



# TEC Connections

*The Therapeutic Equestrian Center engages the power of horses to challenge people with special needs to build stronger bodies, minds, and spirits.*

## Life in the Fast Lane

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Thank you!

**Special thanks to Mary Margaret Butler and Whirlpool Corporation for our new refrigerator at the TEC barn!**

**Contact TEC at  
(269) 429-0671 or  
info@tecfarm.org.**

All TEC instructors are certified by and TEC is a member center of:



Elliott Sheldon likes things that go fast: rollercoasters, snowmobiles, cars, and now, horses. He himself tackles life at full speed, with enthusiasm that is off the charts. His mother, Tessa, says "Elliott was born to bring joy to the world", and it doesn't take more than a few minutes with him to see what she means.

Elliott is in most respects a typical 7-year-old. He attends Stewart Elementary in Lakeshore; he loves Mickey Mouse and Minions; and he fights with his older brother and sister. What sets Elliott apart are the challenges he has had to overcome. After suffering two massive strokes while in utero, he was born with epilepsy and cerebral palsy, which left him partially paralyzed. **The doctors told his parents that he would probably never walk or talk, but Elliott is a fighter, and proved them all wrong.** They also thought that he might be deaf, but according to his mother, that turned out to be a case of typical childhood "selective listening".

Tessa laughingly says "Elliott has absolutely NO self esteem problems!" However, there are things his brother and sister can do that he can't. **Now, thanks to TEC, Elliott has something that is HIS.** He goes home after each Saturday lesson and tells everyone in his family what he did and what he learned. **Since Tessa is a special education teacher, she especially appreciates**



*Elliott rewards Tori with a treat.*

**that Autumn Zick, his TEC instructor, adapts the lesson to his specific needs. He can't use his right arm? Then we'll teach him to neck rein!**

Tessa hopes that her son will get to the point where he can handle a horse independently. He seems to be on his way; during one of his first lessons, he decided that he was ready to trot. He gave his pony, Tori, the signal, and off they went - much to the surprise of his sidewalkers! Elliott loves to trot, and he LOVES Tori! During a recent lesson he showered her nose with kisses, saying over and over again, "She's so cute!"

Tessa notes that Elliott, like many children, has an innate connection with animals, and that **"the TEC horses have helped him to feel successful"**. *She's excited about what she sees happening at the barn, adding, "I can't say enough good things about TEC, and I wish more people knew about it."*

Elliott's grandma and grandpa recently gave him a blanket with a horse on it that looks like Tori. On Friday nights, when he doesn't want to go to bed, Tessa reminds him that when he gets up the next morning he gets to go ride at the barn. With that, her little fighter happily climbs into bed and snuggles under his horse blanket, looking forward to trotting along on his cute little Tori.



*Elliott relishes a trot on Tori.*

# King of the Hill

**Eeyore.** Whenever volunteer Lisa Mearing sees TEC horse, Garth, standing in his stall, she thinks of the unassuming little donkey from Winnie the Pooh. Head down, minding his own business; not begging for attention, not bugging the horse next door; no muss, no fuss; that's Garth.

Except when he's not. According to Dee Tuohy, the TEC Barn Manager, Garth has a flip side to his Eeyore persona: a 'King of the Hill' attitude with the barn team volunteers. **While he is patient, tolerant, and steadfast for his students, he treats the barn volunteers like his subjects.** He has no problem letting them know when he is hungry, tired, bored, or irritated; if he had a bell to ring for food service he would do it! When being exercised he will refuse after a few moments to do any more, because he doesn't think expending energy outside of class is necessary. He doesn't like being kept waiting for his supper and he drools so much his nickname is Slurpee. Despite all of these little quirks Garth remains a solid favorite for the barn volunteers. **He is the go-to horse for riders with behavioral challenges - always cooperative, willing, and dependable; in other words, a regular Mr.Mellow!**

Whichever side of his personality he is displaying, this little fireplug of a horse can do it all. Built wide, sturdy, and close to the ground, he is strong enough to carry a full grown man yet gentle enough to carry a young child. Garth's specific breeding is unknown, but in addition to pony and draft horse, he probably has some Morgan blood. According to his Ohio health certificate his official birthday is January 1, 1992,



*Garth feeling his oats in the pasture.*

making him 25 years old - the equivalent of approximately 75 human years.

One volunteer, Jody, tells about a trail ride where he saved the day. Her husband was leading Garth and she was sidewalking for the rider. They ran into a swarm of bees, Garth got stung, and he jumped - but just once. Jody caught the rider, her husband hung onto Garth, and that was the end of it. They got the rider back on and continued on their way with no one the worse for wear, thanks to Garth's unflappability.

Volunteer Amy Pheifer has a huge soft spot in her heart for this gentle boy. **He reminds her of a little old man, an old soul, and, yes, Eeyore.** Because Garth didn't get a lot of attention before he became a TEC horse, she and her husband, Jim, do their best to make up for it with lots of extra pets and kisses whenever they see him.

During his interview, Garth mentioned he was making his Christmas list. He would like all his fans to know how much he adores treats and grooming, and asked

that they please watch announcements for the TEC Horse Christmas lists when the time comes. He believes everyone has been exceptionally good this year, especially himself!!



*Dylan is all smiles as he rides Garth during a lesson.*



**Do you want to support a horse, volunteer, ride, or participate at the Therapeutic Equestrian Center? Visit [www.tecfarm.org](http://www.tecfarm.org), call (269) 429-0671, or e-mail [info@tecfarm.org](mailto:info@tecfarm.org).**



# A “Horse Fix” and So Much More



Volunteers Jim and Amy Pheifer

The first time Jim and Amy Pheifer visited the TEC barn, he thought “Nice barn!”. She thought, “What can they do in this little place???”. It was the spring of 2015, and Jim had seen an ad in the *Herald Palladium* for TEC volunteers. Having raised quarter horses in Florida for many years, he thought, “That’s something I know we’d stick with”, so he and Amy signed up for the volunteer training. They have been involved with TEC ever since. **And now they both agree that the TEC barn is a small but mighty place, well-equipped and well-run, and that amazing things happen there.**

Amy can’t believe the amount of growth the riders make in a short time. She recalls riders who needed help just to sit up on their horses when they began, who are now sitting up and posting at the trot on their own. She wasn’t expecting to get so attached to the riders, and says that especially after working with the same people over multiple sessions, the bond becomes very strong. For Jim, being the lifelong horseman that he is, the horses are the best part of the job. However, he loves that **“the riders don’t care who you are; they don’t care about your color, your religion - they’re just happy to be there, and happy that you’re there to help them.”**

When asked what skills or qualities a person should have to work at TEC, Amy says **“you need a good heart, and the ability to walk. Having a love of horses helps, but once you get there, you will fall in love with the people, too.”** Jim feels that horse

sense and horse skills are helpful for volunteers, but not essential. There are plenty of things to do besides working with the riders and horses, and **“every little job or contribution helps; whether it’s cleaning a stall or donating rolls of paper towels, it all benefits the horses, the riders, and the program”.**

Amy would love for TEC “to find someone to sponsor us every year so we wouldn’t always have to be asking for money, and to have enough volunteers that Beth [TEC Volunteer Coordinator, Beth Drollinger] wouldn’t have to scramble to find people to cover the lessons.” Jim would like to see “a new barn with a nice bathroom and a refrigerator that works\*”, and more men involved in the program to help with the never-ending building and maintenance that is a part of any horse facility.

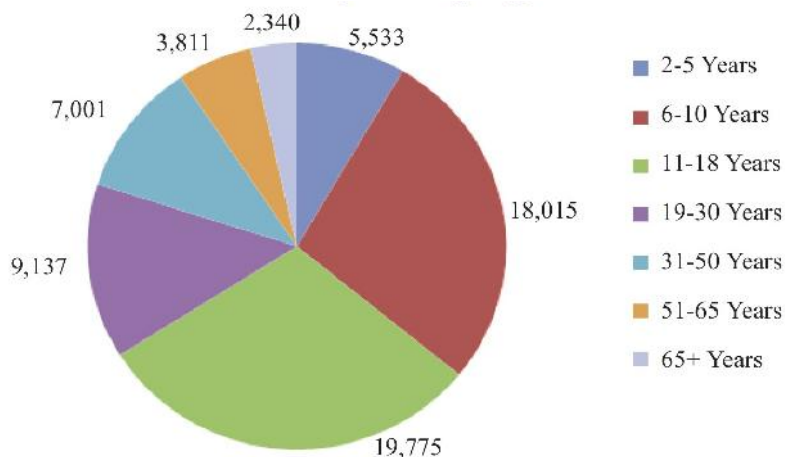
*[\*TEC is now enjoying a new refrigerator thanks to the generosity of Mary Margaret Butler and Whirlpool Corporation.]*

One of the reasons Amy and Jim became involved with TEC was to get their “horse fix”. They found this was a great way to spend time with horses without the work and expense of having their own. To someone who is thinking about volunteering at TEC, Amy would say, **“Come and watch, see what happens here, and then do it, even if it’s just to sub.”** Jim would put it more bluntly: **“Just get off the couch and do it.”**



Jim makes room for the new refrigerator while Amy supervises.

## PATH International Participants by Age



TEC is a proud member of PATH International, the governing body for equine-assisted activities and therapies.

# Calling All Veterans

**Veterans, TEC WITH VETS needs you! We need your time, your talents, and your skills.** TEC WITH VETS is a no-cost therapeutic program for military veterans and their families. It is specifically designed to help veterans who may be dealing with a variety of physical or emotional challenges; such as, anxiety, depression, or Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS). You'll find that it can be a great alternative to other treatments you may have tried, and it's fun to boot!

When you start the program, you will be paired with a horse who will become your new, totally non-judgmental partner. You will learn to care for and work with that horse on the ground, and will then have the choice of continuing with groundwork, or switching to riding lessons.

**For Melanie, a Navy veteran who joined the program with her children in June, horseback riding has become a spiritual journey. It clears her mind and gets her**



**out of her head.** "The last time I rode I had major anxiety, and the horse, Nellie, seemed to recognize it. She came to me. She made me feel special."

Melanie and her children have gained huge benefits from the program - physically, mentally, and emotionally. To other veterans, Melanie would say "getting out of your head is a big part of it. It gives you a sense of peace. It's fun, and it's a great time to be with family."

Kendell and Kevin Casey are volunteers with TEC, and our newest board members. Kendell is a clinical social worker who specializes in

animal-assisted intervention, and likes the fact that TEC and its instructors are PATH certified, because that assures the programs are actually therapeutic, with trained instructors and measurable results. **Kevin is a retired career Army veteran who was deployed five times to the Middle East, and knows firsthand how beneficial the horse-human relationship can be for veterans.** During his last deployment, Kendell bought a horse and trained it for Kevin, to help ease his transition from military to civilian life. Riding has become something for them to do together, and the horse has become Kevin's best friend.

Of course, as with any equine venture, there is lots of work involved, and that's where we need your help — with lessons, feeding, grooming, and stall cleaning; as well as, building and pasture maintenance. All of these things help the program, help our horses, and help to give back to your fellow vets.

**To learn more, visit [www.tecfarm.org/tecwithvets](http://www.tecfarm.org/tecwithvets).**

**Want to volunteer? Contact [beth.drollinger@gmail.com](mailto:beth.drollinger@gmail.com) or text/phone (269) 932-5005.**

**Want to ride or do groundwork? Contact TEC at (269) 429-0671 or [info@tecfarm.org](mailto:info@tecfarm.org).**

## Have You Seen Our New Website

Thanks to a grant from the Frederick S. Upton Foundation, managed by the Berrien Community Foundation, TEC was able to transform our old, out dated site into a new, more user friendly and mobile site.

The year-long project was spearheaded by Colleen Villa and Kris Reinelt. Colleen, who is a marketing communications coordinator and part-time business faculty at Lake Michigan College, served as web developer and handled the administrative and backside logistics of the website. Kris, who is the owner of the marketing firm — Infinite Creative Services in Bridgman — facilitated the process that started with forming a focus group to evaluate the old site, brainstorm needs for the new site, and then evaluate the site before launch. She also wrote all the content for the website.

**Take a look at the new site — [www.tecfarm.org](http://www.tecfarm.org) — and let us know what you think.** Feel free to share your thoughts on our Facebook page.





# Want to Help?

**Your Donations of Time and Money Help Us to Change Lives!**



Volunteers are needed:

- To sell donated tack on various websites. Inventory donated tack and send thank you notes.
- For our school programs and therapeutic riding lessons to serve as horse leaders or sidewalkers.
- To assist with our fundraisers and special events.
- For a helping hand with barn and pasture chores, and barn maintenance.

To learn more about our volunteer opportunities, visit [www.tecfarm.org/volunteer](http://www.tecfarm.org/volunteer).

Our most pressing need, as always, is funds to help us care for our four-legged therapists. At any given time, we have six to seven horses and the cost of maintaining each one is \$14 a day or \$5,100 a year. You can sponsor a horse by visiting, [www.tecfarm.org/sponsorahorse](http://www.tecfarm.org/sponsorahorse).



**Yes!** I want to support more "I DID IT!" moments at TEC with this *tax-deductible* donation.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Check or Money Order (Payable to: Therapeutic Equestrian Center)

TEC Connections December 2017

☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover Account Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Security Code: \_\_\_\_\_ (3-digit code on back of card)

Name of Cardholder: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Cardholder: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail your donation to: Therapeutic Equestrian Center, PO Box 1250, Niles, MI 49120

Save a stamp! Make your donation online using your debit/credit card or PayPal at [www.tecfarm.org/donate](http://www.tecfarm.org/donate).

## Therapeutic Equestrian Center

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 1250

Niles, MI 49120

NON PROFIT

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#510

49120

Barn Address:

Stockbridge Equestrian Center

615 N M-140

Watervliet, MI 49098

**ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED**

Phone: (269) 429-0671

E-mail: [info@tecfarm.org](mailto:info@tecfarm.org)

Website: [www.tecfarm.org](http://www.tecfarm.org)



# Horses Change Lives Through TEC



*Hayden peeks out between Szanghai's ears at the camera.*



*Olivia makes sure Bess knows who's in charge before taking her for a walk.*



*Cobby negotiates a left-hand turn with an assist from his mom.*

**Interested? Need more information? Want to sign up for a program or become a volunteer? Call (269) 429-0671 or e-mail [info@tecfarm.org](mailto:info@tecfarm.org).**