



TEC Connections

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



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. To learn more, visit www.tecfarm.org/covidsafetymeasures.



www.tecfarm.org

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



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



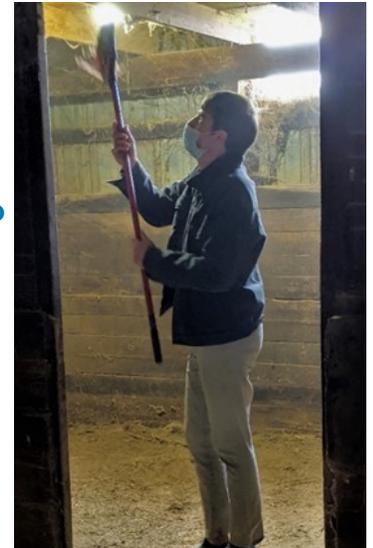
CBI Returns to TEC

“We get to go to TEC! We get to go to TEC!”

When Tasha Smith goes to work on Thursday mornings, she knows she will be hearing that chant from one excited group of students. Tasha is a paraprofessional at Blossomland Learning Center, a county-wide school for special needs students, and this group is taking part in CBI (Community-Based Instruction) at TEC. **CBI is designed to give special needs' students hands-on experience working in various community settings, which help to prepare them for future employment and independent living.** During the COVID pandemic, TEC has been one of the few settings that has been able to safely continue with the program.

Together, Kacie and Tasha help keep the group focused and busy - sweeping cobwebs, dusting, pulling weeds, and various other jobs. **In just a few short hours they learn about safety and teamwork, as well as the importance of having a good attitude. They are also taught respect for others, including TEC volunteers and horses. And they learn that any job worth doing is worth doing right!**

In addition to the Blossomland students, TEC also hosts a group of CBI students from Lighthouse Education Center, another county-wide special education school. Every Tuesday morning, this group of students, along with their teachers, are put to work and led through the paces by TEC volunteer, Kacie MacLagan.



Justin tackles cobwebs hanging from the ceiling.



Chance wipes down railings in one of the grooming stalls.

Tasha often deals with the misconception that her students are not capable. She wants people to know that they are VERY capable of many things and given the chance, they will show you what they can do. Volunteering at TEC gives them this chance.

Tasha's favorite part of the TEC experience is watching her students make the journey from being afraid of the horses to falling in love with them. Hearing them whinny with excitement when the bus first pulls in “does wonders for the soul”. When the students return to school at the end of the morning, dirty and smelling - well, like a barn, they have the satisfaction of knowing they've done their best caring for the horses. Their reward for doing their jobs? Not only improved life skills, but also a sense of accomplishment and purpose. And who doesn't love that feeling?

HAPPY TRAILS TO YOU...

Over the past several months, TEC retired three members of our horse team. Saying goodbye to these all-important team members is always a bittersweet experience, but knowing they are heading to greener pastures makes the task a little bit easier.

After four years, Alex retired from TEC in April. He's a beautiful Haflinger with liquid brown eyes and a rock star personality. Sturdy, stocky, and strong, Alex was the perfect-size mount for riders who were too big for the smaller ponies, but not quite ready for a full-size horse. He was on loan to TEC from Charity Hackett, who recently became a certified PATH Instructor at TEC. Alex returned home to, once again, be a trail-riding horse. He will be missed by all of us, but none more than his pasture mate and "girlfriend", Nellie.



In September, we said goodbye to Renegade, the smallest member of our horse team. A spunky and energetic Shetland pony, he was the perfect height for someone in a wheelchair to learn how to groom their horse. Renegade was also the ideal size for young riders just starting out. **He gave them lots of "I Did It!" moments, as well as lots of giggles when they rode his trot.** He has gone to live with a family who will put his talents to good use. Thank you for your time with us, Renegade, and enjoy the next chapter in your life!

And finally, near the end of the summer, we sent our beloved Szanghi off to spend his retirement in comfort, living with a pasture buddy and providing easy rides for one little girl.

Szanghi started his TEC career nine years ago. Typical of Arabian horses, he had a refined, delicate look that belied his strength and stamina. **He brought with him a wealth of experience along with a gentle and sensitive nature that has been key to building confidence in many, many riders over the years.**

One of the many great Szanghi stories is about a new rider who was so afraid to even step foot in the barn. **The rider was paired with him and he spent many hours waiting patiently while the boy gradually overcame his fear and gained enough trust to eventually get on and ride.** That was many years ago and this rider is still participating at TEC, thanks to his instructors, volunteers, and most of all, the kind and patient Szanghi. Now at 27 years of age, it's time to let this teacher retire and enjoy the next stage of his career. We will miss you, our beautiful boy, more than you'll ever know.



Happy trails to these amazing TEC horses!

I am a lesson horse ...

- ◆ I am not loved by one person. I am loved by several people. I don't have my person; I have my people.
- ◆ I will teach your child and yourself more than just to ride. I will bring your child out of their shell. I will teach your child about life.
- ◆ At the end of your child's journey on a lesson horse, they will outgrow me. But I will never outgrow being a lesson horse. I will be the one that loved your child and helped your child grow into the rider and person they are.
- ◆ At the end of my time as a lesson horse; I will be covered in grey hair. Each grey hair came from each hour I spent as a lesson horse. I will be in a field of green grass; I will be taken care of as I was when I was a lesson horse.

(Excerpt from Katlyn Hopper)



Be a Blessing Today, Ensure Future Tomorrows

Dear TEC Family,

It is at this time of year that we reflect back to the many blessings TEC has received. **We are so grateful for your financial support as it was your dedication to our mission that allowed us to reopen this summer after 5 long months of being closed due to the coronavirus pandemic.**

Winston Churchill said, *“There is something about the outside of the horse that is good for the inside of a man.”* That has never been truer. This past summer and fall we heard from participants and volunteers how good it felt to be back at the barn. **Our horses are a true blessing; helping volunteers and participants build relationships, strengthen their bodies, and regenerate all of our souls.** Board member and lesson volunteer, Hank Bostic, shared his experience upon returning to the barn. *“Seeing the strength and gentleness of the horse, and how the rider moves from fearing the strength to loving the gentleness, is a process that is worth the watching and waiting. Being a part of that is healing to my spirit as well.”*

Unfortunately, on November 15 it was once again necessary to close our doors to do our part to stop the spread of this awful virus.

We are asking for your support so that TEC will reopen when it is safe to do so. **We know the need is great.** As I write this letter, TEC has received two calls from parents with desperation in their voices. One call was from a mother reaching out to help with her child’s anxiety as she had heard that horses can help.



All of our participants’ parents and adult riders, like the parent above, have aspirations and goals. And like you, they want to move forward with their lives. **TEC can help them do that, but we need your help.** Your gift today will maintain the feed, shelter, health, and wellbeing of our very special horses. It will also see that our dedicated staff will be there to team up with the horses to make a positive impact in the lives of those we all wish to serve.

As one donor shared “I know you provide a wonderful experience of connection between horse and rider for those who need it most. It is our pleasure to contribute to your efforts.” Please give today so that TEC will be here for future tomorrows. Our participants are counting on all of us. Thank you!

Stay safe and be well,

Autumn Zick, TEC Board President/Instructor

Reminder:



The Universal Charitable Deduction lets you deduct up to the first \$300 that you donate to nonprofits this year. This includes everyone, even if you don’t itemize on your taxes.

Calling on Santa's Helpers All Year Long



We're looking for elves to help Santa bring Christmas to TEC now and throughout the year. Don't fret, though, being an elf is pretty simple. You don't have to move to the North Pole, you don't have to make toys or feed the reindeer, and you definitely don't have to check the naughty or nice list. **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. We've created a couple "wish list" that will help you know what is needed: bit.ly/tecdreamlist or bit.ly/tecwishlist.

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

bit.ly/shophardings



bit.ly/amazonsmile4TEC



TOGETHER WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

You shop. Amazon gives.

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.

There are many other ways to be an elf for TEC, visit our website at 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.



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 2020

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.

You Help Make “I Did It!” Moments Happen ... You’re a blessing to the TEC family!



Your support of TEC is more than a blessing in this crazy year we call 2020! The coronavirus pandemic has hit all of us in one way or another. It's been said that we're all in the same boat. Well, maybe the same storm but definitely not the same boat. **Each of us have taken on new roles and responsibilities depending on the boat we're in as we navigate this storm, we call COVID.**

Families and businesses have had to pivot with every new discovery about the virus and safety protocol put into action. Many have been classified as essential workers and are busy working the frontlines, some have been separated from loved ones. Many have spent the past nine months balancing family life while working from home and others have had the added duty of helping children migrate through virtual learning. And sadly, some have lost their jobs and loved ones due to this awful disease.

This year has not been easy for any of us, which makes your support even more meaningful. We are beyond grateful to those who have helped TEC steer through the murky waters of this pandemic. With much appreciation, we send a heartfelt thanks out to our donors!

- * Cathy Alwine
- * Baird Private Wealth Management
- * Joyce Ballard
- * Baroda Area Business Association
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* *Charitable Shoppers through the Harding's Community Rewards & AmazonSmile programs*

Veteran & Volunteer ... A Woman of Many Hats

Kacie MacLagan wears a lot of TEC hats. She volunteers her time on Wednesdays, along with her sister and nephew, bringing in and feeding the horses. She manages to squeeze in a break during those chores to ride in the TEC WITH VETS program. In addition, she has recently become the on-call photographer and videographer, recording ordinary and special events, and producing COVID training videos for TEC. Again, many hats.

But wait, there's more! Kacie also drives from her home in Kalamazoo every Tuesday morning to help Lighthouse Education Center students learn job skills and life skills as part of their Community-Based Instruction (CBI). **She works along with their classroom teachers to supervise the group and keep them focused on their jobs of cleaning up, in and around the barn.**



Kacie became involved in TEC WITH VETS in the summer of 2019 after learning about it from the Disability Network. Her 4 ½ years in the Navy repairing satellite communication systems made her eligible for the program. **TEC WITH VETS provides lessons to veterans and their families, thanks to the Stephen E. Upton Love Your Community Grant.**



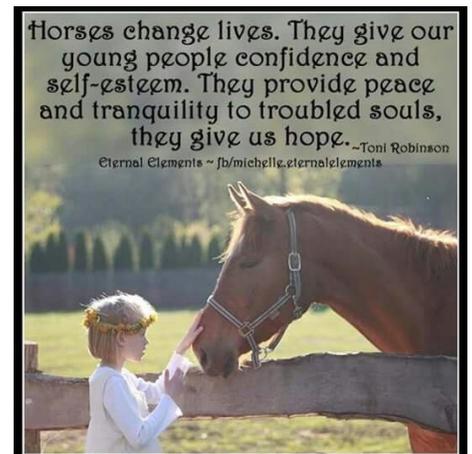
Although Kacie hadn't ridden since 2001, she was pleasantly surprised to find that riding a horse, like riding a bike, comes right back to you. Although she normally rides Grace, she has recently been working on getting comfortable riding one of TEC's newest horses, Sally, and together they are even doing some dressage! She has discovered that her favorite part of being at TEC is the horses. "Sometimes they have an attitude, sometimes they're loving, but they know when you're having an issue, and they work with you." Kacie has been trying to get more people involved in TEC by reaching out to family and friends on Facebook and through word of mouth. **To anyone thinking about volunteering, she says, "Definitely do it! The relationship with the horses, helping people who need it, giving back - you'll get A LOT out of it!"**

Through the Eyes of a Parent: Why Horses are Important?!?!?

Written by TEC Volunteer/Parent "Sharon"

Life can be difficult, but happiness can come with remembering the happy before the bad. "Carly" was a victim of domestic violence. What she endured no one will ever really know because she was only a toddler when it happened. Before the bad, she had a toy horse barn with eight horses that she carried everywhere. When the anger and the nightmares and the fear of men started and wouldn't go away, we discovered TEC at the RESA Festival of Families event. I began by volunteering and asked if Carly was eligible to participate. Margie, Ron, and Autumn all said YES, and we signed up without hesitation. That was three years ago.

In that time, Carly has grown up and matured with the help of her instructors. Helen got her comfortable with real horses and Marilyn continued by showing her she could do it. Margie and Ron pushed her gently, teaching her independence and following directions, and praising her achievements. The anger has decreased and the skills have increased, and her verbal communication has grown with all of her riding helpers, especially Ron. And she has a special friend in Deb. Deb has taught Carly friendship and trust.



Thank you, TEC. We are so thankful for all of you and what you provide for everyone.

Please note: "Names" have been changed to protect their privacy.

Spread Cheer & Joy Like Falling Confetti

Typically, this is the most joyous time of year. Many gather with family and friends to celebrate the holidays. Sadly **this year will look and feel much different**. Festive holiday events and family gatherings will be cancelled or reduced in size, putting a damper on holiday spirit.

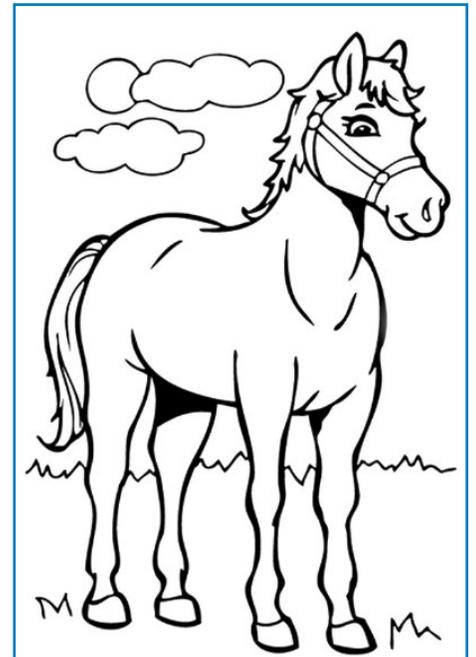
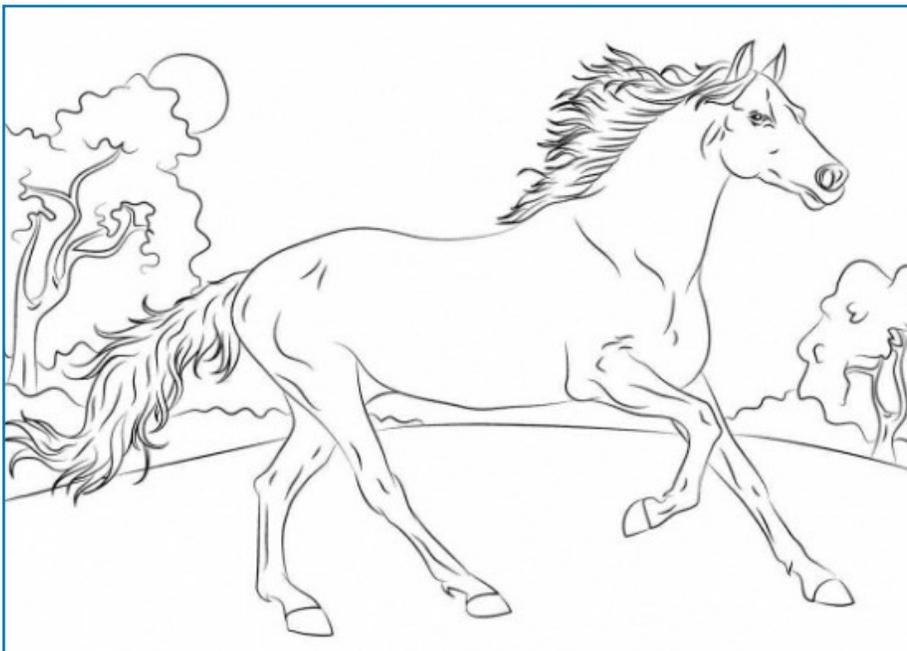
Help us keep the holiday spirit alive. We invite you to join us in spreading holiday cheer and joy. Let's warm up others like sharing a cup of hot coco with a friend. It's easy to do. Send the TEC horses a Christmas card, draw a holiday picture, or share your favorite holiday recipe or memory. We'll share your holiday cheer with our TEC family on Facebook.



Need a little inspiration? Use one of the images below to start your drawing or visit our Fun Activities (www.tecfarm.org/funactivities) page to see more. **When you're ready to share your holiday cheer, send it to TEC via e-mail at info@tecfarm.org or send by snail mail to Autumn Zick, 5415 Lincoln Avenue, St. Joseph, MI 49085.**



Tell us your favorite holiday recipe or memory:



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Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 1250

Niles, MI 49120

NON PROFIT

USPS

#510

49120

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Watervliet, MI 49098

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From all of us to you ...

