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NEWS

Starlight Therapeutic Riding Center set to open indoor arena for equine therapy

Caitlin Randle, MRT.com/Midland Reporter-Telegram
June 1, 2021 | Updated: June 1, 2021 9:25 p.m.



PHOTO L-R: Starlight Board Vice President, Greg Welborn; Founder/Board President, Chim Welborn; Facility Director/Instructor, Ginger Cage; Board Secretary, Shannon Key; and Equine Director/Instructor, Shelley Duffin. Courtesy Photo

Rain or shine, Midlanders living with disabilities will soon have a location to participate in equine-assisted therapy.

Starlight Therapeutic Riding Center recently broke ground on the construction of an indoor riding arena and sensory trail, according to a press release.

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"The wind and weather have posed significant scheduling challenges for our program," Executive Director Gina Friedman said in the press release. "Breaking ground on a new indoor arena is something that we've been looking forward to for a long time."

The new facility includes a 72-by-128-square-foot indoor riding arena, a viewing area for parents and caregivers, a restroom, storage area and a multi-purpose area. An outdoor sensory trail will extend from the arena and follow the perimeter of the property.

"Our participants rely on consistency in their daily routine," Friedman said. "Interruptions to their schedule due to inclement weather can result in stress and anxiety, making it difficult for them to achieve their therapeutic goals."



The \$441,000 construction project was funded through grants and donations raised during Starlight's 2020 Capital Campaign. The new facility is expected to open in September.

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Starlight was founded by Chim Williams Welborn, daughter of businessman Clayton Williams, in 2019 with the goal of improving the mental wellness, physical ability, behavior and cognitive skills of people living with disabilities, according to their website. The nonprofit stopped offering in-person lessons during the COVID-19 pandemic and recently reopened.

They partner with local schools and organizations, including the Bynum School, Lazy3 Ranch, Midland Polo Club, Williams Equestrian Center and the Midland Girl Scouts, to offer individual or group lessons.

Some of the benefits of equine therapy for those with disabilities include improved balance and coordination, increased self-confidence, relief from anxiety and depression and a greater feeling of freedom and independence, their website states. Disabilities can include autism, sensory integration disorders, language development delays and trauma.

More information about Starlight's programs can be found at starlightmidland.org.

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Written By
Caitlin Randle

Caitlin Randle is a general news reporter for the Midland Reporter-Telegram. Have a story idea? [Send Email](#)

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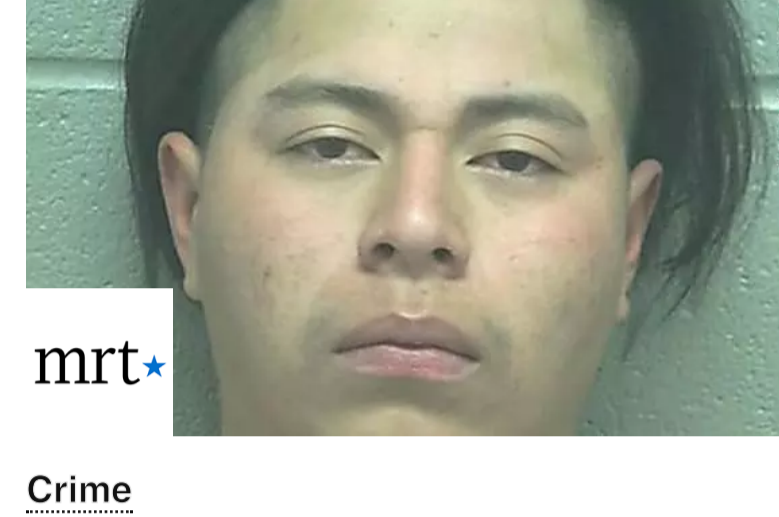
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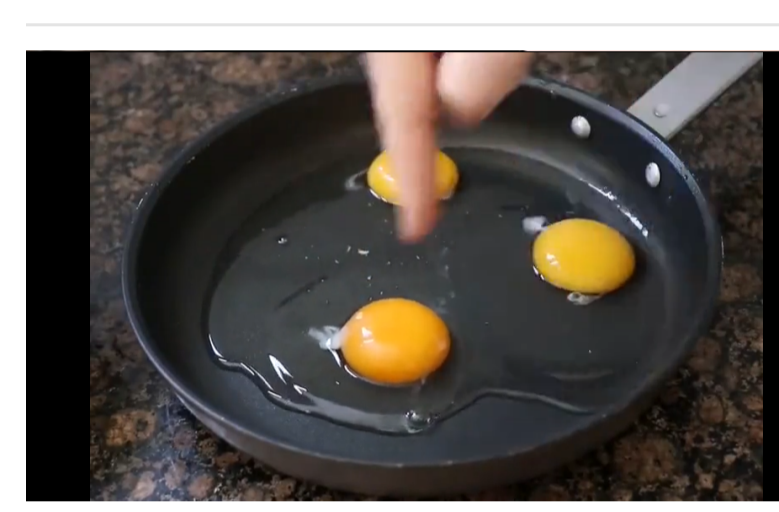
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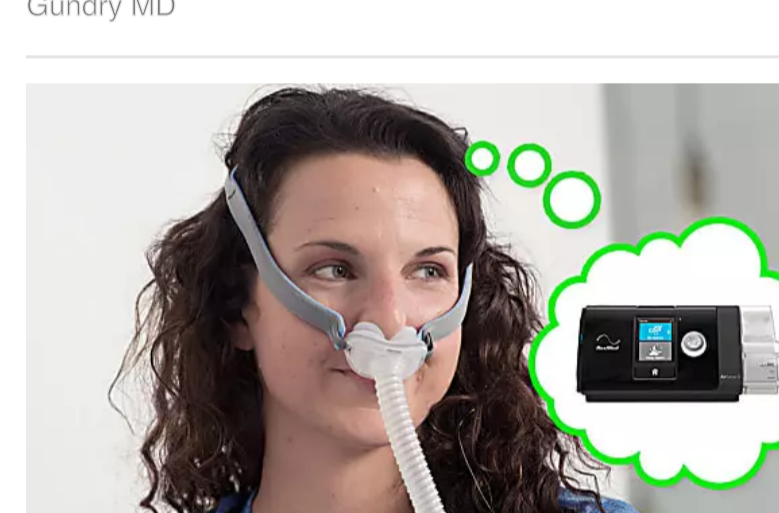
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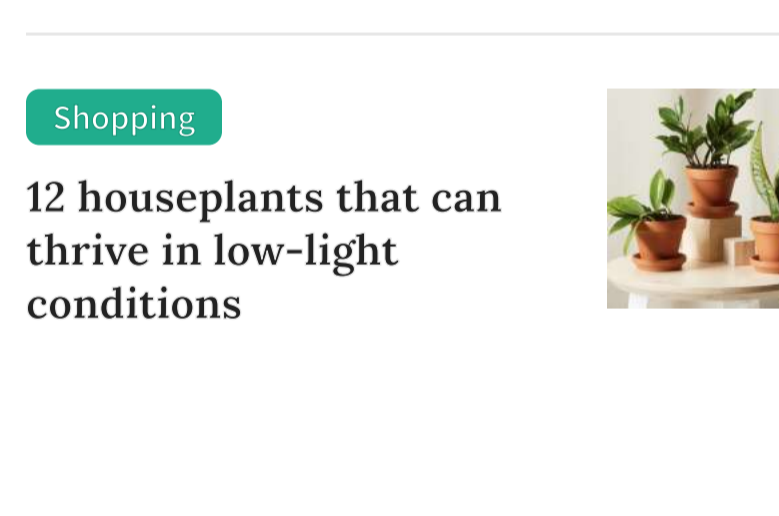
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