



# TEC Connections

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

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## A WORD OF THANKS

We are delighted to bring you this issue of *TEC Connections* and hope you enjoy reading about our riders, horses, and volunteers. Many hands brought you this newsletter as they generously shared their time and talent. Thank you to our storytellers, Jane Ives and Autumn Zick, and to our photographer and layout person, Luana Santos, who helped get it ready to mail. To learn more, visit us at [www.tecfarm.org](http://www.tecfarm.org) or connect with TEC on Facebook.

## TEC WITH VETS

Enhancing the lives of veterans through horse-related activities.

When TEC WITH VETS instructor Colleen McNamara welcomes a new veteran to the TEC barn, she starts out by introducing him or her to all of the horses. After they have had the opportunity to spend a little time with each horse, she asks which one the veteran would choose to work with. For the regular TEC lessons those decisions are made by the instructors, based on the size, temperament, and movement of the horse. **With the vets; however, Colleen feels that personality is paramount to forming the horse-human partnership** that is such an important part of the program. According to Colleen, **the horses are “a means to connect for people who have lost the means to connect.”**

Colleen had worked in Florida with a veterans' therapeutic equestrian program, and when she moved north to be closer to family, she jumped at the chance to build such a program from the ground up.

*We are profoundly grateful for the grant we received from the Stephen E. Upton Love Your Community Grant through the Berrien Community Foundation that has made it possible for TEC to change the lives of veterans.*



Dylan Ahlgrim giving a high five to his volunteer veteran.

We are also thankful to Pat Forbes for a donation to support training instructors to work with veterans. Colleen has taken several specialized training courses to aid those with **spinal cord injuries and paralysis**; as well as, those dealing with **PTSD and sexual assault**. She also learned about **Operation Mustang**, a program that pairs adopted wild mustangs with veterans who will help to gentle them, with the goal of developing trust and healing for both. Colleen sees **parallels between the veterans and the mustangs: “Both have highly developed instincts, heightened awareness, and a keen sense of self-preservation.”** Szanghi, who is featured in this issue, is the TEC horse Colleen sees as ideal for working with vets. Because he is **highly intuitive and**

**sensitive**, he is more likely to have that **“moment of connection”** that is so important to the partnership.

**Healing includes family.**

An important feature of the veterans' program is that it

includes family members, since one of the greatest challenges for veterans is re-establishing relationships with their children or significant others. Veterans and their families can participate together or separately, depending on their needs; each situation is individual. After nearly 20 years as a therapeutic riding instructor, Colleen has learned an important truth: **she is not the therapist; the horse is.**

*TEC WITH VETS is offered free of charge to veterans and their families.*

If you are interested in participating or know a veteran who might be, contact Colleen McNamara at **(954) 462-5444** or call TEC at **(269) 429-0671**.

# Szanghi the Go-To Horse

## A True Therapy Horse

When Andrew T. started at TEC four years ago, **he sat on a bench outside the arena with his head down, shying away from everyone.** TEC instructor Samie Ledyard decided that, "since Andrew was not going to come to Szanghi, I would bring Szanghi to Andrew." Samie says that the horse responded immediately to Andrew, gently dropping his head to him in order to get acquainted. Although it

was six months before Andrew was ready to put on a helmet, he eventually rode Szanghi, and has been riding him ever since. According to Samie, **Szanghi is responsible for encouraging Andrew and opening up his world.**

## A Three-Career Horse

Twenty-seven year-old Szanghi is a beautiful chestnut-colored Arabian who came to TEC after a career as a western pleasure, dressage, and schooling horse for

lessons. After retiring from his previous careers, he was generously donated to TEC in 2011 by Joy and Becca Stemm.

## Perfect For the Job

Szanghi is the ideal size for a TEC horse. At 14.2 hands (a little less than five feet at his back), he is a good height for the littlest riders, but having the strength that is characteristic of Arabians, is also able to carry adults. His temperament also makes him well-suited to be a therapy horse: dependable enough for beginning riders, and responsive enough for higher-level, independent riders. **It is this unique combination of versatility, kind nature, and gentle soul that make Szanghi one of Samie's favorites.** As she says, "He is my go-to horse."



*"No one can help everyone, but everyone can help someone."*



*Szanghi warms up before class.*

TEC Connections — Summer 2017

**Yes!** I want to Be Part of the Story by supporting TEC with this tax-deductible donation.

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

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

Mail to Therapeutic Equestrian Center, PO Box 1250, Niles, MI 49120 or

Visit [www.tecfarm.org](http://www.tecfarm.org) and use PayPal. THANK YOU!

# A Place to Fit In

Although Meris Watson is not usually “a hugger”, she loves the hugs she gets from Thunder, one of her favorite TEC horses. Thunder is one of the newest horses at TEC, and Meris says the first time they met, he wrapped his neck around her and snuggled.

By the time Meris began riding at TEC in the spring of 2014, she had already received a good deal of intervention to help her overcome various challenges. Her Occupational Therapist had suggested to her mother, Karey, that Meris try therapeutic riding. Karey was impressed with TEC from the beginning, and she has been amazed at the progress Meris has made.

Karey says, *“I wish other people were aware of just how therapeutic the TEC program is.”*

Meris remembers from her early lessons, *“Things were challenging, but not too much; they pushed me, but not too hard.”* She says TEC was totally



*Meris brings Szanghi out of his stall for the next lesson.*

different from anything she had done before. She liked horses, but had spent very little time around them.

Since starting at TEC, however, she has developed a passion for them and has graduated from riding with assistance to riding independently. She now helps out during riding lessons and with barn chores, and is excited to learn all she can.

For Colleen McNamara, Meris' instructor, one of the best parts of working in therapeutic riding programs is **finding those riders who have something special, that certain light** - and she saw that in Meris.

Colleen says *“Meris has blossomed at the barn, and is very different than the person she was a year ago.”* This newfound confidence has helped her cope with bullying at school.

**Meris wishes TEC could have a bigger barn and arena, but neither she nor her mom would change anything else about it.** Asked what she would

tell someone considering becoming a volunteer, Meris says *“I would tell them to do it. Not only will the rider get something out of it, you will too.”*

Karey is delighted that her daughter has such a great outlet that she can call her own, and that she cares about so passionately. For Meris, as for so many of the riders, *“the best thing about TEC is having a place where I fit in and can be myself.”*



*Meris and Tori take Lyli for a trot.*



Do you want to volunteer, ride or participate at TEC?

Visit [www.tecfarm.org](http://www.tecfarm.org), call (269) 429-0671, or e-mail [info@tecfarm.org](mailto:info@tecfarm.org).

*“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”*

*Mahatma Gandhi*

# Want to Help?

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

### Be A Volunteer

- Sell donated tack on various websites.
- Inventory donated tack and send thank you notes.
- Write articles for *TEC Connections*.
- Volunteer as horse leaders or sidewalkers for various school programs that come to the barn during school hours.
- Help spread the word

about what TEC does through various events and other fund development activities

- Volunteer as a veteran and help with other veterans.

- Lumber to rebuild ramp
- Financial contribution
- Sponsor a Horse
- And more!

Learn more at [www.tecfarm.org](http://www.tecfarm.org) or call TEC at (269) 429-0671. You can also send an e-mail to [info@tecfarm.org](mailto:info@tecfarm.org), or use the donation form in this issue.

### Make a Donation

- Horse treats
- White copy paper
- Paper towels
- SmartPak Donations
- Lumber for pasture shelters



*Dan Cholewa delivers a wheelbarrow load of hay.*



*“Do Something” volunteers at a TEC Work Day.*



*Makayla Green-McKie, Garth, and their volunteers round the corner at a trot.*

**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 for a year is \$5,100.**

# You Will Make a Difference!

In the Lives of TEC's Horses – Garth, Tori, Alex, Thunder, Szanghi, Bess, and Nellie

Do you love horses? Maybe you always dreamed of owning a horse but have no place to keep it, limited time to ride and enjoy it, and no time to care for it. At TEC, we have a way for you to support your love of horses without having to worrying about all the other stuff. Show your love of horses by becoming a sponsor of a TEC horse!

It costs TEC \$5,100 a year to care for each of our horses.

Times that by seven and we spend more than \$35,000 a year in basic horse-related care. Your sponsorship of a TEC horse will help to feed, shelter, and maintain the health and wellbeing of your horse of choice. Your support will also help TEC continue to improve the lives of those in our community and to serve the needs of the participants of our programs.

## Sponsor a Horse Today!

Sponsorship levels are for a **yearly donation** and can vary within that level:

- **Pewter Sponsor – Up to \$299**
- **Bronze Sponsor – \$300 to \$1,449**
- **Silver Sponsor – \$1,500 to \$2,999**
- **Gold Sponsor – \$3,000 to \$4,449**
- **Platinum Sponsor – \$4,500 to \$5,099**
- **Titanium Sponsor- \$5,100**

Sponsoring a TEC horse is a great way to honor or memorialize a loved one, or to promote a business, organization, or group.

Donors will be included at the level given with the exact amount kept confidential. The names of all donors will be listed on the horse's stall door (unless you wish to remain anonymous). Donors will also receive a picture of their horse.

Start your sponsorship today by completing the donation form in this newsletter. Be sure to indicate which horse you wish to sponsor.

You can also visit our website at [www.tecfarm.org/sponsorahorse](http://www.tecfarm.org/sponsorahorse) to make your donation online.

Have questions or need more information, please contact TEC at (269) 429-0671 or [azicktec@gmail.com](mailto:azicktec@gmail.com).



**Bess**



**Nellie**



**Tori**



**Garth**



**Szanghi**



**Alex**



**Thunder**

# Take a Leap With TEC's Barn Manager

Dee Tuohy volunteers her time and talent as TEC's barn manager. She is the person responsible for the health and wellbeing of the horses, as well as the safety and maintenance of the facility.

**A horse owner herself, she knows how costly it is to keep and care for these large, needy animals.** Your donations help keep the facility going, and Dee spends every penny very carefully. At the same time, she keeps a constantly-growing list of needs small and large from a heating element for a water trough to building pasture shelters to protect the horses from extreme weather when they're outside. Some of the program volunteers have DIY experience and give generously of their time and labor, but the budget is often not able to cover materials. Her greatest wish for TEC is to someday afford our own facility with more room and a larger arena.

## A Day in the Life

Dee started with TEC as an exercise rider, and was immediately impressed with the high-quality program that operates on such a tight budget. After a few months she was "volunteered" by her friend Janeen Pasquil to become Barn Manager, and the rest is history. She now spends her days doing health checks on the horses, maintaining, repairing, or replacing whatever needs it, and scheduling the volunteer Barn Team to help. She also does horse evaluations and training based on feedback from instructors and class volunteers.



*Dee teaching the ropes to Nellie, a new horse being purchased.*

**Dee loves what she does, and says, "I'm not afraid of early mornings or getting my hands (and everything else) dirty. I like feeling tired after a day's work."**

## Volunteers Keep TEC Going

Since starting at TEC, Dee has met many hard-working, passionate volunteers and says, **"I wish more people knew the importance of programs like this and how they affect families; that every minute of time and every dollar offered goes toward a greater goal of personal improvement for an individual."**

She believes that TEC is valuable for not only for the riders, but for everyone who donates their time, energy, and money. That includes the horses, who come from a variety of backgrounds such as showing, trail riding, or backyard pets, and start new careers at TEC.

**She considers all of the participants, two-legged and four-legged, to be a family working together to assist people in their daily lives and**

**build awareness and acceptance in our communities.**

## How You Can Help

**There is always a need for barn work, help with classes, administrative tasks or trade skills, and (of course) monetary donations.**

It is incredibly rewarding to do a job whose compensation is the growth and sincere gratitude of those you have helped, and this dedicated barn manager says, **"I would tell anyone thinking about becoming involved in TEC, to take the leap!"**



*Dee Tuohy makes sure everybody has fresh drinking water.*

# Generous Supporters = Great Strides for TEC

Many thanks to all of you who helped us with the following ...

**Growing our herd:** Recently the family of **Marty, Jen, and Bridget Shone** gifted TEC with a long-term lease of their horse, Thunder. After a trial period, this beautiful blue-eyed paint has shown himself to have the right stuff, and has settled in with the rest of the horses. We are extremely grateful to the Shone family for this wonderful addition to our barn!



*Volunteers help Blossomland Learning Center students with their horse-themed craft projects.*

**Setting records:** Last year TEC provided services to 116 people with special needs and to veterans. That's nearly **2,000 hours** of instruction. Volunteers

logged nearly **8,000 hours**, setting new records for both types of participation! **Let's see if we can break those records in 2017!**

**Staying warm:** One of the most common complaints from TEC participants in the past has been how cold the arena was in the winter. That is now a thing of the past. Last December we celebrated the addition of a new heating system, donated by **the families of Robert Egan and Sarah Damaske**. Sarah and Bob were both avid equestrians and therapeutic riding supporters. **We are humbled and grateful that their families chose to honor their memories by helping current and future TEC participants.**

**Surpassing goals:** Our supporters who generously donated money helped us raise \$5,820 for the 2016 year-end appeal. This far exceeded our goal of \$3,000, and will be applied to our \$130,000 budget for 2017. **Since the cost of taking care of one horse for one year is \$5,100, donations of money are always needed and greatly appreciated!**

**Giving a leg up:** **Phil Grogan, Zach Meyer, and Dee Touhy** made repairs to our mounting ramp and widened a doorway, making it easier for horses and handlers to exit side-by-side. More ramp improvements will be coming this spring.



*Thunder steps up to the mounting ramp for James to climb on.*

**Helping the horses:** Those of you who have made donations for **SmartPak supplements** have helped ease aches and pains in our horses as they, like many of us, deal with the challenges of growing older. **The supplements cost \$40 per horse per month.**

**Donating to help TEC purchase Nellie:** She is our new draft horse cross who will help veterans and other adult riders.

## TEC Says Goodbye to a Dear Friend

Gil (Martin Gilbert) Migala's help and support for TEC was immense! He was our "go-to guy" when we needed contractors for any job - roof repairs, heat installation, updating electrical, etc. Gil obtained quotes, met with contractors, and helped with fundraising events. He was also an active member of the Board of Directors, where his wit and wisdom are greatly missed. He passed away on March 27.



*Gil enjoying 2016's TEC Fest.*

We are grateful for the memorials that have been given in his honor. He will be greatly missed by all those at TEC whose lives he touched.

*"As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands — one for helping yourself, the other for helping others."*

*Audrey Hepburn*

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# Horses Change Lives Through TEC



*Matt Cholewa with his  
new friend Nellie.*



*Lyli Schultz doing trunk twists  
during her lesson.*



*Lighthouse Education Center  
students help with chores.*

**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).**