



**CHALLENGE UNLIMITED
AT IRONSTONE FARM**

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WELCOME TO IRONSTONE FARM

Thank you for your interest in our programs and services. Ironstone Farm is the home of Challenge Unlimited and Ironstone Therapy. The Challenge Unlimited Program offers a variety of therapeutic and recreational riding programs.

Our focus is to help each individual achieve their potential through the benefits of our equine encounters, riding, and the experience of a working farm environment. All of our programs are adapted to riders. We incorporate therapeutic measures that strengthen muscles, improve balance, coordination and endurance, as well as lengthen attention span and increase determination and ambition. For our recreational riders we create well rounded riders while developing horsemanship skills.

The enclosed information describes our programs, policies and procedures. ***Individuals enrolling in Ironstone Farm programs must complete all necessary paperwork before starting lessons.*** An individual with *any* diagnosis must provide a completed physician's approval form. Once completed and returned, the office will reach out to you.

If you have any additional questions or would like to schedule a visit, please email us at Lessons@IronstoneFarm.org. We look forward to meeting you soon!

Warm Regards,

Jessica Casolari

Program Director



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BACKGROUND OF THE ORGANIZATION

Ironstone Farm was founded in 1960 by Richard Donovan. The nonprofit Challenge Unlimited, Inc was created out of the Donovan family's desire to share his farm with people whose lives have been challenged by disability. In 2001, Challenge Unlimited purchased the farm (previously leased) to expand its programs for individuals with disabilities, continuing the vision and work that started in 1960.

Ironstone Farm is a beautiful working horse farm in Andover, MA, and home to two non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations: Challenge Unlimited, Inc and its subsidiary, Ironstone Therapy, Inc., employing licensed physical and occupational therapists and licensed equine professionals (instructors) to provide a variety of programs (see IronstoneFarm.org). These programs currently serve more than 1,000 individuals annually with over 25 diagnosed disabilities served. Clients come from over 90 cities and towns in Greater Boston, the North Shore, Merrimack Valley, and southern New Hampshire. Ironstone Farm collaborates with over 30 outside agencies (including hospitals, schools, and human service agencies). Programs offered are well respected as therapeutic interventions, alternative therapies, and/or complements to traditional interventions.

In 2009, seeking to expand the programs, Executive Director Deedee O'Brien and Programs Director Carolyn Burt (both cancer survivors) met with an individual employed at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, who was instrumental in receiving approval for a pilot program to help people affected by cancer. Since 2009 Ironstone Farm has served hundreds of cancer patients and those dealing with other terminally ill and life-threatening diagnoses. In 2013, the Equine Encounter program was expanded to work with area combat veterans suffering from PTSD. The pilot proved so successful that a bi-weekly, weekend retreat program was created with the nonprofit Home Base Veteran & Family Care through Mass General Hospital. Ironstone has since turned their old farmhouse from a 3 Bed, 1 Bath, to a 13 Bed, 6 Bath retreat house, for veterans and their families to stay in during future retreats.

OUR HERD

Ironstone Farm is home to 30 amazing equines, ranging from age 3 to 23! We have always been known for our love of the Haflinger breed, as their short, stocky stature allows staff to hold on to our smaller clients during therapy sessions while also being fit to hold the weight of our adult veterans and first responders. Ironstone is home to 20 of them!

Our horses live on our 19-acre property year-round. They come from all over the world--from a personal barn in NH, to a show barn in Ohio, to being intercepted at the slaughter pipeline auction in PA! They are our hardest workers and our most loved employees. They bring a sense of calm when needed and do not judge anyone for having a rough day. But most importantly, they teach our clients confidence, patience, and understanding.



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HOURS OF OPERATION

We are open for lessons Monday-Friday from 9:30am-7:30pm, and Saturdays from 9:30am-2:30pm. The farm is closed on Sundays for weekly lessons. Our office is open Monday-Friday 9:00am-6:00pm, and Saturdays 9:00-1:00pm.

Ironstone Farm Holiday Closures		
New Year's Day	Memorial Day	Independence Day
Summer Break Week	Labor Day	Thanksgiving Day
Christmas Eve	Christmas Day	Winter Break Week

COVID-19 STATEMENT

Ironstone Farm takes our responsibility seriously to keep our community and team members safe. Our organization continues to follow the local guidelines provided by the Andover Public Health department as well as regulations set at the state and federal level.

To all members of the Ironstone community: **If you do not feel well, or are exhibiting severe symptoms of COVID-19, we ask that you consult a Medical Profession or provide a negative COVID test before coming on property.** All inconveniences due to COVID-19 related illness will not be penalized. We appreciate cautiousness and understanding during this pandemic!



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LESSON PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Our Programs

Ironstone Farm offers therapeutic and recreational riding lessons, all year around, to clients of all abilities, starting at the age of 6. We offer three types of lessons: private (1-rider), semi-private (2-riders), and group (4-riders) lessons, based on age and ability. Our therapeutic lessons are highly individualized to address the client's needs and age. Private, in-hand lessons use the movement of the horse, position changes and age-appropriate games and activities to benefit riders physically, emotionally, and cognitively.

Lesson Format

The Evaluation: Every client enrolling will begin with a 30-minute evaluation lesson. You can expect to spend about 20 minutes on the horse and 10 minutes talking with the instructor. The instructor will then recommend to the office what lesson plan will be appropriate for the rider. Please understand, we will need to receive the required registration forms before scheduling an evaluation.

Below is a list of all lesson formats provided within Challenge Unlimited:

1. **Private Lessons:** A one-on-one approach in either a half hour or hour-long format. This is the lesson format that can be most adjusted to the client's individual needs and interests. These lessons are available on the lunge line, in hand, or independent under saddle. In hour-long private lessons the rider will brush and tack their own horse with the guidance of the instructor. **This is the required lesson format for all riders who start with us.**
2. **Semi-Private Lessons:** An hour long lesson with two riders. These lessons are great for riders who are learning how to brush and tack up their horses, as well as basic riding and social skills.
3. **Vaulting Lessons:** The vaulting lesson is a 30 minute private lesson on the lunge line. The program allows the rider to develop balance, rhythm, and confidence while the instructor maintains control over the horse. This is an excellent lesson program for children and many adults who are beginners.
4. **Group Lessons:** Our group lesson can accommodate riders at varying riding levels: from therapeutic riders to the independent beginner, riders just progressing out of a private or semi-private lesson, or to those riding at an advanced level. The rider may move into a one-hour group lesson when the riding instructor determines the rider is ready. The rider must be able to steer independently at the walk and trot before moving into a group. We may ask that riders arrive approximately 15 minutes before their lesson begins, which will allow the time needed for students to prepare their horse before they ride each week. They are expected to stay 10- 15 minutes after their lesson to care for their horse and put equipment away.



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Supervision of Clients

Our goal at Ironstone Farm is to provide safe, enjoyable, and engaging therapeutic riding lessons for every rider, at all levels. We strive for a safe environment at all times for riders, their families, caregivers, aides, volunteers, staff and our horses.

To achieve this, **we ask parents/guardians, caregivers, and aides (the person responsible) of riders with a diagnosis (or under the age of 12) to supervise the rider at all times.** This means that the person responsible should **stay nearby and not leave to sit in the car or leave the property.**

If, for example, the client needs to dismount prior to the end of a lesson, the person responsible must be available to walk the client to the car, bench, bathroom or other safe area. If the individual requires assistance with mounting and/or dismounting, we reserve the right to ask the person responsible to assist with mounting and/or dismounting under the direction of the Ironstone Farm staff.

To ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for all, Ironstone Farm may ask that the person responsible participate as a side walker, walking alongside the rider. If the person responsible is unable to, or unwilling to assist Ironstone Farm may not be able to accommodate the rider. If you have any questions regarding our policies and procedures, please do not hesitate to contact the office.

Importance of Proper Clothing

Ensuring safety is a top priority and riders will not be allowed on the horse unless properly dressed. An equestrian helmet (ASTM/SEI approved), long pants, and closed shoes or boots are required for all riders. Sneakers are appropriate for participants in our vaulting and in-hand lessons only. A boot or shoe with a small flat heel with a distinct separation from the sole of the shoe is required for riders in saddles. Open toed shoes, crocs, mules and ballet style shoes are some common examples of **inappropriate** footwear.

Helpful Websites for Clothing: www.DoverSaddlery.com & www.SmartpakEquine.com

Paperwork

All riders must fill out an annual emergency release form prior to starting lessons, as well as the start of a new year. All areas of the form must be filled out to ensure all proper information is given to our administrative staff.

Riders with a medical condition or diagnosis, must also get a physician's approval form filled out prior to starting lessons. All forms are attached on our website, but will also be sent through email when you inquire about lessons.



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HOW TO SCHEDULE RIDING LESSONS

Lessons are available Monday-Friday from 10am–8pm, and Saturday 9:30-2:30pm, as instructor and volunteer availability allows.

If you wish to change (or end) your riding time at any point you must email Lessons@IronstoneFarm.org 14 days in advance of your end date.

All scheduled lessons within the 14 day window will require full payment.

Payment

Lessons are prepaid on a monthly basis through our online payment system. Clients will receive an email from Quickbooks at Challenge Unlimited, where an online payment can be made. **Cards are NOT saved on file for automatic payments and each invoice must be individually paid each month.** We also accept checks, which can be made payable to Challenge Unlimited, Inc.

You will be notified via email if you have an overdue balance, one week prior to the due date. **A \$30 fee will be added to each invoice not paid by the due date.** If the invoice is not paid within one week of being overdue, Ironstone reserves the right to halt clients' lessons until it is paid.

Ironstone Farm does have a "Sponsor a Child" program, if you wish to apply for financial aid. The sponsorship packet can be found on our website, which outlines the requirements necessary to apply and be approved.

Fees for Service

Below is an outline of our current fees for service. These are subject to change based on inflation of equine care, staff, and other day to day expenses.

Mounted or Unmounted Lesson or Equine Encounter Session

(Clients with a medical diagnosis need a physician's approval form)

LESSON FORMAT	# OF RIDERS	FEE FOR THERAPEUTIC	FEE FOR RECREATIONAL
1-Hour Group	Up to 4 riders	\$60	\$65
1-Hour Semi-Private	2 riders only	\$70	\$75
30-Minute Private	1 rider	\$70	\$75
1-Hour Private	1 rider	\$90	\$95



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Cancellations and Weather Closings

Ironstone Farm follows the Andover Public School System for weather closings, but not for all holiday closures, election days, or professional development days. If schools call for a delay, Ironstone Farm may not follow, as the 19-acres does take some time to prepare in inclement weather.

If you are unable to attend your lesson, Ironstone Farm has a **48-hour cancellation policy**.

Pre-cancellation requests must be made 48 hours in advance in order to receive a make-up lesson. If you cancel within 48 hours of your scheduled lesson, we ask that you do so using the same day cancellation line at 978-475-4056 Ext. 1. **All cancellations given less than 48 hours in advance will not be refunded or granted a make-up lesson option.**

If you are running late to your lesson, please call the office. Ironstone has a **15-minute late policy**, where the horse will be put away if you are more than 15-minutes late to your lesson, and do not notify anyone. If you notify us in advance, we will hold the horse for you. **Arriving late will not result in extra time on the horse**, so please plan accordingly.

Refunds or make-ups will be offered for cancellations due to a medical condition or COVID-19, only if a doctor's note is provided.

In the event Ironstone needs to cancel your lesson due to weather or staffing issues, the farm will attempt to provide a make-up lesson. If a make-up time can not be agreed upon, Ironstone will credit the rider in their next monthly bill.

MAKE-UP LESSON STRUCTURE

Make-up lessons are offered to riders as the following options, and will be based on the availability of our lesson schedule:

LESSON FORMAT	MAKEUP OPTIONS			
30-Minute Private	30-Minute Private		1-Hour Group*	
1-Hour Private	Two 30-Minute Privates	1-Hour Group*	1-Hour Semi-Private*	1-Hour Private
1-Hour Group	30-Minute Private		1-Hour Group*	
1-Hour Semi-Private	30-Minute Private	1-Hour Group*	1-Hour Semi-Private*	

***Dependent on the rider's ability to safely ride in a group/semi-private lesson**



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IRONSTONE FARM SAFETY REGULATIONS

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

The following regulations have been established for your safety and the safety of all involved in the activities at Ironstone Farm. Please make every effort to abide by them during your time on the premises.

SMOKING: There is **NO SMOKING** allowed on the property of Ironstone Farm.

CHILDREN: Ironstone is a working farm. We insist that all children, when not involved in a lesson, remain beside their accompanying adult. Running, yelling, or unaccompanied children can create hazardous situations – for themselves, riders, handlers, staff, and other visitors at the farm. Please observe (or ask about) designated areas for viewing lessons. If children behave in an unsafe manner, we may ask you to remove them from the premises.

PETS & SERVICE ANIMALS: The animals at Ironstone Farm live in harmony with one another and the introduction of a new animal is handled very carefully. Visiting pets will upset this harmony and can be very disruptive, creating an unsafe situation. Please leave your pet(s) at home. With regards to service animals, please check with the office before visiting the farm.

TREATS: Our animals are on a routine feeding schedule. Their daily intake is carefully monitored. Treats may be harmful to some animals, and hand-feeding encourages the animals to bite in search of treats and can be dangerous. Please do not feed the animals.

PARKING: Please park in designated areas only. Observe the "No Parking" signs and spaces allotted for the pick-up and drop-off of clients. Please do not sound your horn/car alarm while on Ironstone Farm property! Sudden loud noises may frighten the animals residing at the farm as well as clients participating in therapy.

UMBRELLAS: Please do not use umbrellas on the property. The odd shape and sudden movement of opening/closing an umbrella can startle our horses.

THE BARN: The upper barn is a staff-only area. If you need to reach someone in the barn office, please call us at 978-475-4056, or ask a present staff member to contact us for you.

OBSERVATION: Our instructors and therapists are trained professionals. Please remain outside the teaching area during lessons. You are invited to watch from designated areas.

PADDOCK: Only Staff, Working Students, and Feeders (all of whom must have Paddock Privileges) are allowed in the Paddocks. *Volunteers and visitors are not allowed to enter the Paddocks for any reason.*

We appreciate your patronage. We pledge to offer you the best in quality, horse-related and therapeutic programming. During your time spent with us, we ask that you have respect for the property, the animals, and the staff. -- Thank you!