Zaniez Embraces Natural, Successful Neurological Equine and Aquatic Therapies at Revolutionary Farm Trade School for Spectrum Students

Zaniez Revolutionizes Autism Care with "Zippotherapy" and Aquatic Therapy at Its Pioneering Farm Trade School

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In a groundbreaking approach to autism support, **Zaniez** is integrating proven neurological therapies — equine-assisted "Zippotherapy" and aquatic therapy — as foundational elements of its innovative Autism Spectrum Farm Trade School. These natural, joy-filled interventions help students and families reclaim skills, independence, and happiness while addressing core challenges associated with autism.

Zippotherapy (Zaniez signature take on hippotherapy/equine therapy) will be encouraged daily. This gentle, rhythmic horseback and horsemanship experience provides powerful sensory input that mimics natural human movement and interactions, delivering profound benefits. Research shows that children with autism participating in therapeutic horseback riding and care for just 10 weeks experienced significant improvements in **social communication**, **word fluency**, **irritability**, and **hyperactivity** — with many gains sustained six months later. Additional benefits include enhanced balance, posture, motor planning, emotional regulation, empathy, and nonverbal connection through the unique bond formed with horses.

At Zaniez, Zippotherapy will serve as a cornerstone of the adult work-study program, directly supporting greater independence, vocational readiness, and confidence for participants of working age. Zippotherapy will create a foundation for older students to embrace entrepreneurship, as appropriate and desired.

Aquatic therapy (also known as hydrotherapy) is another cornerstone at Zaniez. The calming properties of water make it especially effective for individuals with autism and other neurological conditions. Studies demonstrate that aquatic programs improve **motor skills**, **balance**, **social interaction**, **self-regulation**, **attention**, and **executive function** while reducing stereotypical behaviors and anxiety. The buoyancy, resistance, and deep pressure of water create a low-impact environment that supports sensory processing and physical development in ways traditional therapies often cannot.

Zaniez will maintain a heated pool for year-round access, encouraging daily swimming and hosting water-based events and activities designed to maximize these benefits for students and spectrum families.

“My son on the autism spectrum and I swim together daily and have for many years,” shared **Dana Leigh Shafman, Founder of Zaniez**. “It is something that we can do together that makes both of us happy and always a bonus in the Arizona sunshine, advancing additional benefits. I have never been advised by any doctor or therapist to swim with my son — it is simply an activity that I love and have encouraged my son to do with me since he was born without the knowledge of the inherent benefits of swimming. At Zaniez, we understand keenly the benefits and will encourage all students and families to participate.”

By embedding these evidence-based, natural therapies into a full farm trade school curriculum (including gardening, woodworking, animal husbandry, cooking, science, art, music, and more), Zaniez creates a holistic environment where learning, therapy, and joy happen simultaneously for students and families.

To bring this life-changing model to spectrum families, Zaniez is raising **$500,000** for property acquisition, facility equipping, and program launch. Open enrollment began December 1, 2025, with a soft launch this Summer/Fall 2026 and full operations shortly thereafter. Families, donors, and partners are invited to learn more and support this mission at **ZaniezKids.com** or by donating at GiveSendGo.com/Zaniez. Together, we can give autism spectrum families the dignity, skills, and community they deserve.

About Zaniez
Zaniez is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit Autism Spectrum Farm Trade School dedicated to empowering individuals ages 3 and up through hands-on vocational training in areas like gardening, woodworking, animal husbandry, cooking, science, art, music, and more. By combining practical skills education with family support, sensory-friendly events, and advocacy, Zaniez fosters independence, prosperity, and belonging. For media inquiries, contact **ZaniezKids@gmail.com** or call **(602) 432-7230**. Visit **ZaniezKids.com** for enrollment, donation, and program details.

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