



# TEC Connections

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

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Merry Christmas ...



Do you shop Amazon for your holiday gifts? Use their AmazonSmile platform and turn your gift buying into a donation to TEC. Same products, same prices, same service.

Use this link <http://bit.ly/SHOP4TEC> and Amazon will donate 0.5% of your eligible purchase to TEC.

Happy New Year

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

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



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



## Pacem + Sully = Success!

Pacem Bodtke is an 18-year-old man who has been riding at TEC since its first day in 2006. Sully is a 7-year-old Quarter Horse/Belgian Draft cross who joined the TEC herd just this past summer. Since pairing up, the two of them have become an unbeatable team!

Pacem, a student at Blossomland Learning Center, is fun-loving and easygoing, and always has a smile on his face. According to his parents, Theresa and Slim, he has loved riding from the beginning. He asks them every day if he gets to ride, and on Mondays when his mom wakes him up and tells him it's his riding day, he jumps right out of bed.

Over the years, Pacem has ridden most of the horses at TEC, eventually outgrowing all of them. That's when Sully entered the picture. **Sully was purchased from Dan and Judith Lynch in Wisconsin thanks to a "For Good" grant made possible by T.E.A.M. (Teens Exhibiting Able Minds) members of the Youth Advisory Committee of the Berrien Community Foundation.**



*I found it! Slim holds a tray of pictures while Pacem listens for clues and picks the right picture.*



*Sully keeps a sharp eye out for after-lesson treats.*

He weighs in at around 1,400 pounds, loves to eat, and has feet nearly the size of dinner plates! Despite his size, he is gentle and graceful, and, like Pacem, basically unflappable. **Without a horse of his size and strength at the barn, several TEC participants would have nobody to ride.**

**Pacem's parents wish other people knew how TEC helps to empower its participants.** They have seen Pacem grow mentally, physically, and emotionally from the experience. He has become much more communicative through his riding lessons, and has learned to ride and control his horse. And along the way, his self-confidence has gotten a big boost.

Slim volunteers as a sidewalker for Pacem, and also puts his carpentry skills to work at TEC; among other things, he built a lean-to shelter for the horses using lumber donated by his employer, Big C Lumber in Eau Claire, MI.

When asked what he would like to do for TEC, **Slim says he would love to win the lottery so that he could start a fund in Pacem's name that would help TEC continue to grow.**

# Through the Eyes of a Parent: It's Not a Choice



Matthew Cholewa with Nellie.

*Written by TEC Parent Clare Cholewa*

**The unrealistic expectations that other people place on families of people with autism can be more stressful than living with the challenges of autism itself.**

There are a couple of truths that have really been rammed home by living with two sons on the autism spectrum. The first thing is that there is nothing easy about living with someone with autism. The “you can do anything you want” idea is completely unrealistic. Just working harder **WON'T** enable them to do anything they want; the very nature of autism can prevent them reaching the simplest of milestones. Inspiration is good, being positive is good, **BUT** having unrealistic expectations does not help anyone.

The second thing is that their autism is **NOT** something they control. **It controls them and everything in their lives and ours.** Yes, they can struggle to learn control, but it can take just one word, one action, one place, for that hard-fought control to be lost, and then they – and we – have to start all over again. It can take Matt 10 to 15 years before he is able to show us that he is learning a skill, or that he understands what we are asking him to do. Not to achieve it, but simply to show progress.

As caregivers, Kenneth and I also have a reality that is not reflected in inspirational memes or stories. We do **NOT** get to do anything we want or put our minds to. **None of us made a choice for autism to come into our lives.** We just do the best we can in an ever-moving reality that can blindside us in a blink of an eye. We rely on others, like those at TEC, to provide opportunities for Matt to learn something new, to meet a diverse group of people, and to learn and practice social skills that he can use in the community.

It is also really important to us that Matt and Kyle learn that there are others who can be there for them so they don't just rely on us. *As parents, we can't do it alone. TEC provides a positive place where we can tell Matt, “We think you can do this!” and where, as a team we work together to help make that a reality.*



## Running for a Cause

Special thanks to the SWMI RACERS for selecting us as their benefit partner at this year's *Once Upon a Time 5k* race. Their donation of \$3,250, along with the \$200 donation from the Baroda Lions Club Pancake Breakfast held prior to the race, is appreciated greatly.



# It's Not What's Under the Tree That Matters, It's Who's Gathered Around It

*“Christmas gives us the opportunity to pause and reflect on the important things around us.” – David Cameron*

As we reflect on the past year, we give thanks for all those who gather around TEC. Whether you're a staff member, volunteer, participant, family member, donor, or just a friend of TEC, you are what is most important to us; as well as, our TEC horses for they are truly the gift that keeps giving all year as they are the catalyst for change in the lives of our TEC participant. **Because of all those around us, we have the blessing of helping others make “I Did It!” moments happen at TEC.**



*Rich, Hayden, and Chris.*

We find many don't see or understand these **“I Did It!”** moments we speak of often. Imagine you're the parent of a child with special needs. The chances are rare that your son/daughter will be the star player on their school's sport team or do the youthful activities of a child without a disability. These parents don't have the typical brag story parents share after the game or when they run into another parent at the grocery store.

On the other hand, we think these parents have an even better story to brag about. **Therapeutic riding is an activity parents and other family members can participate in with the child. It's fun, allows for growth of both the participant and family, and is something you can talk about with others.** How many people can say their child is riding a 1,000-pound horse? Or their child learned how to lead a horse around the arena. And beam with pride as they share the joy of watching their child light up the first time they trotted on their horse.

These are the stories that come out of TEC. And we're fortunate to have so many parents involved in our therapeutic riding lessons. Some serve as sidewalkers for their child or volunteer their handyman skills around the barn, while others are the cheerleaders around the arena.



*Alex and Mike with horse Nellie.*

Take Mike Buddemeier and his teenage son, Alex. Mike had been looking for an activity his son would like to do that he could participate in with him. Together, we use pictures to help Alex learn the sequence for tacking his horse, Nellie. Remembering the steps of a task helps prepare him for future job skills.

Then there's Andrew Dale who brings his young daughter, Josilyn, to TEC. Together, they brush and saddle her horse, Szanghi. This provides Josilyn with practice for staying calm, completing tasks, and interacting with others which are skill that will transfer away from the barn.

Sometimes it's a family affair. For instance, TEC participant, Hayden Clark, is joined by his dad, Chris, and grandfather, Rich. Chris and Rich are Hayden's sidewalkers during riding lessons. Together, they are strengthening Hayden's muscles and teaching him skills he might not learn elsewhere.

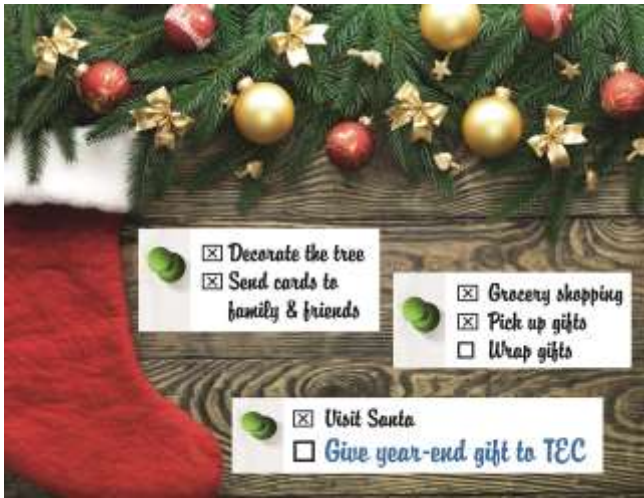


*Andrew and Josilyn with horse Szanghi.*

**These “I Did It!” moments don't happen without our change agents ... All of those gathered around TEC. There's truly not enough words to say how much we appreciate and are grateful for your continued support of TEC – THANK YOU!** We look forward to making more of these moments happen in the New Year.

**Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!**

# Be a Change Agent, Make “I Did It!” Moments Happen All Year Long



We need more change agents to make “I Did It!” moments happen. It costs approximately \$5,100 a year to care for just one TEC horse. Multiply that times seven and it cost TEC \$35,700 a year in basic horse-related care.

As you check off your holiday to-do list, add become a change agent for TEC. A year-end gift to TEC will allow us to change the life of a person living with special needs.

We are asking for a gift to our general horse care fund. No matter the size of your contribution it all helps TEC to feed, shelter, and maintain the health and wellbeing of the horses. We are as efficient as possible with our funds. We have just over a handful of part-time staff members, who along with our amazing team of TEC volunteers, provide quality programming and consistent horse care.

As our participant list grows with each passing session, we have expanded the days and hours of our therapeutic riding sessions and programs. **Horses are vital to our success all year long.** In addition to our riding sessions, they play a key role in our summer day camps, TEC WITH VETS, and Saddle STARS programs.

**Please donate today. Your gift will change lives. And, for that, we are most grateful - THANK YOU!**



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)

HOLIDAY 2019

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

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

Name of Cardholder (print): \_\_\_\_\_

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).

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

# More Than One Way to Support TEC

You don't have to move mountains or donate hundreds of dollars to TEC to make a difference. Whether you give an hour of your time or a \$5 in coins, it all adds up to "I Did It!" moments at TEC.



**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 you purchase from your favorite store.** In-kind contributions; such as, salt for sidewalks, horse treats, dry cat food, and many other items are greatly appreciated.

**Make your purchases earn donations for TEC.** Turn your everyday shopping habits into regular donations. A few of our favorites, include:



You shop. Amazon gives.

**Participate in TEC fundraisers and special events.** What's better than getting out of the house or office for some fun while helping your favorite charity.

**Sponsor an issue of TEC Connections, a horse or classroom.** Help TEC cover the costs of producing this newsletter, wellness care for one of our horses, or teaching a class of eager learners.

**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.

Visit our website at [www.tecfarm.org/support](http://www.tecfarm.org/support) to learn of other ways you can support TEC in making "I Did It!" moments happen.



## Applauds to Our Recent Change Agents ... Your Support is Greatly Appreciated!

We also wish to acknowledge those who have made in-kind donations by giving horse treats and SmartPaks, cat food, copy paper, and more.

A shout out also to those who support us through charitable shopping. Your contributions have totaled:  
Harding's = \$135.18  
AmazonSmile = \$102.42

- |                              |   |  |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| ⇒ Baroda Lions Club          | ⇒ Knights of Columbus #13942              | ⇒ Larry Sehy                                 |
| ⇒ Kathy Barton               | ⇒ Knights of Columbus #708                | ⇒ Elizabeth Sexton                           |
| ⇒ JoAnn Bertrand             | ⇒ Lions Club of Benton Harbor – Fairplain | ⇒ Amy Underwood                              |
| ⇒ Rick & Roseanne Burden     | ⇒ William Martindale                      | ⇒ Stephen & Elizabeth Upton Charitable Trust |
| ⇒ Kendall & Kevin Casey      | ⇒ McLoughlin Family Foundation            | ⇒ Rachel & James Whitcomb                    |
| ⇒ Clare Cholewa              | ⇒ April & Matthew Meier                   | ⇒ Ruth & Tom White                           |
| ⇒ Diane Conover              | ⇒ Paw Paw Lions Club                      | ⇒ Rodney Wilder                              |
| ⇒ Farmington Elk Lodge #1986 | ⇒ Plym Foundation                         | ⇒ Vikki Wilkins & Rob                        |
| ⇒ Roshelle & Kenley Hall     | ⇒ Barbara Priest                          | ⇒ Clover Lee Wolford                         |
| ⇒ Patricia Hesch             | ⇒ Jeffery Richards                        | ⇒ Jane Wynn                                  |
| ⇒ Margie Hojara-Hadsell      | ⇒ Dana Riley                              | ⇒ Ray & Patricia Zemaitis                    |
| ⇒ Knights of Columbus #14409 |   | ⇒ Autumn & Russ Zick                         |

*Donors recognized above are for the period of June 1 - Nov. 30, 2019. Harding's & AmazonSmile amounts are for Jan. 1 - Nov. 30, 2019.*

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# Horses Change Lives Through TEC

## Camp TEC 2019

Special thanks to the Michigan Elks  
Association Major Project Commission for  
sponsoring our under 18-year-olds!

