



# TEC Connections

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

**We Moved!**

Barn Address:

Jane M. Hilier Facility  
1207 E. Galien-Buchanan Rd.  
Buchanan, MI 49107



As we continue to migrate through the coronavirus pandemic, please know whether we're open for lessons or simply caring for our horses and barn, we adhere to the CDC guidelines and local, State, and Federal mandates that are in place.

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

Contact TEC at  
(269) 429-0671 or  
[info@tecfarm.org](mailto:info@tecfarm.org).

Find us on  
**Facebook**

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



## ***“WE”*** Did It Moment for TEC

It's been 15 years since TEC began making “I Did It!” moments happen for participants. For the first couple of years, these moments took place at a location on Red Bud Trail before moving to the Watervliet location. Neither location was owned by TEC and we dreamed of having a place to call ours someday.

As we all know from working with our participants, these “I Did It!” moments happen when you least expect them to and for TEC that's exactly when our own “I (*WE*) Did It!” moment happened. In August, after renting our Watervliet location for 13 years, our landlords announced they were transitioning the use of the barn in a new direction and our lease would be terminated on October 31.

***“To say we were caught off guard is an understatement,” said Autumn Zick, TEC Board President and Instructor. “But sometimes it's during these unplanned, stressful moments that we discover the greatest rewards.”***

When the announcement was made TEC immediately began searching for a new home close to the Watervliet location. After an extensive search, no barns were found that would accommodate our needs. At the same time, the family of Jane M. Hilier approached TEC about working with us to create a lasting legacy in their mother's name. It was then that our search went from looking for a rental to seeking out a place to purchase and then finding our forever home in Buchanan.



***“It's such a beautiful location and a place full of opportunity,” shared Elisabeth Diaz, TEC Volunteer Coordinator. “It's a blessing that we were able to find a place like this that not only meets our needs but will allow us to grow into the future.”***

TEC moved into our new home at the end of October and shortly thereafter gave a sneak peek to staff, volunteers, participants, and their families.

*(continue on page 2)*



(cont.) **“WE” Did It Moment for TEC**

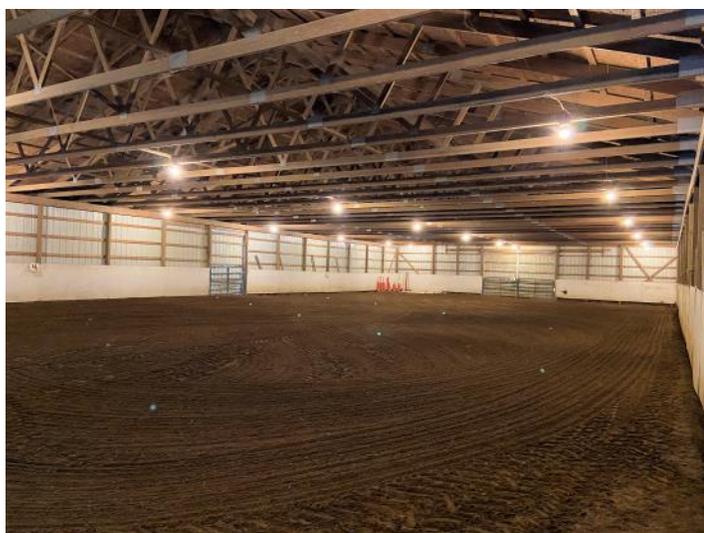
TEC’s new home is the former Cadence Equestrian Center located at 1207 E. Galien-Buchanan Road. It includes more than 14-acres of land, a barn with larger stalls for the horses, an impressive indoor arena, several pastures, and an outdoor arena.

*“The first thing I noticed was the size of the arena! Being able to ride in a bigger space will make it easier for participants to practice skills,” stated Marilyn Harvey, TEC Volunteer and Instructor. “Plus, having the stalls separate from the arena will allow for greater ease in moving and taking care of the horses during lessons.”*



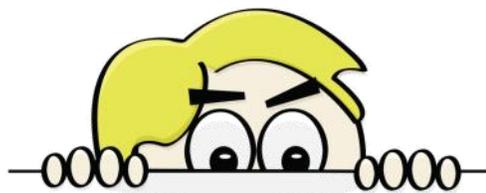
For TEC to purchase our own facility is a dream come true that was made possible thanks to a generous gift from the Jane M. Hiler family. Since the move it has been a whirlwind of activity. We have been busy getting unpacked and settling the horses into their new home. Plus, we’re developing new policies and procedures for safety at the new facility, and thinking about ways to improve and expand programming.

*Autumn Z. shared that many of TEC’s staff members, volunteers, participants, donors, and friends poured their heart and soul into helping us find just the right forever home and coordinating our move. She added that “we appreciate each and every one of you for your contribution to making this **“WE Did It!”** moment happen!”*



As happy as we are with our new facility, we are aware that for some of our participants and volunteers the weekly commute to the new location will not be feasible. Please know we are looking at ways to keep you involved with TEC; such as, a monthly “Riding Club”. We also invite you to come out for a visit as it might be worth the trip as the Brown Family shared at the sneak peek.

*“We were concerned about the new location being a bit further from our home,” said The Brown Family (Anthony, Lacey, and Laniah). “Having now seen it, we know the extra travel time will be well worth it as it’s truly more of a sanctuary for the horses and kids.”*



As TEC turns the page to a new calendar year, we’re excited about the new opportunities that we hope will help us to meet and exceed the needs of our participants and volunteers in the New Year. Be sure to follow our Facebook page and website for more TEC updates.

## Take a Sneak Peek

If you haven't been to TEC's new home, here's your chance to check it out. Visit <https://bit.ly/tecbuchanan> to watch the video of the new facility created by TEC Volunteer, Kacie M. Thank you - Kacie - we certainly appreciate you doing this for us!

## Goosebumps: Moves a Volunteer's Heart

Often when a person gets "goosebumps" it's thought to be a reaction to fear. For TEC Volunteer, Lynne Kramer, she gets goosebumps when talking about the many "I Did It!" moments she has witnessed at TEC. Like the time she was watching a rider work long and hard to turn his horse with the use of his arms, but it wasn't quite working. Then one Saturday morning, like a switch had been flipped, he pulled on the left rein, his horse turned left, and suddenly he was able to steer without help.

*"These are the unexpected and heartwarming moments that give me goosebumps," shared Lynne K. "My soul suddenly gets warmer than my body and my heart smiles!"*

Lynne came to TEC after moving back home to Michigan from California. While browsing the Volunteer Fair at Lake Michigan College she stopped at the TEC booth and talked with Board President and Instructor, Autumn Zick. Lynne was impressed with what she learned, and thought she could contribute, given her past experience with horses. She saw her lack of experience in helping people with disabilities as a learning opportunity for herself.

Lynne has served as a Volunteer Ring Assistant for 10 years on Saturday mornings. Her primary role is to monitor the riders and take progress notes during lessons but she also gets the tack ready, helps set up and put away various equipment, and helps clean the barn and arena when lessons are done for the day. After all this she still feels like she gets more from the program than she gives to it.

*"As an instructor, having a ring assistant is essential. They are the extra set of eyes and hands to keep classes safe, organized, and on time," said Autumn Z. "During our Saturday morning classes Lynne also helps to chart the rider's daily progress and is a big reason why classes run smoothly!"*



The thing that has most impressed Lynne over the years are the riders and their parents or caregivers. Every week she sees riders struggle to overcome their fear, anxiety, and often physical challenges in order to get on these big, powerful animals. And she sees the huge changes that their efforts produce. She finds the parents and caregivers just as impressive for providing the riders with this opportunity, as well as often participating themselves as volunteers during the lessons. *She says, "The grace and humor with which most of them approach it is truly inspiring."*

Working with TEC has been a learning experience for Lynne, too, from familiarizing herself with all the different types of tack that she manages, to developing the patience and understanding that are essential to the work. She has welcomed having a place to go every Saturday - especially while working from home during the pandemic - where she can work hard, enjoy a positive environment, and leave with the rewarding feeling of having done something for someone else.

**Lynne would love for more people to become aware of TEC and be able to take advantage of it.** She would also love to see more people volunteer. *"We have wonderful volunteers who are good, consistent, and reliable. But we're always in need of more."* To someone considering volunteering, she would tell them to bring their can-do attitude and their ability to go with the flow, because there is something new almost every week. Most importantly, though, she would tell them to be prepared to get more out of this experience than they could ever imagine.

MORE  
INFO



To learn more about being a volunteer or participant at TEC, visit:

- ~ Volunteer - [www.tecfarm.org/volunteer](http://www.tecfarm.org/volunteer)
- ~ Participant - [www.tecfarm.org/participant](http://www.tecfarm.org/participant)

# Hidden Blessings, Lest Expected

Dear TEC Family,

As we pause and reflect on the past year, the first thought that comes to mind is “seeing is believing”. If you would have told us last year that we’d be in our own facility today, we’d have looked at you with a twinkle in our eyes. Our goal was within the next 5 years not by the end of the year. **But for as much as we plan for our future, life has a way of surprising us with unexpected “WE Did It!” moments that will make you happier than you originally planned.**

Thanks to the generosity of the Jane M. Hiler Family, we were given a blessing when lest expected that provided us the opportunity to purchase our forever home. **Now as owners of our facility we have greater flexibility and opportunity for growth. The possibilities of where we go from here are endless but will also be dependent on the support of the TEC family and community.**

We understand that many are hesitant to give to TEC because they haven’t had a chance to experience the “seeing is believing” or of witnessing participants as they celebrate in their “I Did It!” moments. **To help you see into the life of a TEC participant, we share with you a letter we received from Perry Heppler shortly after we announced we were moving to a new home.**

Perry, who is a family member of a TEC participant, wrote:

**I’m writing to share how TEC provides a unique program that benefits many people with disabilities who live in southwestern Michigan.**

I just can’t say enough about what TEC has meant to my brother-in-law, Johnny, who is now 65-years old. If you were to strike up a conversation with him, you would probably think that he’s just an average guy, but he has a mental disability that impairs his ability to make good judgements and decisions. He is gentle and kind, and loves to help out in any way he can. **TEC gives him a way to express his love of horses, to feel like a productive member of the community, and to make friends with fellow participants and staff.**

Johnny started attending TEC back in 2008 when it was just a very new organization. He loved it from the very start. He attends faithfully; if TEC is cancelled due to bad weather, he is truly disappointed. His response upon hearing the news is a heartfelt, “Oh, Geez!”

**I have noticed that, while the participants are enjoying their horse riding, TEC is also teaching each participant important skills according to individual needs.** Here are some things that Johnny works on:

- Listening and understanding verbal instructions.
- Improving coordination and maintaining physical balance.
- Developing core strength and improving posture.
- Responding to cues from the horse, horse leader, and instructor.



*Johnny is all smiles as he poses with Elsa!*

*(continue on page 5)*

## (cont.) **Hidden Blessings, Lest Expected**

**TEC provides an emotionally safe environment.** Recently Johnny had open heart surgery to replace a damaged valve. He needed to take some time off from TEC, but when he returned, the people there were very patient and allowed him to participate by walking his horse rather than riding it, until he was able to saddle up again.

**The staff and volunteers at TEC use their monetary and material resources wisely in order to maintain the current facility and keep their horses healthy.** They hold regular fundraisers, and have benefited from donations from generous community members and organizations. They are frugal enough to remind everyone to “turn off the lights” when they leave the barn!

**TEC also emphasizes safety.** There are protocols for participation at any level, including COVID mitigation procedures. Johnny knows that he must wear a helmet when he rides, and he participates in TEC’s regular safety drills.

**TEC encourages volunteerism--in fact, volunteers make TEC possible!** Johnny has received scholarships to help make his tuition more affordable, and along with that, he’s been encouraged to volunteer--it helps his self-esteem to be counted on and to be able to help. TEC supports volunteers with many opportunities for training. I’ve attended a training session for leading horses, and the training was clearly presented, making me feel confident and ready to lend a hand.

**TEC does a terrific job of communicating with participants and their families.** We receive regular newsletters with highlights of activities. E-mails with important information are sent often. I can go to their website and Facebook page for basic information and for news about upcoming events.

When I asked Johnny recently to tell me his favorite things about TEC, he said, “Riding Sally and walking with her, because we get along together. Also sweeping the floors and spraying down the barn with a hose so it’s not so dusty. And helping Autumn load up her van.”

**TEC is definitely an asset in our community. Please consider supporting TEC as they move to a new location, so they can continue their important work.**

Thanks, Perry, for your heartfelt letter. We appreciate your support and look forward to working with Johnny and all our participants for years to come.

Merry Holiday and Happy New Year to All,  
*Autumn Zick, TEC Board President/Instructor*



**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: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**HOLIDAY 2021**

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

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

**Cardholder Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Cardholder Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Please apply my donation to:** \_\_\_\_\_

*(Unless specified, all donations go to the general fund.)*

**This donation is made in**  **honor or**  **memory of:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Yes, I'd like to become a TEC volunteer. Please contact me at:** \_\_\_\_\_

**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).**

# Share Your Christmas Spirit All Year Long

The Christmas season is like a tonic for our souls. It feeds our desire to think of others rather than our ourselves. It infuses our thoughts towards giving. You can keep the Christmas spirit alive all year long by simply serving as an elf for TEC. Don't worry, though, it doesn't required taking care of Rudolph for a year or moving to the North Pole. **All that's needed is for you to help TEC continue making "I Did It!" moments happen in one or more of the following ways.**



**Volunteer at TEC.** This is a great way to learn a new skill, meet new friends, be active in your community, and have fun at the same time.

**Donate supplies and materials.** In-kind contributions; such as, salt for sidewalks, horse treats, dry cat food, and many other items are greatly appreciated.

**Honor a loved one with the gift of a donation in their name.** Don't fret over finding just the right gift for that special person who has everything. Make a donation to TEC in their name anytime of the year.

**Earn donations through charitable shopping.** Turn your everyday shopping habits into donations. A few of our favorites, include:

[bit.ly/shophardings](http://bit.ly/shophardings)



TOGETHER WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

[bit.ly/amazonsmile4TEC](http://bit.ly/amazonsmile4TEC)



You shop. Amazon gives.

There are many other ways to be an elf for TEC, visit our website at [www.tecfarm.org/support](http://www.tecfarm.org/support) to learn how you can help TEC in making "I Did It!" moments happen.



**Horse Owners:** If you use Tribute Equine Nutrition products, donate your product labels to earn TEC \$0.25 cents for every label collected. Labels can be dropped off at Family Farm & Home in Benton Harbor or mailed to TEC.

## A Glimpse at the First Quarter



Mark your calendars:

- Since we're at a new location, Volunteer Training is a necessity for current and new volunteers. For returning/experienced volunteers, please attend either January 10 or 18, 2022; and for new volunteers, we ask that you participate on January 11 or 17, 2022. Watch for an e-mail from TEC Volunteer Coordinator, Elisabeth Diaz.
- We will also offer participants and families a chance to become familiar with the new protocols for lessons on January 15, 2022; with a snow date on January 22, if necessary. For those who would prefer a 1-on-1 meeting, we will do our best to get you on the schedule before lessons begin. Watch for an e-mail from TEC Rider Coordinator, Lisa Mearing.
- The Winter Riding Session will run from January 31, 2022, through March 12, 2022.
- Volunteer Training will be offered again in March. For returning/experienced volunteers, it will be on March 14, 2022; and for new volunteers, on March 15, 2022.
- The Spring Riding Session will run from March 28, 2022, through May 27, 2022.

Be sure to follow TEC's Facebook page and watch our website for further updates and a complete 2022 calendar to be posted.

# You Support “I Did It!” Moments & More!



It's been another year filled with twists and turns as we all continue to migrate through the COVID pandemic and every day life. **Through it all we continue to have the most amazing supporters who help us make it possible to do what we do!**

Your support allows us to create an environment that brings horses and people together to make “I Did It!” moments happen. These moments are possible because your donations provide us with the means to have a place to call home, the tools to care for our horses and facility, the resources to create powerful programs, the funds to offer scholarships, and so much more.

**We extend our heartfelt thanks to you for choosing to support TEC in making “I Did It!” moment happens for our participants and volunteers.**

A shoutout of gratitude to our donors from June 1 - November 30, 2021.

- |                                   |                             |                           |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| ♥ Sara Bard                       | ♥ William Haslett           | Anna Gunnett              |
| ♥ Berrien Community Foundation    | ♥ Todd Hebert               | ♥ Cindy and Doug Peterson |
| Phoenix Endowment Fund            | ♥ Jane M. Hiler Family      | ♥ Katy Post               |
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| ♥ Margie Hojara-Hadsell & Ron     | ♥ Philip & Diane Neville    | ♥ Autumn Zick             |
| Hojara                            | ♥ Oak Title Services, LLC & |                           |

We also wish to thank those who participated in the following fundraising events/opportunities:

- ♥ AmazonSmile Shoppers
- ♥ Baird First Annual Golf Outing
- ♥ Harding's Community Rewards
- ♥ In-kind donations; such as, horse treats, water bottles, cat food, copy paper, toiletries, etc.
- ♥ Papa Vino's Give Back Days
- ♥ SWMI RACERS Once Upon a Time 5K
- ♥ TEC's Tack & Moving Sale
- ♥ TEC's Stocking Stuffer Sale
- ♥ Tribute Equine Nutrition Partner's Program

## Benefits of Therapeutic Riding

For people with autism, therapeutic riding is a way for them to improve their:

- Communication: Riding requires interaction with people and the horse.
- Focus and Behavior: Horses and riding provide an immersive environment and focal point.
- Motor Skills: Handling a horse and being in a riding environment requires controlled movement.
- Strength and Balance: Riding exercises many muscles groups and builds core strength.



**Therapeutic Equestrian Center**

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NON PROFIT  
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