



Therapy Education Sport and Recreation for Individuals with Disabilities

4STEPS Therapeutic Riding Program

5367 Sixty Foot Rd, Parsonsburg MD 21849

410-835-8814

giddyup4steps@aol.com www.4stepstrp.org

January 2022

WHAT IT MEANS TO HAVE 'GRIT'

Definition: courage and resolve; strength of character

4STEPS riders are GRITTY!

They work strenuously toward challenges and maintain effort and interest despite physical, emotional, behavioral and cognitive challenges, despite failure, adversity and plateaus in progress. GRIT requires courage, conscientiousness, perseverance, resilience and passion. You grow GRIT by being around GRITTY people.

How do you know if you have GRIT?

When you have grit you don't get humiliated or mortified if you make mistakes. You refuse to give up, give in or get out when you know what you want, and you let nothing get in your way!



4STEPS is a 20-year national non-profit of 100% volunteers

HOW MUCH DOES A LESSON COST?

Understanding the True Cost of Services Can Improve Sustainability

True Cost of Service - Actual Fee or Tuition = GAP

One of the first steps to achieving sustainability for our program is to have an accurate understanding of the true cost of a lesson or cost to our center to provide each unit of service. At first blush, this seems like an easy question. Take all of our center's expenses, divided by our participant visits for a set period of time and with the help of an Excel spreadsheet, we have a cost per lesson or per participant. For example, our center's annual expenses are approximately \$70,000 providing 350 lessons. This calculates to be \$200 per lesson.

At 4STEPS, we charge our clients \$240/6-week session which turns out to be \$40 per lesson. So where does the other \$160 per lesson come from? *That's the GAP!*

FUNDING THE GAP

This GAP is truly the elephant in the room. It's an enormous topic that is vital to the sustainability of our center. Funding the GAP can be done in many ways. While civic organizations, business and individual donations often make up a significant portion of this GAP, grants and foundations also help subsidize our program. The ability to clearly articulate our center's fundraising needs based on this identified GAP is key to garnering donor, grant and foundation support of our program. Funders need to understand their support is CRITICAL to overall program operations because their contributions subsidize the difference between what our participants can afford, or are asked to pay, and what it really costs to provide the service. When we provide budgets for grants, for instance, we use true costs figures with transparent explanations. And because many participants' success stories are so compelling an even more direct appeal is included to all funders to support scholarships.



Events are another way to fundraise the additional revenue required. Unfortunately, events are time consuming and subject to environmental changes. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, has created numerous challenges by upending traditional fundraising appeals.

Events can also be very labor intensive. When planning events, it is helpful to recruit additional volunteer support to avoid overburdening staff. It is also vital to budget clearly to avoid a low ratio of revenue to expense. A true accounting of an event's success includes an assessment of staff and volunteer times required to execute the event, as well as the return on investment (both as fundraiser and as 'friend' raiser).

Empathy is so important to building a better world!

A recent study showed that when kids are around horses it activates the part of the brain related to empathy. If being with horses can help a child develop empathy, then a horse can help change the world!



COMMUNICATING OUR CASE (CAUSE)



Ultimately this information on the full cost of service enables us to provide a clear, transparent case for support. A center's job is to provide clear, consistent communication to its stakeholders-donors, grantors, those receiving services and the community-at-large regarding the VALUE for equine-assisted services. By clearly articulating the benefits and demonstrating the impact of these services, our center reinforces the value and the need. This message is carried throughout our organization. Volunteers,

participants, families and board members help to spread the message of the VALUE of the services to the larger community.

Above all, the VALUE of our services is the positive impact on the lives of participants, families and volunteers alike. We shout it from the mountain tops so that others understand and more fully appreciate the impact it has. Increasing this awareness, communicating more fully the value of our services, as well as the financial need, helps create a more sustainable future. We can only be effective if we are still here in the future to provide these services.

Now more than ever, the field is seeing an increased demand for the benefits of horse and human interactions. The challenge of operating during a pandemic means incurring additional expenses. For example, we have had to incur additional cleaning services and supplies, additional helmets for personal use and fewer participants per hour. These expenses impact our center's cost equation. At the same time, many of those we serve are less able to afford to pay full tuition and need more financial aid.



Thanks to 4STEPS Board of Directors which has been consistent in understanding the VALUE of our services and has been disciplined to enable us to more accurately assess the impact of services in budget planning and financial predictions – all of which enhances our organizational stability, ensuring our center's ability to ride through uncertain times.

A NAME CHANGE AND A CAREER CHANGE FOR ZORRO

Before becoming a program horse at 4STEPS 'Zorro' was a harness racing horse. His owners, George and Tina Dennis of Harrington DE, knew the shiny black Standardbred* gelding would make a wonderful mount and exceptional therapeutic riding horse due to his calm, easygoing demeanor and his remarkable ability to please his owners in and around the barn and on the race track.

Born 'Shwingit' in Kentucky in 1998, then renamed for racing as 'El Diablo' in 2002 and renamed 'Zorro' in 2007 when he became a 4STEPS program horse, Zorro, won the heart of Director Sandy Winter when she got the call that they had a horse to rehome. Upon visiting the race barn Sandy was told that Zorro had a 'winning' attitude however he had injured his ankle while racing. After a year of rehabilitation he was no longer suitable for racing. His large and sturdy size and incredible loving nature was just what the program needed. Sandy remembers why she chose to take 'Zorro' home that day. "I had 3 criteria. He had to be 1) gentle, 2) kind around other horses, and 3) easy on a lead rope". All 3 criteria were met that day. And 15 years later 'Zorro' continues to live up to them!



Beyond being brave and smart, Zorro has always been a kind soul. When he first arrived at 4STEPS he was given under-saddle training and was allowed to join the herd before working as a therapeutic mount. He easily transitioned but soon his ankle injury became apparent and he was unable to be ridden. It was an obstacle that had to be faced. During the months of soaking, rub-downs, wrapping and even acupuncture treatments, Zorro became a horse that got lots of love and attention. All of our volunteers and clients were involved in his healing. He became the barn favorite and his injury became less and less painful until he was able to, pain-free, join our riding team.

During his time of healing we noticed the bonds Zorro made with the other horses. It was as if he knew he had to get better if he was going to do what the other horses were doing.

On one of his first riding lessons at 4STEPS, Zorro's usual gimping gait transformed into small trotting steps that his rider could manage. As he and his rider, Mike Fentress, travelled around the arena it was clear that Zorro was taking care of Mike and Zorro was very proud of himself for doing so. Leaving his pain behind, Zorro and Mike enjoyed the routine of getting ready to ride and then riding through patterns in the arena and on the trail.

LEARNING LIFE SKILLS

As Mike's riding skills improved, he and Zorro became best buds! As their mutual trust grew and their bond became stronger, Mike became more confident. Coming to the farm, grooming and tacking up his horse became part of his weekly ritual – but the impact of therapeutic riding on Mike's life extends far beyond his riding lessons. Mike has learned to deal with the situation at hand and knows that sometimes all you can do is wait for it to pass – an important lesson which is hard for a lot of us.

Through therapeutic riding, Mike improved his ability to manage stressful triggers and intense emotions, as well as regulate feeling of frustration, disappointment and anger. Mike's mother Linda tells Mike that none of us are perfect and all of us have room for improvement, emphasizing the importance of lifelong self-reflection and perseverance.

To this day, Zorro has given many 4STEPS riders the gift of his bravery, kind-heartedness and sweet personality. He is the big, black, shiny horse that snickers when you come to the farm and connects with so many people. Zorro lifts so many people up – he is in every way a SUPERSTAR!!!



**A Standardbred is a breed of horse that originated in the United States. This breed is most commonly known for its pacing and trotting abilities and has been a popular harness racing horse for over two centuries. Standardbreds are extremely fast and can even trot the distance of a mile in less than two minutes which is incredible for the trot. The small cart pulled by Standardbreds when they are racing is known as a sulky.*

EVERY'S JOURNEY

Avery has been riding at 4STEPS for 10 years. She recently underwent surgery to fix her severe scoliosis. Less than a week after her surgery Avery requested to visit the farm and her beautiful white horse 'Diamond'. Diamond recognized Avery's pain and helped to relieve some of it by snuggling with her. Avery gave Diamond a big hug and a treat and sang a song from her favorite movie 'SING'! When Avery hugged Diamond, Diamond hugged back!

Avery can't wait until March which is when her doctors expect she will be fully recovered and ready to get back in the saddle! The movement of the horse will help Avery's muscles relax, stretch and strengthen. We all are looking forward to Spring!





Do you know someone who is isolated and might need a natural connection?

Horses connect in a way that is organic and authentic and just might be the connection he or she needs.

Your referral and support enables us to connect horses and people in a profoundly meaningful way.

4STEPS relies on donations to fund scholarships and operations. Your donation inspires us to continue to enhance and enrich the lives of individuals with disabilities by providing adaptive horseback riding and equine-assisted activities. Joined by other local non-profits, we strive to build the kind of community we want to live in.

4STEPS Therapeutic Riding Program

5367 Sixty Foot Road, Parsonsburg MD 21849

Enhancing Lives through Equine Activities

4STEPS is a 501c3 non-profit organization

