



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](mailto:giddyup4steps@aol.com) [www.4stepstrp.org](http://www.4stepstrp.org)  
4STEPS Therapeutic Riding Program is a 501c3 charitable organization

### What does it mean when it's said that a horse is a mirror to your soul?

The natural ability of a horse to instantly present psychological awareness to a person is not only intuitive but transformative. Although many of us perceive that horses are magical, *they are not!* The horse purely does what it does best – be a horse.

Things do not have to be magical to be amazing. In many cases people do not have the language to de-mystify the deeper nature of horses (Equus). One can be a horseperson, understanding the language, be educated in the area of horse nature, and still be awed by the keen ability of the horse to demonstrate clearly and precisely an experience that a client needs to bring about profound change.

It is the innate ability of the horse to mirror our thoughts feelings, actions, behaviors and unspoken desires. It is through this mirroring process that clients come to understand who they are and how they impact the world around them.



**In this publication you will discover how 4STEPS horses help with personal and educational development**



**At 4STEPS, a lesson may turn into a yoga session for horse and kid...*just breathe and relax!***

The experience of being with horses in nature helps up-regulate your mood from depressed and anxious to general well-being and calm. *It* reduces anger, fear, and stress and increases pleasant feelings. Not only does being with horses in nature emotionally makes you feel better emotionally, physical well-being, blood pressure, heart rate, muscle relaxation, and production of feel good hormones improves. Time spent with horses in nature increases the ability to pay attention. The experience is so distracting that the stress of holding on to things decreases, pain lessens, and memory and focus improves.

## **'THANK YOU's' From our President, Nancy Blank**

### **Thank You Volunteers**

**4STEPS** future to deliver services of equine assisted activities and therapies (EAAT) in our community depends on many components. Key components include talented and passionate PATH Intl Certified Professionals, a safe facility, the best equines, funding and **VOLUNTEERS** including board members and program staff. No doubt continued generosity of time and talent by volunteers is a necessary component. We could not do our work without volunteers – those who support participants, engage our community by promoting our services, as well as help in many other ways they can.

When writing grants or recording volunteer hours for credentialing we place the highest figures to their value. Volunteers typically report getting more out of volunteering than giving and they give a lot! In 2018, our volunteers recorded over 1600 hours in direct service to our clients. In return we provide volunteers with training, lots of heartfelt hugs and thanks and interesting rewards such as pencils, pens and logo-wear to help them look and feel like a member of our team and of course community service hours.

### **Thank You Equines**

This year we lost three of our trusting equine partners, RU, Jingles and Dreamer. With the passing of each of our horses and ponies, the agonizing belief is that freeing them of pain and disability is the most compassionate thing to do. The decision to euthanize a beloved horse is the greatest act of love and compassion an owner can express. "One of the hardest decisions of owning a horse is when and how to say goodbye to an old friend," says Dr. Al Rayne, a veterinarian from Willards, MD. "While veterinary medicine has made great advances in diagnosis and treatment of lameness and infection, we do not have the tonic of youth to cure old age and other incurable conditions."

In time the heart starts to heal as a new reality settles in. We have lost several horses over the years and it is never easy. In our grief and sadness, we find positive ways to remember our beloved horses. New horses have been introduced to the herd. The horses that were selected have really big shoes to fill.

### **Thank You Donors**

**4STEPS** recognizes and honors those who support our program through their thoughtful and generous donations. Your donation keeps our riders in the saddle, funds our unmounted programs, and ensures our irreplaceable therapeutic horses stay healthy and content. Thanks to supporters like you, we have been a PATH Intl. program for more than 15 years.

Donations to **4STEPS** represent approximately 67% of our \$65,000 annual operating budget. Because of your gift, some very special people gain greater independence, self-confidence and strength. Thanks to your support, their own hard work, and the magic of the horse/human bond, our participants can meet their challenges with dignity and courage, and they become the awe-inspiring champions they were born to be.

### **Thank You Parents and Caregivers**

Caregiving for an individual has wide implications for society. Those who care for others, day in and day out, are building up everyone through their acts of everyday compassion. For all your incredible hard work and diligent emotional and physical support, we say **THANK YOU** to the parents and caregivers who help those who cannot help themselves.



## Notes from our Executive Director, Sandy Winter

### Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL): A Remarkable Tool for Our Tool Box



As humans we are exposed to learning something every day. Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) is one of the fastest growing services in our industry and for good reason. Learning to ride a horse helps a participant improve his life and reach his goals, perhaps even realize his dreams. Because the movement of a rider on a horse produces the feel-good hormone oxytocin, a rider becomes open for learning. When learning channels open up it requires that we have a deep tool box to provide a multitude of different services for people with a variety of challenges. That is the essence of EAL, bringing people together with horses in a learning environment. The value of our horses, professionals and volunteers truly amazes me and for this 4STEPS is a valuable resource in our community.

EAL is an experiential learning approach that promotes the development of life skills for educational and personal goals. While EAL can benefit many populations, the beauty of this work is how it can be individualized to fit each group or client. Although we provide specific programs to

participants and groups, our services are client-centered so that we create an experience tailored to each person and his needs and allow for flexibility in the delivery of that service.

A young boy on the autism spectrum, who has trouble making friends, gains experiences that help him to connect with family. As he learns how to communicate non-verbally with his horse, skills such as self-regulating, maintaining personal safety, and setting appropriate boundaries are taught.

For a teenage girl burned-out on traditional therapy, EAL can be a perfect bridge for engaging her back into the process of growth. Because we focus on future goals and development of life skills, she might spend a few weeks learning natural horsemanship and when she is more open can be transitioned back into therapy.

A developmentally challenged young man desires to work in the community but has no skills or resume to facilitate his goals. Our center provides training and skill development which can enhance a person's value as an employee.



Educators, homeschool groups, and parents find that incorporating EAL can help teach academics such as math and literacy. For example, Taffy, our Chincoteague Pony, can be used to teach local geography, social studies and cultural development of the Eastern Shore. Math can be taught with measurements and formulas to calculate feedings, medicine dosage and much more. Participants develop skills that can transfer into everyday life.

Each week amazing changes happen as the horses collaborate with those who come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. It is a rewarding pleasure to work and play with the participants, their families, volunteers and everyone engaged in our center.

## 4STEPS Therapeutic Riding Program

5367 Sixty Foot Road, Parsonsburg MD 21849

Enhancing Lives through Equine Activities

4STEPS is a 501c3 non-profit organization



**4STEPS**

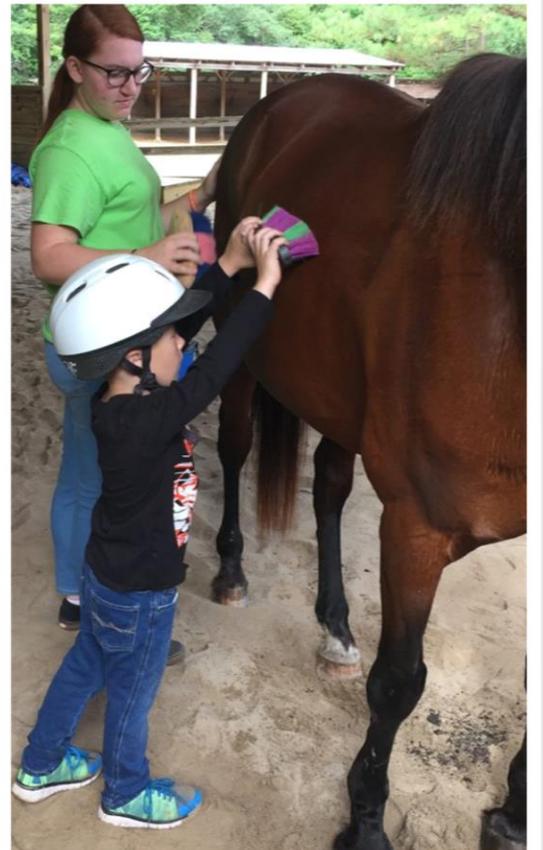
Therapeutic Riding Program

### Creating a Learning Environment

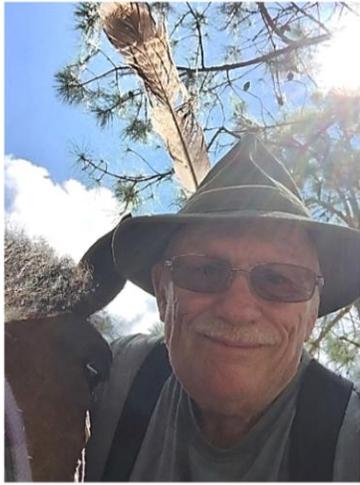
Horses are a great incentive for participants to become more open, trusting, accommodating and appreciative as horses are accepting and non-judgmental. Horses interact in a very authentic way. Through direct feedback from the horse, participants experience cause-and-effect relationships and develop appropriate decision-making skills.



Leading and grooming are part of a planned session and it helps a participant practice trust-building, setting boundaries and leadership.



***A request from our Treasurer, Dick Warren***  
**Your donation will make a real difference for our participants**



Like every organization, 4STEPS has annual operating expenses. Your gift will be used where it is needed most to fund all the basics to provide for horse and facility care and use, running an office, supplies and postage, maintaining our PATH association including program insurance and membership dues—all those mundane but critical things which allow us to continue providing our life-changing services.

**Help with Financial Assistance.** Our goal is to keep the cost of participation as low as possible so to keep our services affordable to those who need it the most. Last year we provided 12 scholarships to participant families in need!

***Here are some of the comments we've recently received from our families, and DONORS LIKE YOU MAKE IT ALL HAPPEN!!!***

*"Our daughter talks about the horses and the experience all the time and asks if it is her riding day and looks forward to it. Her therapists say she is communicating more."*

*"Our son has come a long way with riding, and we are very proud of his accomplishments and how well it fits in with our plan toward independence. Riding has given him a reason to shine. He often talks about riding at work and with his family and peers. We are very happy to be given the opportunity to have him in this program."*

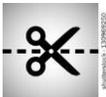
*"We are so grateful for the opportunity 4STEPS provides for our special needs community."*

*"Thanks to everyone who makes 4STEPS possible!"*

**Make your gift online, by phone or by mail:**

**Gifts by mail can be sent to**  
4STEPS Therapeutic Riding  
5367 Sixty Foot Road, Parsonsburg, MD 21849

To make your gift online go to [www.4stepstrp.org](http://www.4stepstrp.org)



***THANK YOU FOR YOUR TAX-DEDUCTIBLE GIFT!***

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to support 4STEPS. Enclosed is a check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

To pay by paypal or credit card go to [www.4stepstrp.org](http://www.4stepstrp.org)

## Connecting with our Volunteers

A volunteer is defined as *someone who gives his or her time, effort and talent without seeking anything in return.* Although the definition is simple, the enormous commitment volunteers make is boundless. It is what enables 4STEPS to run its programs, serve participants and reach out to our local community. We could not survive without the dedication of volunteers.

Volunteers share in the success of their students, meet the challenge of new experiences and certainly feel they make a difference in someone's life.



Everyone has a talent that we can use. If you would like to give some of your valuable time to help improve the lives of the disabled children and adults at 4STEPS give us a call. We hope that in doing so you will find that your own life will be enhanced as well. All of us at 4STEPS are proud of the fine work we do and the extraordinary results we see.

**2019 Early Spring Session begins the week of March 4<sup>th</sup>. To find how you can help, call our office at 410-835-8814 or email [giddyup4steps@aol.com](mailto:giddyup4steps@aol.com) . To download an application, go to our website at [www.4stepstrp.org](http://www.4stepstrp.org)**