Student Service and Research at Tarleton

**Therapeutic Riding: Partnering with the Horse**

By Elizabeth B. Christensen, TSU Graduate Student

Tarleton Equine Assisted Therapeutic Riding (TREAT Riding) is a unique program designed to utilize horseback riding as a form of physical, emotional, and recreational therapy. This program is located in Stephenville, TX, and associated with Tarleton State University. “Therapeutic riding is fabulous; it improves the individual’s self-awareness, confidence, fine motor skills, posture, balance and coordination.” There are many disabilities that respond positively to equine therapy: autism, cerebral palsy, development delay, emotional disturbance, head injuries, PTSD, scoliosis, spina bifida, stroke, and many others. This is because the therapeutic riding involves all of the muscles of the body and stimulates all body systems. The rhythmical gait of the horse causes the rider’s / client’s pelvis, shoulders and trunk to react similar to those produced by the normal human walk. TREAT also serves as a training program for college students who plan to enter careers in a variety of phases of the equine assisted therapy industry and for students involved with special needs in their chosen profession. TREAT is a hands-on laboratory for a variety of classes including special education, adaptive physical education, psychology, nursing

The TREAT program partners with the horse to enrich one’s heart, not only the rider’s, but all who are involved. I have obtained the real sense of dedication, sincerity, and compassion through this program. I can only hope someday I too can use this experience to further my understanding, awareness, and patience with all my unique and different students I come across in my profession as a teacher. How can I duplicate this amazing TREAT program? There were so many life lessons, and this is the best program I know of. It teaches one to be grateful, humble, and to give back to society. Within this program, I was very blessed to meet a devoted, caring, knowledgeable, enthusiastic, exceptional Dr. David Snyder, Shelby, and staff. They were professional, along with student and non-student volunteers. I thoroughly enjoyed talking with Dr. Snyder, to get his opinion or explanation on various things about the program, and what it takes to make things tick. He and his staff have been a wealth of knowledge for me, and I have learned so much from this class. Ty, a student of the class TREAT, was kind to show me around the tack room, how to set up for class, tie up horses, brush and pick feet, what the different size saddles were, and remind me to make sure gates are closed at all times. Lat-ham showed me how to saddle and end up with the TX (T) wrap. I was able to capture lots of amazing photos, videos, and action shots throughout the session. Nothing was staged; everything was the real deal. The volunteers were communicating and engaging in conversation with their riders, at all times. I expected to give back to the community through the program, but I myself attained so much more. What an amazing experience this was with such amazing people.

Immediately after arrival, I was trying to figure out how I could be of help. I wanted to add or contribute to this amazing program, and possibly run one similar back at home in my newly assembled indoor arena. After experiencing a day at the TREAT program I was able to come up with some ideas of my own, to add. Some of these ideas were to incorporate the use of swim noodles, present large alphabet letters to have participants ride to, and imaginary rain fall using (marking tape), to name a few. My expectations of this class were to learn and experience some valuable insight on what it takes to run such a special program as TREAT. While being a teacher, I know of multiple students that would benefit immensely from a program like TREAT. The progress that each of the riders made was amazing and being able to witness it with my own eyes was unbelievably incredible. For each event, the riders arrived full of excitement. Their smiles were contagious, and you knew they were ready for some fun. The bond between the rider and the horse was truly amazing. The horse was calm and collected, even in the heat, and made an excited rider happy. The horses were well trained, pretty much bomb proof, and truly loved their job. TREAT horses may have
a tense child, or a loud excited child, a child tugging on its mane, or even one jumping about the saddle, but the horses never acted up. TREAT horses were gentle and kind. I feel it was an accomplishment for most of these riders, to actually mount, have a fun safe ride, and dismount. Fun is the key to this program I believe. I enjoyed talking to as many parents, caregivers, grandparent, etc. as I could to get their perspectives on what really makes TREAT tick. Along with learning from some amazing TREAT staff and watching how to run a program of this caliber so smoothly.

Method
While doing my part, leading the horse around the trail course, for Susan, with Jordan as my side walker, we talked, played games, and had some fun. Susan was so happy, waving to all her friends in the area. She was on top of the world, which I believe was a feeling all the riders shared. Once I was finished, I then ended the day by wiping down all the riding helmets with Morgan, and collected my questionnaires and read some amazing responses, which I believe makes it all worthwhile. There really isn’t much I would change, maybe only add to it by creating some new safe activities for the riders to experience. They could possibly use swim noodles, flagging tape, add more wind chimes, and get some barrels. One particular girl pretended she was barrel racing, but we only had three cones, I’m sure that is not the same in her eyes. So, I picked up three barrels and wrote TREAT on them for the program.

Jeffrey comes with his dad, and rides the large Clydesdale horse named “Brady”. Jeffrey was in a terrible accident as a teenager, once a talented athlete, now wheelchair bound. He goes everywhere with his dad. Jeffrey totally understands what is going on, but he has difficulty responding back. He uses various signs like thumbs up, nodding, and a smile. Jeffrey absolutely loves shooting baskets on horseback, which I think is his favorite thing to do. He especially loves all the girls being around and talking with him. Jeffrey and his father share such a special bond. His dad actually walks the whole trail and assists the volunteer walkers. The TSU football players were great with him and really showed him a good time. An observation I made was that Jeffrey was tense one day, and needed an extra minute to relax in order to lower his foot in the stirrup. I then witnessed the warmth of the horse relax Jeffrey so he was able to lower his foot.

The “Sure Hands” lift $8,000 several years ago and how it works is truly wonderful. This was the first time I had ever witnessed something like that. As I watched the machine in action my eyes welled up with tears of joy. What a beautiful thing to be able to witness. TREAT was giving a person their life back, something to look forward to, and to be a part of. It was a full day, this time, with a lot of riders. It was so amazing to watch Dr. Snyder, Shelby and the staff, select the horse for each rider. They knew exactly what horse would fit a particular rider. They definitely had their system down, and the program ran smoothly, well organized, and adjustments could be made as they arose. Dr. Snyder, especially, knew every rider and each of his horses, their strengths and their little quirks. He would explain to me what he was doing and why with a particular rider. I was totally amazed at his knowledge, and strength with physically lifting and placing riders on horseback. Dr. Snyder and Morgan were also back riders, which meant that they would ride on a pad behind the saddle to support / hold on to the rider during their 30-minute ride. I was able to get some really fantastic pictures of Dr. Snyder and Morgan, what special people they are.

Then there is Brent who loves the water activity, where he would scoop up toy plastic animals with a net on horseback. He was always giggling, talking, and having a grand old time. Brent’s brother or mother would bring him to TREAT. It was awesome to see how supportive and helpful his brother was, and his mom was very nice, too. It was remarkable to see how at times Brent’s horse would get hit by the ball, from the rebound off the backboard, and not even flinch a muscle.

Ian is a rider who usually cries when he first gets onto the horse and then has an absolute blast. When he rides, Morgan back rides with him, to give him support while riding. On this particular day he had fun with the rings and was a ham when I took pictures of him with my camera. He loved getting the attention. I was in the library the next day, and I believe that he recognized me as I waved to him and made eye contact.

Joseph was very stiff one day when Dr. Snyder was lifting him onto the horse. Dr. Snyder told us that it was an occurring thing and very typical for cerebral palsy. It was
amazing to see that by the end of the ride he was very relaxed. This is just another prime example of how awesome this program is, and how much it truly helps those in need.

Our class was featured in Saturday’s local paper with TREAT rides for the local Veterans. It was very inspiring to see all that help that was given to the veterans in need, and I even captured a picture of Dr. Snyder using the “Sure Hands” lift to help a disabled veteran mount a horse. You could just see the sense of accomplishment written all over his face, priceless.

One day I was able to help Henry’s Mom; she was alone with the three boys, Henry, James, and William. What a truly special person she is. I was holding baby William, while also holding on to James who wanted to explore and communicate with Henry. I watched Henry, who was full of smiles and making great eye contact. At one point, I told Henry’s Mom I was down for the whole summer, and I would love to give her and her husband a break so they could go out and enjoy themselves sometime. She was like “Really?” and I said absolutely, and that I would even drive to Weatherford. You would think that I gave her a million dollars, from her reaction, and the smile that was on her face. After their ride, I helped her load the boys into their car, and she said she would bring their address, etc. to the next TREAT event. I was sad to not be able to make it work prior to leaving Stephenville, but there is always next year.

Dr. Snyder gave me an old Strides Journal (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship Internationals), which has an advertisement for the insurance company Dr. Snyder was telling me about. The name of it is Markel, and it’s “The Insurance Company with Horse Sense”. This provided me with a wealth of information for creating my own therapeutic riding program, and finding good reputable insurance company.

Results
Appreciation, confidence and learning were obtained every day for me. After an interview with Jared’s grandpa one day, and he had quite a bit to say, “Jared varies minute to minute, but he’s happy today. Communicating is tough; he goes to a school in Granbury, and rides once or twice a week. I could not say enough good things about Dr. Snyder and his staff. Jared is in constant motion, but I can control him when need be. Jared has come a long way from starting this program 4-5 years ago. The horses are great with him when he gets jumping around and repeating statements. It relaxes him when he gets on the back of the horse, and gives him another fun thing to do. Jared hesitates, collects himself before he mounts and dismounts on his own, like he is concentrating on what he needs to do” (James Watson).

There is always something amazing taking place at the TREAT program. One day, Luke waved and said “Bye, Bye”. Another day, Ian was talking a little and waving good-bye. It is Dr. Snyder’s goal to have Ian walking in a year.

Wow, I am still so amazed how smoothly the TREAT program is run. There are such a large number of riders, all with various disabili- ties that are getting to ride for their session without any or little wait. Dr. Snyder and Shelby are always selecting the perfect horse that would fit to that particular rider’s needs. The back riders supporting the rider as they rode, sitting only on a small pad behind the saddle, were so neat to watch. I do not even think I could keep myself on without a saddle, let alone with a tight muscled rider in front of me. Then, always after their riding session a relaxed rider was taken off the horse. My expectations of this program were definitely exceeded beyond amazement.

The connection between rider, staff, and guardians showed such dedication, sincerity, and compassion. The horses did their job proudly, with sweat upon them just standing there waiting for the next rider. It just melts my heart when, after the dismount, Brent would get back in his walker and push it up to the horse he rode, pet it and say “thank you” every time no matter which horse he rode. You could just see and feel the bond.

I really enjoyed watching Dr. Snyder and Shelby load wheelchair bound riders with the “Sure Hands” lift. The lift worked so beautifully, with such class and dignity. The horse just stood there and waited patiently for its rider to mount, get adjusted, and begin that fun safe ride. It was even amazing to see the student volunteers being out in the hot sun, still creating a fun time for riders, and communicating with them as well. It was a special thing to witness and be involved in. A class I will never forget and talk positively about for years to come.

This day began with catching /
gathering up the TREAT horses from the pasture. I then proceeded to brush them and pick the dirt from their feet, for almost half the herd. I enjoyed doing it, but forgot to wear my compression sleeve for my edema in my right arm (I had lymph nodes removed, so it swells, I have to be careful). Dr. Snyder fixed me up with some horse vet wrap and I was good to go. It was funny though all the riders took notice right away, and were concerned asking me if I was OK? I reassured them and off they went on their ride.

A group of down-syndrome riders came this particular day. As Ricky came into the building he decided to pull the fire alarm, and got scared and ran into the room adjacent. The sirens were going off, lights were flashing like crazy. Most of the riders were already mounted and outside on their ride, so they were fine. The horses tied up just stood there during all the flashing and squealing, not even flinching. The riders that were waiting for their turn moved to outside the building like a fire drill, and did very well. Yet some of the riders were a little more shaken up than others. Dr. Snyder reported the incident, and nice gentlemen came to shut the system off. Dr. Snyder and Jeff’s Dad (involved for 7 years now), said that it was a first. Dr. Snyder remained positive and stated, “It was a great-unexpected practice.”

Gunner arrived and they needed a side walker and it was my turn. Gunner is an autistic boy with very little communication. I did ask him a few questions about his sister, who was also riding the horse he was on and if he liked TREAT. He seemed to understand, had a few grunts and eye movement. Gunner seemed to really enjoy going down hill. I believe it maybe because he had to adjust to the downward movement, but he would smile and make his special noises of joy. He especially loved the chimes, but was not a big fan of the ropes dangling, or even want to stop and play with them. You could tell that he was really having a fun time. He was singing out on that trail and moving his body with the horse, able to ride on his own and sits nicely, with great posture. You could tell he was so proud to be able to ride by himself like his sister did.

**Discussion:**
What Jared’s grandpa was telling me about Jared was so similar to what I have been reading in our class book *Dibs in Search of Self*. He told me Jared loves to read, is able to watch two movies at the same time, likes a schedule, and is amazed with calendars and dates. The main character in the book, Dibs, was very similar. Jared’s grandpa and I talked for a very long time. As he was leaving he said something I’ll never forget, “Thank you for caring and helping with our special kids.”

**TREAT Riding Questionnaire Summary:** Those that completed the form
Physical Benefits Witnessed

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved appetite</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decrease spasticity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Improved balance and coordination</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>93%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improved respiration and circulation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase range of motion in joints</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>58%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reduction in abnormal movement patterns</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory integration</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strengthened muscles</td>
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<td>78%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stretching of tight or spastic muscles</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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Psychological Benefits Witnessed

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<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tr>
<td>Development of patience</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional control and self-discipline</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<tr>
<td>General sense of well being</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>58%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improved self-confidence</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased interest in the outside world</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased sense of control</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sense of normality</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
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</table>

Social Benefits Witnessed of the Rider

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development of friendships and trust</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of respect and love for animals</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience a sense of being part of a team</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience independence</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For my final report I chose to use Henry, a 5 year old that weighs 35 pounds. I chose him because I met him and his parents in April of 2014 when I was visiting the TREAT program for the first time. It was after that first day there that I decided I wanted to duplicate this program back home. At the time in April, his parents were new to the program, but very excited and seemed to have an invested interest. They drove from Weatherford, TX, about forty-five minutes, in order to attend the program. The whole family attends, younger brother, mom, dad (when he can) and now new baby William (5 weeks old). Henry’s middle brother James also rides in the program, and he just has a ball. Henry’s disabilities listed were: hydrocephalus, genetic mutation, rare genetic mutation, and general developmental disabilities. His listed medication was Miralax, which I assume he has for the common physical problem with this disability of chronic constipation. The term hydrocephalus is derived from the Greek words "hydro" water and "cephalus" head. It is a condition in which the primary characteristic is excessive accumulation of fluid in the brain. Hydrocephalus was once known as "water on the brain," but the "water" is actually cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) — a clear fluid that surrounds the brain and spinal cord. Hydrocephalus may be congenital or acquired. Congenital hydrocephalus is present at birth and may be caused by either genetic influences that occur during fetal development, or genetic abnormalities. Henry’s mom stated that his is genetic.

Henry’s mom also mentioned that he can sit with assistance, he is not mobile, and that he uses a wheelchair. She also stated in his history information that he is very social but non-verbal. The goal Henry’s parents have for him is to gain core muscle strength. On my TREAT Riding Questionnaire Henry’s Mom checked: Physical benefits: Improve balance and coordination; Strengthened muscles. Psychological Benefits: General sense of well-being; Increase interest in the outside world. Social Benefits: Development of friendships and trust; Development of respect and love for animals. Jennifer (Henry’s mom) stated: “Henry loves the social aspect of TREAT. It’s great opportunity for him to get individual attention while riding and gaining strength. His core muscles have gotten stronger since he has started. We also appreciate that the TREAT class gives students the opportunity to work with kids with special needs.”

I have now witnessed Henry as a rag doll little boy held on a horse by a back rider, in April, to a boy sitting up and trying to straighten himself up in August. He is so full of smiles now, and I believe he recognizes me, as we laugh, and communicate before each ride. I like to try and help his amazing mom, who will sometimes come to TREAT by herself with all three boys. She is very knowledgeable and such a sweet person, and I really enjoy talking with her and her husband. They are an amazing family, and Henry has truly flourished right in front of me in this TREAT program. I am so happy for all of them, amazed, and thrilled by such good things this program does. Dr. Snyder, Shelby and staff are some real special people.

Following are various rider evaluation sheets filled out by various students and volunteers:

Henry likes to be outside and usual does 3 laps on the outdoor trail. Ty Tapp commented: “Posture and balance play a key role to help his head from tipping over; Henry loved the chimes and ropes; He was happy.” Mandi hopes that soon he could sit up on his own with no back rider, even though Morgan is awesome. Sara states: “I think he enjoys riding and needs to work on his posture, balance and core strength.” She also mentioned how Henry fell asleep at one point of the ride, also how they weaved the poles and had a fun safe ride. Latham suggests that he work on his hips, to try and stretch them out to give him confidence. He also mentioned that Henry liked weaving the poles. Morgan Miller usually back rides with Henry, and she noticed that Henry is tighter on the right side of his body, and grips the rein well with his left hand. By the end of the ride Morgan seems to notice and feel Henry relax more. The last few rides with him he tried to hold himself up more, and increased his balance and coordination. Henry actually pets Leo (the horse) and seemed more confident and needing Morgan less. He attempts the rings, water toys and weaves the poles, with her also. Morgan continues to work on posture, relaxed legs and holding the rein. Morgan and Henry have a wonderful bond. Another rider evaluation from Morgan states similar to the above but this time she says, “His confidence grows every round, he let go of the bareback rider, held the reins, and started petting “Thumper” the horse.” Henry has been on a variety of horses, which is awesome and allows him to feel different gaits to different horses. Macken-
zie would like to achieve communication and balance for Henry. She too did three laps out on the trail, rings, and the water activity with him, and saw some smiles a bit of sound. Jacey, on the other hand, again wants to work on balance and posture. She experienced the same activities and he only held on or grabbed one ring. Which I believe it is a lot of work for him to do that. She said he seemed to enjoy the water area, but would not grab the wet toys. Sara worked on bareback riding with him to strengthen arms, legs and core muscles. Henry built confidence with each round, slowly touching the horse. She believes Henry needs to work on loosening his limbs and stretching while walking on horseback.

The student and volunteers are just wonderful. In the heat of the day, they are tacking, setting up, assisting riders, filling out paper work, communicating with our special riders, and creating a fun atmosphere here at TREAT. I am so fortunate to be able to experience and witness such an amazing program and people who run it. I thoroughly enjoyed taking pictures and videos of some amazing happenings right before my eyes. I witnessed children laughing, smiling, waving bye-bye, talking, and petting the horse while saying “Thank you.” My heart just melts with warmth and is tickled pink. Watching Dr. Snyder and Shelby use the lift to get wheel chair bound riders on horseback was truly invigorating. To see the reactions on the riders’ faces of accomplishment, and the bonding taking place with students, volunteers, and staff was remarkable. Again, it was neat to see how organized they were and how they were able to give a large number of clients a nice fun safe ride, in an orderly fashion with little to no waiting around. There was just so much magic happening before my eyes, that I feel like each Tarleton student should experience this outstanding TREAT program before they graduate. It truly puts life into perspective.

My recommendations for Henry’s future riding sessions to help him improve in his core muscle groups would be as follows. As I watched this young boy Henry grow before my eyes, and actually sit up from his back rider, it brings tears of joy to my eyes. His parents take notice right away as it is happening, with smiles on their faces. As I witnessed Dr. Snyder lift another boy from his wheelchair, up the mounting board, and see if he enjoys the rings activity will help, reach across does wonders for core muscles.” He continued on talking about how shooting the basketball sideways, where Henry would have to balance sideways on the saddle, would help too. All I could think of was that the horse does not like the basketballs coming back at their face, but that’s not true, they don’t even flinch. It was ideal for clients to mix up their angle of shooting, in order to work on core muscle groups. Dr. Snyder went on to explain about this ply wood board with cut out shapes, where the clients would throw bean bags or knobby balls through, it is a great activity. “Especially, throwing down at the target works those core muscles,” stated Dr. Snyder. Then off he went to assist another rider; he is an amazing man, and difficult to describe in just words. I just respect him, his work, and gifted nature so highly beyond belief.

I was looking forward to working with Henry to watch progress unfold before my eyes of his improvements from April 2014, as we wrap up this session. Henry and I always bond right before his ride, and I just know he understands me with that great big smile he has. He loves his family and they love him so very much. Henry has made some new friends here at TREAT, what a wonderful thing. Henry’s mom was so happy and appreciative that the Tarleton TREAT class gives the students the opportunity to work with special needs kids. I would like to say, thank you for allowing us to work with Henry in this program. You chose a wonderful program, in which he has just flourished. I am so grateful for you allowing me the opportunity to meet and interact with such a wonderful child.

This next ride I would like to create would have something Henry will throw down at. We could possibly use the little tikes basketball backboard, and see if he enjoys that, and if it works on his core muscle group. Just watching Hen-
ry come alive and open up is amazing. I always love to see that big beautiful smile he has and it just makes my day. Every time he comes we have fun safe ride with him. I hope the program TREAT continues to do what it has for Henry. It obviously has been working; I have watched him grow right before my eyes. I only hope to one day open up my own facility that could do what the TREAT program is doing for Henry, and will try my best to continue their tradition. Therapeutic riding is fabulous; improves the individual’s self-awareness, confidence, improving fine motor skills, posture, balance and coordination. This hands-on lab is truly life changing, and I am blessed. Thank you for an amazing experience with some amazing people.

Quotes:
“TREAT riding offers many benefits for the riders. The most important thing that they offer, I believe, is improving self-esteem. Every rider has a different condition or reason why they are at TREAT Riding, but improvement on self-esteem is something most of them all benefit from. Learning and knowing that they can ride and/or control a horse is an extreme self-esteem boost.” -Tonya King

“TREAT helps Lizzy build muscle to enhance her balance and posture.” -Jacey Tomlin

“When she can't necessarily run or jump or be very athletic normally on a horse she can do it all. In addition, it helps with healing and core muscle strength which is extremely important for her both on and off the horse.” -Kelli Bannert

“TREAT gives every rider a place to go out, be social, and interact with other people. It is a place where they can be themselves and enjoy life.” -Eric Martinez

“TREAT has been an excellent addition to Rock House! Our clients have something to look forward to every week. It helps them stay active and motivated to do well throughout the week. They are happier, feel better, and tend to socialize more. I don't see how it can get any better!” -Maegan Moreno

“Balance, coordination helps him cope with adaptability. A fun therapy out of 5 total he takes. Helps develop social skills. He is cute and rocks the helmet. Anything that may help him, we will take advantage of necessity for momma, gives me a 30-minute break.” -Paula Nielsen

“Awakening senses, child is excited to be around animals and talking a lot.” -Jeanna Devinett

“This is a wonderful program for children with different forms of spina bifida. My daughter would rather this form of physical therapy then going to a hospital. She looks forward to it and that is wonderful.” -Jessica Gilbert

“Has improved his balance and coordination. Allows him to be out in fresh air and get exercise in a safe environment.” -Shaun Baker

“Brent has developed a rapport with the workers at TREAT. He is also more confident when being addressed by new people (he doesn't look at me before he answers anymore). He has gotten stronger in his core muscles, upper body strength, and balance has improved.” -Amy Morrison

“Great enjoyment of program, which increased interaction physical and emotional abilities with others.” -Jim Garrrell

“The TREAT program has helped/ is helping Henry in his physical abilities and cognitive skills. The horse helps Henry to use his core muscles for balance as well as stretch his leg muscles. Without this program, I feel that Henry would not progress so rapidly.” -Morgan Miller

“Jake loves being around animals and has gotten more confident and more independent being able to ride the horse by himself. He thinks that it is the coolest thing ever and did not think he would be able to do it.” -Grace Clark

“I feel the most difficult thing for special needs or anyone is leaving their comfort zone whatever it is. TREAT Riding encourages a new found trust in a horse and team of caring individuals, which attributes to physical, psychological, and social benefits.” -Cody Christensen

“Some are a little scared at first and build confidence throughout the TREAT Riding program. The added fun to their life, a hobby, they can talk about and look forward to. It is not only rewarding experience to the rider, but the volunteer walkers as well.” -Liz Christensen

I already have riders and parents “chomping at the bit” to begin therapeutic riding in my community. Been receiving numerous calls, I guess the word is out. I am looking forward to opening horizons with my new acquired passion of
therapeutic riding and its benefits. After witnessing this amazing program with some amazing people, my goal is to create a similar program in my community for our special needs, foster care, and veteran population. Volunteer and get involved - it is a life changing experience. Please view my YOUTUBE below and see for yourself the amazement.

TREAT Riding Summer 2014
YOUTUBE created by Elizabeth B. Christensen

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gk1k7omKkrE

References:


Delta Society© The Delta Society uses all species of domestic animals for animal assisted therapy. Their website contains a wealth of information and research about the benefits of animal assisted therapy.