclusion, joy, and each individual being celebrated just as they are. Check out the link below to learn more about Night to Shine and this incredible event!

<https://timtebowfoundation.org/night-to-shine/>

Cooper Ridge will also be attending RECing Crew Idol on March 7! We can't wait to cheer everyone on and celebrate the incredible talents on display. Want to learn more about RECing Crew? Click the link below!

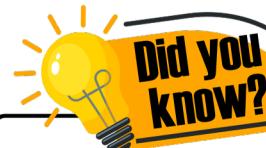
<https://thereingcrew.com/>

Success Story

One of our recent success stories comes from a newer participant who tends to be quiet and keep to himself. When music starts playing, though, something shifts. He loves to sing along and dance. During his most recent session, he truly began to open up as everyone danced together in the barn. He showed off his moves, and that spark carried throughout the session. He initiated conversations with others and even completed a puzzle independently for the first time since joining us at the farm. Building confidence is one of the core pillars of the work we do, and moments like these remind us why it matters so much. We love watching our participants grow, gain confidence, and come out of their shells alongside us and one another.



"Animals are the bridge between us and the beauty of all that is natural. They show us what's missing in our lives and how to love ourselves more completely and unconditionally."
-Trisha McCagh



Pigs are very intelligent animals. They can use tools, solve puzzles and even play video games!

How Can I Help?

Donate
Now!



<https://cooperridgefarm.org/donate>



Amazon
Wishlist

<https://shorturl.at/zSiL1>



February 2026 NEWSLETTER

Beyond The Barn

In this section 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.

Have you listened to our latest podcast episode yet?
Click the link to the right to listen now!



Terminology used in AAI

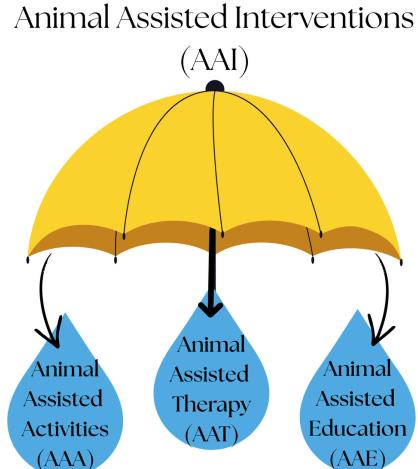
There can be a lot of overwhelming terminology when talking about Animal Assisted Interventions. Our goal in this section is to clear up some of the confusion that goes along with the approaches within Animal Assisted Interventions. It helps to think of Animal Assisted Interventions (AAI) as an umbrella with different subsets of practices underneath.

Animal Assisted Interventions (AAI) is a term for purposeful interactions between people and animals that support well-being. Within AAI are three approaches identified below:

Animal Assisted Activities (AAA) are informal, motivational, or recreational interactions focused on comfort and connection, with no set goals or documentation.

Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) is a structured, goal-oriented therapeutic intervention led by a certified professional, with sessions documented and progress measured. AAT is what we provide here at Cooper Ridge.

Animal Assisted Education (AAE) is a planned, goal-driven intervention led by an education professional, focusing on learning and prosocial skill development.



Together, these approaches highlight the many ways animals can support human growth and well-being.

To the right is a graphic that may help with the visualization of the terminology.

Podcast Link

Spotify:

<https://shorturl.at/0X020>

Apple:

<https://shorturl.at/EiqAN>

More Pictures





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Golf Class Information

Come along with us as we tee up for an incredible event that will support the individualized therapy programs that we have here at Cooper Ridge!



West Lake Country Club
May 4, 2026

Calling All Golfers!

Are you an avid golfer or do you know someone who is? Join us for a good cause! Rally your friends to create a team or join us on your own and we'll pair you with other golfers. Registration is quick and easy. Just click the link: <https://cooperridgefarm.org/golf-tournament-2026>

We Need Sponsors!

We are looking for business sponsors to partner with us for this exciting event. All proceeds from the golf classic will directly support our programs and the incredible participants who benefit from them.

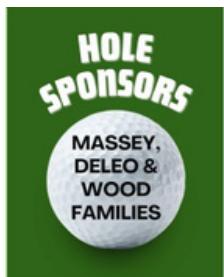
If you know of anyone who would be interested in partnering with us, please send us their information, or share this link with them for more information: <https://cooperridgefarm.org/golf-tournament-2026>

Our Sponsors:



Georgia
Power

Signarama



1304 Richland Avenue West, Aiken, SC
803.648.3875



Golf Classic Info

Days Until The
Golf Classic:

92



**Tickets/
Sponsors**

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



February 2026 NEWSLETTER

Meet The Team



Participant Spotlight: Melissa Murzynowski

Meet Melissa! For over 2 years, she's been a bright light at the farm, spreading joy wherever she goes. Diego and Oliver the donkeys are her absolute favorites, and she's always ready to dance and share one of her famous hugs!

Animal Partner: Earl

Meet Earl! A favorite among many at Cooper Ridge. Earl comes running the moment he hears the gate open, ready to flop down for belly rubs and attention. He loves any snack you bring him and can often be seen trotting around with it proudly in his mouth. This month is Earl's birthday. He'll be turning 3!



Board Member Spotlight: Vanessa Murphy

Meet Vanessa! She is a longtime educator in the CSRA with a deep commitment to literacy and student success. She is currently employed at CSRA RESA as a Growing Readers Coaching Specialist. There she provides

coaching and literacy support aligned to the Science of Reading & Georgia's new Literacy Law. With 27 years of experience in teaching special education across Columbia, Aiken, and Richmond Counties, Vanessa has a special passion for supporting students with varying exceptionalities - work that truly reflects where her heart lies.

Vanessa has proudly served on our Board of Directors for 4 years and values the farm's mission and community impact. She can often be seen at many of our special events here at the farm and in the community. Outside of her professional life, she is a devoted wife to her husband, and a proud mother of four children. She is also enjoying a new and joyful role as "Honey" to her brand-new grandbaby!



Upcoming Events

**February 2
Farm Closed**

**February 16
Spring Registration
Opens**

**February 23-27
Farm Closed**

**March 2
Spring Program
Begins**

**May 4
1st Annual Golf
Classic**

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