

TEC Connections

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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, William Clark, Bernice Lopata, and Autumn Zick, and to our photographer, Luana Santos, who gave us images to bring the words to life. To learn more, visit us at www.tecfarm.org or connect with TEC on Facebook.

A Journey of 10 Years ...

People and Horses Together

"Once upon a time ..." Familiar words that begin many stories of adventurous exploits, filled with obstacles to overcome, dragons to slay, and promises to keep. Companions on the journey, personal courage, and (sometimes) a little magic eventually lead to "happily ever after." What is most important, however, is the journey itself as that is when the timid become brave and the ordinary person becomes a hero.



Allie E. all smiles for the camera while riding Bess.

Once upon time, people from Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties had to travel to Kalamazoo or South Bend if they wanted

to participate in a year-round equine therapy program. While 4-H had been offering its *We Can Ride* program for more than 30 years, the program was not year-round and participation was limited to youth between the ages of five and twenty-six. Distance, age restrictions, and the small number of programs available locally put equine therapy out of reach for many who could benefit from this unique alternative to physical therapy.

Ten years ago, that changed. TEC launched its year-round riding program for individuals of all ages with disabilities and special needs.

Since its beginning, TEC has moved beyond its barn in Watervliet to extend services to the communities of St. Joseph and Benton Harbor, partnering with schools and local agencies, including Blossomland Learning Center and Lighthouse Education Center, which are programs of Berrien County's Regional Education Service Agency (RESA).



Dylan A. pointing to horse body parts.

This year, TEC looks forward to launching TEC WITH VETS, an initiative for men and women who have served in our country's armed forces who are looking for an alternative activity to help them meet the challenges of daily living.

With every participant, another chapter is written for TEC. Each person has a story of courage and transformation, of struggle and accomplishment. Each person, in the company of volunteers and program staff, slays inner dragons and experiences moments when magic happens. Step by step, they move closer to "happily ever after."



Justin E. getting ready to ride at TEC Open House.

Together ... People & Horses
Challenge ♦ Strengthen ♦ Inspire



See enclosed flyer for details.



Saddle STARS Buddy Aubrey H.
helping fellow student Sara C.
communicate during
Saddle STARS

Become Part of the Story

TEC's tagline, "Together ... People and horses challenge, strengthen, and inspire," is more than a catchy phrase. It is at the heart of TEC's commitment to making a difference in the lives of *everyone* who comes through its doors – program participants, volunteers, instructors, family members, and caregivers. You will see the truth of this statement as you read the articles in this newsletter. You may also have your own TEC story of the small successes that have shaped the life of someone you love.

We invite you to join us as we close the chapter on our first 10 years and begin writing the next milestones in our story.

Your generous contributions of time, expertise and financial support show your confidence in the work that we do. Your support keeps our doors open and allows TEC to continue to make a

difference – one person at a time. Together, we can ensure that our program participants live "happily ever after."

We have two ways you can become part of the story right now. The first is for you to make plans to [join us on September 18 for our 2016 TEC Fest](#) at Riverview Park in St. Joe.

See the enclosed flyer for more details about the annual event filled with family-friendly activities, good food, multi-sporting events, silent auction, and great music. You won't be disappointed.

During this year's TEC Fest, we will also be celebrating TEC's 10th anniversary. To mark the occasion, [we will be raffling off a new 2015 Chevy Camaro](#), compliments of Dominion Automotive Group. But you can't win if you don't buy a ticket. Tickets are \$20 each and only 5,000 will be sold. An order form is included with this newsletter, or visit www.tecfarm.org/TECFest for additional information.

All mail orders for tickets must be received by Sept. 14 to ensure inclusion in the drawing.

State of Michigan Lottery Raffle:
#R37311



All smiles from Ride with Pride students after their drill team demonstration.

Yes! I want to [Be Part of the Story](#) by supporting TEC with this [tax-deductible donation](#).

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Street: _____ City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____ E-mail: _____

☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Discover Card Account Number _____

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

Name of cardholder _____

Signature of cardholder: _____

☐ 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 and use PayPal. THANK YOU! (Summer 2016)

To Take on a Challenge ...

Alice Dollinger comes from a generation that rarely complains about what they did not have growing up. She was one of 10 children, raised in Pennsylvania. Afflicted with polio at the age of eight, Alice lost her ability to walk for a year. Unable to use her right hand, she taught herself how to write with her left, a preference she still carries to this day. The long and winding path that brought her to TEC is a journey that flowed through a marriage of over 50 years and a life of loving sacrifice. Alice raised seven children, doing it with the quiet devotion that many women from her generation wear like armor.

This past winter, Alice came for a three week visit with her daughter, Joann McQuoen. "I wanted to offer my mom something for her to be able to grow in confidence, get exercise, and make a social connection with others."



Mother and daughter — Alice and Joann.

As a TEC volunteer, Joann had seen the positive changes experienced by the riders as they bonded with the



Alice D. riding Gath in 2-point position.

horses. Would her mom be interested? Joann vividly remembered the story that her mom had ridden once as a child – and it hadn't gone well. Feeling that she had nothing to lose, Joann asked her mom if she would be willing to give riding another try. Joann was pleasantly surprised when her mom said, "Yes."

Alice approached the challenge of riding the same way that she faced innumerable challenges before in her long life – head-on and without excuses. She knew she could do this; she needed to do this. So, with her daughter at her side, Alice mounted her horse and did something very few would do at the age of 83 – she rode!

"I saw a huge difference between the first and second lessons. She went from being apprehensive to being engaged and wanting to learn how to brush and saddle Garth," said Joann.

Riding provided exercise and Alice's confidence grew as she was able to control her horse. Alice was pleased to accomplish something that had

scared her as a child. She was so excited to be a part of the TEC program, she wanted to help by sweeping the barn.

Driving home, Alice told her daughter, "Everybody at the barn likes me." Joann saw her mother's self-confidence, determination, and pride shine in a way she hadn't seen in years.

As Alice reflected on her three-week TEC experience, she described it as the biggest event in her life since her very first birthday party – when she turned 75 years old!



High five with volunteer Beth G. and Alice.

To Touch Joy ...

“ Reach high,
for stars lie hidden
in your soul.
Dream deep,
for every dream
precedes the goal.”

Pamela Vaull Starr

Close your eyes and imagine a place where you could go whenever you are sad or having a bad day. You walk through the doors, breathe in the familiar smell, and just know that, before long, a smile will return to your face. *For James Appleton, that place is the TEC barn.*

Six year old James lives in a world where the sounds and images of everyday life are very different from what most people perceive.

In his world, a simple object, like a toy car, can take on tremendous importance and become the focus of his attention. In his world, loud noises create anxiety and a change in routine causes stress. Silence and unresponsiveness disguise the internal storms he lives with every day.



Instructor Samie Ledyard and Marilyn Bobula Harvey help James practice his balance and follow directions.



Instructor in Training Marilyn Bobula Harvey with James.

For someone with autism, often the simplest of things can calm the storms. For James, this calming effect comes from a small pony named Tori, a gentle companion who seems to know that James needs a special friend, someone he can “talk to” without saying a word. Just stroking the softness of Tori’s mane calms him and slowly draws James into that special place they share.

Elizabeth, James’ mother, has watched Tori “work her magic” on her son. “As James began to understand that Tori was there for him and she was his friend, it was amazing to see the relationship between them grow. When James is having

a bad day, Tori helps him relax and makes him happy.” Tori brings joy to James’ life.

“It’s not just the interaction with the horses that is great, but Samie and Marilyn (TEC Instructors) have been fantastic. As James learns to speak, they continue to challenge him to keep taking steps forward. It’s been wonderful to work with such a positive organization.”

Elizabeth knows firsthand how TEC makes a difference, not only in her son’s life, but in the lives of everyone who comes through its doors.



Marilyn with James while Elizabeth, James’ mom, looks on.

Give TEC a “Leg Up”

Want to donate to TEC? Here are some suggestions:

- Gift certificates to Family, Farm & Home Store
- Sponsor a TEC Horse for SmartPak Supplements — Only \$40 a month
- 20 Quart Plastic Flat Back Water Buckets
- Paper Towels
- Dry Cat Food
- Mats that will go around the rest of the arena
- Long Rafter Brush
- Gift certificate to www.freedomrider.com
- Stall mats for grooming stalls
- Thinline therapeutic saddle pads

For more information or questions, please contact TEC at (269) 429-0671 or send an e-mail to info@tecfarm.org.

WIN a New 2015 Camaro



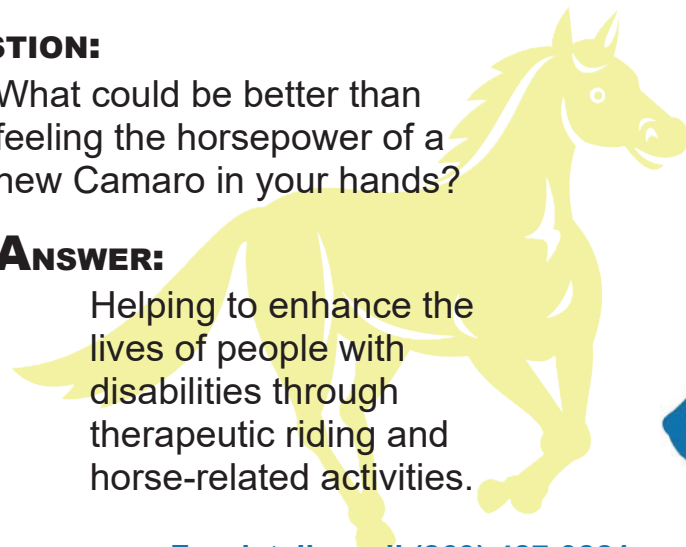
Horsepower Changes Lives

QUESTION:

What could be better than feeling the horsepower of a new Camaro in your hands?

ANSWER:

Helping to enhance the lives of people with disabilities through therapeutic riding and horse-related activities.



- Tickets are \$20 each
- Only 5,000 tickets will be sold
- Winner will be drawn on September 18, 2016, at 1 p.m. at TEC Fest 2016 held at Riverview Park in St. Joseph, MI
- Winner need not be present to win



For details, call (269) 487-9821 or visit www.tecfarm.org/TECFest.
To order tickets, complete the form below.

Raffle Rules & Requirements

Car raffle tickets are \$20 each and must be purchased in advance of the drawing time. Drawing will take place at 1 p.m. on Sept. 18, 2016, at the Therapeutic Equestrian Center's (TEC) annual event - TEC Fest 2016 - held at Riverview Park at 2927 Niles Road in St. Joseph, MI. This is a fundraising raffle and all proceeds will go to support the ongoing therapeutic programs of TEC. Tickets may be sold to TEC employees, board members, volunteers, and affiliated persons. This car raffle is open to individuals 18 years of age or older at the time of ticket purchase who possess a valid driver's license as of 9/18/2016. Winner does not need to be present at the drawing. If not present, a representative from TEC will contact the winner after the drawing. The new 2015 Camaro is being provided by Dominion Automotive Group in Bridgman, MI. All applicable state, federal, and local taxes and fees for taking ownership of the vehicle will be the sole responsibility of the winner. Prize is non-transferable. Winner will be issued an Internal Revenue Tax form stating the value of their prize. **State of Michigan Lottery Raffle: #R37311.**



Therapeutic Equestrian Center - Car Raffle Ticket Order Form

Number of Tickets: _____ @ \$20 each Total Amount Due: _____

☐ Check made payable to: Therapeutic Equestrian Center

☐ Money Order ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ Discover

Account #: _____ Expiration Date: _____ Verification Code/CVV #: _____

(This is the 3-digit code on the back of the credit card.)

Name of cardholder: _____ Signature of cardholder: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

☐ If sold out, please return my money. ☐ If sold out, please use these funds as a general donation to the Therapeutic Equestrian Center.

Confirmation of your ticket numbers will be sent to you upon receipt of your order form and payment.

Return order form to:
Therapeutic Equestrian Center
PO Box 1250, Niles, MI 49120
State of Michigan Lottery Raffle: #R37311.

**Join Us for a Day of Family Fun:
TEC FEST 2016
Sunday, September 18, 2016
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Riverview Park - St. Joseph, MI**



Food
Children's Activities
Craft Beer & Wine
Silent Auction & Live Music
Suggested donation:
\$7 and \$5 for children 12 and under

Registration open online for TEC Fest
5k Run/Walk, 10-Mile Bike Ride, or Motorcycle Ride**

**Motorcycle Ride will not be held this year. Find out more online.

The Therapeutic Equestrian Center's mission is to enhance the lives of people with special needs through horse-related activities.

**BONUS: Car Raffle
Win A 2015 Camaro!!**



Sponsored by:



Ticket information online at www.tecfarm.org/TECFest or call (269) 487-9821.

State of Michigan Lottery Raffle: #R37311 For complete Car Raffle Rules and Requirements, please visit bit.ly/CarRaffleRules.

Scan QR Code
for easy access!



**Thank You to Our
Sponsors!!!**



**Kelm Acubar - Professional Hearing Services - Kinexus- Vail Rubber-
South Shore Women's Healthcare**

The Therapeutic Equestrian Center (TEC) is a nonprofit 501(C)3 organization. In-kind donations will also be accepted from sponsors and will be recognized on the value of the donation. Please make checks payable to Therapeutic Equestrian Center.



Cowboy Pride

Something special happens when a small group gathers around a campfire – even if the campfire is only made of cardboard. For several students at Lighthouse Education Center, the Old West came alive as they sang about “Ragtime Cowboy Joe,” learned that the cowboy code of conduct still makes sense today, and went from learning about horses to riding them.



Lighthouse student Kyle S. and Jane Ives “cleaning stalls” in the classroom.

TEC launched its *Ride with Pride* program this winter with a quiet optimism that the new program would be as successful as the *Saddle STARS* program offered for youngsters at Blossomland Learning Center. No one involved was disappointed.

TEC instructor, Autumn Zick, attributes that success to two volunteers – Lisa Mearing and Jane Ives – who helped develop the program and worked with the twelve- and thirteen-year-old students at Lighthouse Education Center during the three-month session.



Lisa Mearing and students learning about horses.

Ives admitted that she was afraid the students would think the cowboy theme was “corny,” but all were delighted as the students eagerly participated in the weekly activities.

The seven boys and one girl gave themselves cowboy nicknames, designed bandanas, and created their own brands. They learned that cowboys looked out for their partners, worked together, and knew how to have a good time. Both Mearing and Ives are “horse people” and welcomed the opportunity to share what they know and enjoy with these youngsters. They especially loved the program’s focus on the culture, philosophy, and code of the Old West; it was fun and totally applicable to qualities we value today.

Ride with Pride ended with three sessions at the barn. Students rode or led their horses as they prepared for a drill team presentation.

Participating on a drill team taught them, not only how to work closely with their horses, but also how to work with fellow classmates. The team put their horses “through their paces” with choreographed exercises performed to popular music. On their last day at the farm, a performance by the drill team showcased what the students had learned to an audience of proud parents and friends.

Students also enjoyed a scavenger hunt that took them through the barn to locate various pieces of equipment and places related to the horses. The activity reinforced what the youngsters had learned about caring for horses and “tested” their powers of observation and ability to follow directions. Teamwork was the focus while students worked in small groups to locate items.

Another closing activity was a mustang round-up, a cross between *Jeopardy* and “Mother, may I?” that helped the students review the concepts and lessons learned during

the earlier classroom sessions. Successfully answering questions brought the students closer to the goal of reaching the mustangs and “branding” their own horses. Fun bonuses gave them extra steps while obstacles, such as a snake in their boot, made them go backwards. The final class had them gather one last time around the campfire to shake hands, sing about Cowboy Joe, and receive awards recognizing their personal growth and accomplishments.



Ethan C. riding Bess with Clare Cholewa sidewalking.

As Lisa and Jane reflected on the program, one particular student came to mind. Ethan was the quietest student in the class. He was uncomfortable speaking and reluctant to make any kind of connection with people (including eye contact). They were pleased that Ethan would at least sit around the campfire with the others. As the time grew closer to the students coming to the barn, the instructors worried about how he would be with the horses. In fact, when the day came, Ethan waited until the very end of the session before he approached his horse. To everyone’s surprise, he got on his horse! Jane remarked that it was “totally cool and exciting” to watch him as he stroked his horse and talked to her the entire time he was riding. “We saw him blossom,” said Lisa.

Lisa, who retired from Coca-Cola four years ago, began volunteering with TEC shortly after leaving the company. She assists with lessons a

(continue)

couple of days a week and has taken on the role of Rider Coordinator for the entire program.

Lisa describes her Ride with Pride experience as "uplifting" and commented, "When I get in the car at the end of a session, I'm bone tired, but I crank up the radio and sing all the way home. It lifts your heart – watching the accomplishments, the challenges these young people face every day. I realize how good I have it."



Volunteer Dan Cholewa assisting Vivianna J. groom Garth.

She describes what happens at TEC as "nothing short of miracles" and being a volunteer as "one of the most rewarding experiences you could ever have."

Jane, who lives in Berrien Springs, had heard about TEC and, when she retired after 37 years as a special education teacher, she became interested in continuing her work with emotionally impaired children in a different setting. When Autumn suggested offering Ride with Pride at Lighthouse, Jane was particularly intrigued as she taught at the center more than 25 years ago; she was eager to see how the program evolved since then.

During the program, Jane noted that "It was wonderful to see the kids loosen up and not feel embarrassed or self-conscious. They took the class seriously." When Jane thinks about what happens at TEC, she says, "People blossom there. They open up and find their courage."

Volunteering is a reward in itself. She invites people to come and watch the lessons and laughs as she says they often end up working. Jane knows that seeing TEC in action is one of the best ways to become involved and she encourages folks to "do it – for the good of the riders, for the good of the program."

As TEC looks forward to its next 10 years, we are grateful for the many good-hearted people who support the program. TEC is doing great things, touching lives every day because of them. We invite you to join us. *TEC offers a variety of volunteer opportunities to match your interests, skills, and time availability.*

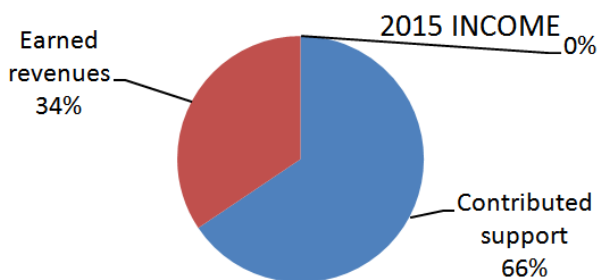
To become a volunteer or for more information, please contact Beth Drollinger at (269) 932-5005 or beth.drollinger@gmail.com.

In Lisa's words, "You'll never regret it. It feeds your soul."



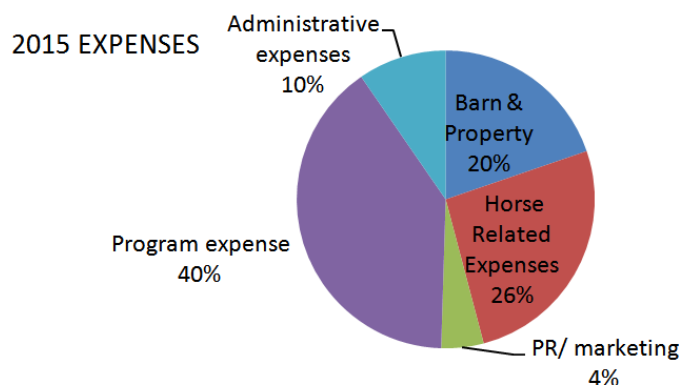
Aiden S. receives a graduation certificate from Autumn Zick, Lisa Mearing, and Jane Ives.

Where did your dollars go in 2015?



- TEC provided 1,995 hours of instruction
- 113 people benefited from TEC's Services
- With the help of 7,312 volunteers hours

Thank you to all of our donor and volunteers who make TEC possible!



To Say Goodbye ...

Goodbyes are never easy. This past March, as the harsh winds of winter gave way to the gentle promise of spring, we said our last goodbye to our beautiful Stikla. The small, cream-colored Icelandic mare lived almost 30 years. *A "grand old dame," she was endowed with a gentle spirit and the wisdom that comes with age. She has been a friend and teacher to many of us.*



Stikla helping Saddle STARS student with volunteers Karla H. and Bob C.

She inspired confidence and was responsible for many high fives, smiles, and "I did it!" moments.

Stikla's sweet disposition and insightful nature cast a hook deep into the heart of all who came in contact with her as she offered them her unconditional love.

While Stikla is no longer with us in the physical world, we are comforted in knowing that she is in a special place where horses never die, where warm breezes carry the smell of wild sage, and the sun never sets on beautiful green pastures.

Thank you, Stikla, for your faithful service. Know that you are missed.



Stikla spreading good cheer with First Church of God volunteers during a barn clean up and horse spa day.

Stikla came to TEC in January of 2011, thanks to the generosity of Dawn Bruin-Slot and her family. Her small stature, steadiness and patience made her a favorite among our riders.



Allie E. riding Stikla with Randi E., Judy B. and Dana R. volunteering.



Austin P. a Saddle STARS student thanking Stikla.

Up Coming Dates

- Fall Riding Session - 9/12/2016 - 10/29/2016
- Holiday Riding Session - 11/7/2016 - 12/10/2016
- Join us for **TEC FEST** and celebrate **TEC's 10 year anniversary** - 09/18/2016 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. (see enclosed flyer for event details)
- **Drawing for a new 2015 Chevy Camaro at TEC FEST** (see enclosed flyer for details)



Do you want to volunteer, ride, or participate at the Therapeutic Equestrian Center?
Visit www.tecfarm.org, call (269) 429-0671, or e-mail info@tecfarm.org.

**THERAPEUTIC
EQUESTRIAN CENTER**

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Niles, MI 49120

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Stockbridge Equestrian Center

615 N M-140

Watervliet, MI 49098

Phone: 269-429-0671

E-mail: info@tecfarm.org

Website: www.tecfarm.org

Connect with TEC:



TEC WITH VETS

A Program of the Therapeutic Equestrian Center

Enhancing the lives of veterans through horse-related activities.



Volunteer Cameron H. assisting Dylan A.

Horses change lives ... Let them change yours!

TEC is launching a new program for men and women who have served in our country's armed forces.

We will open our doors to veterans from Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties who are looking for an alternative activity to help them meet the challenges of daily living. Our instructors have designed a program with *you* in mind, beginning where you are and moving forward as a team.

Sign up for the program today, or join us as a volunteer.

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.