

History of Central Kentucky Riding for Hope

Central Kentucky Riding for Hope (CKRH) has a mission to enrich the community by improving the quality of life and health of children and adults with special physical, cognitive, emotional and social needs through therapeutic activities with the horse.

CKRH was called Central Kentucky Riding for the Handicapped when it was established in 1981 as a Kentucky non-profit corporation. The program began with a chance encounter between Dr. Peter Bosomworth, then chancellor of the UK Medical Center, and Debbie Marcum, a Somerset, Ky., horse lover. A discussion of the benefits of horseback riding for individuals with disabilities ensued. Intrigued by the possibilities, Dr. Bosomworth contacted Rusty Chevront, then executive director of the Kentucky Horse Park, who in turn contacted Becky and Jim Howard, the owners of the Bluegrass Riding Stable located at the Park. Following discussions with their chief riding instructor, Mary Quattrocchi, the first therapeutic riding classes were held that fall for four students. Those classes were so successful that CKRH was begun later that year.

Because of these founders and many volunteers who joined with them, the dream of sharing the physical, mental and psychological benefits of horseback riding with students with disabilities has grown tremendously. Our hope for the future was reflected when our name became Central Kentucky Riding for Hope in 2004.

Meanwhile, many other changes have occurred. In 1987, CKRH became nationally accredited as a riding center by the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (now the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International [PATH Intl.]). Since 1998, CKRH has been a PATH Intl. Premier Accredited Center and is one of three accredited centers Kentucky.

In 2002, CKRH developed several new partnerships that continue today. Cardinal Hill began a pilot program in the special area of hippotherapy in which clients receive one-on-one treatment from a licensed therapist using the horse's movement as a tool for therapy. The hippotherapy program grew and thrives today.

In the same year, a partnership with the U.S. Pony Club enabled members of the Keeneland Pony Club to mentor CKRH students during a winter stable management program. This partnership was so successful that in 2008 CKRH became the first therapeutic riding center to obtain the status of "Pony Club Member Center," a title it continues to hold. CKRH participants may join the U.S. Pony Club and enjoy the full Pony Club experience by participating in rallies, quizzes and a variety of other activities with other Pony Club members across the region.

During this time, partnerships with several colleges and universities also were formed. The University of Kentucky and Eastern Kentucky University began using our facility to help expose students in physical therapy and occupational therapy to hippotherapy. Today, full college credit courses are taught at CKRH in hippotherapy. Additionally, a

partnership with Midway College was formed. CKRH now provides an internship placement for at least two interns per semester for students in equine management at Midway College. In 2010, we began a partnership with Asbury University's department of social work. Master-level social work students help CKRH staff develop and implement programming at CKRH.

The greatest change at CKRH began to take shape in 2004 because of growing demands in our community for us to provide services to participants and partners year-round. At the time, we were located in a converted tobacco barn at the Kentucky Horse Park with two outdoor riding rings, which meant we could not operate during parts of the year because of weather.

To this end, we announced plans for constructing a complex with an indoor arena and developed the first Night of the Stars gala to raise approximately \$200,000 to provide seed money for the new facility and increase awareness of the program. CKRH broke ground for our new complex in 2006 and moved into the barn, indoor arena and limited office space in March 2009. By the fall of 2011, our entire therapeutic riding and educational complex was complete.

CKRH has always provided an outstanding program that stresses its motto of "Ability Not Disability." We give people with disabilities something that they CAN DO in a world that may tell them all they cannot do. The new complex has allowed CKRH to continue and expand services in the areas of therapeutic riding, hippotherapy, therapeutic driving and professional development education. And the possibilities for growth are endless.

In 2010, we began developing new programs and partnerships for individuals with special needs. Horses for Heroes, which serves military veterans and their families, includes therapeutic riding, community transition services and mental health services. Adult day programs allow adults with severe cognitive delays to experience the joy of interacting with horses and being a part of the farm environment. A partnership with NeuroRestorative enables adults with brain injuries to rehab with horses.

Our partnership with AIM, a program within Fayette County Public School Special Education, allows high school students with special needs to develop employment skills in an authentic environment. We have partnered with the Markey Cancer Center to study and document research regarding the effects of equine-assisted therapy on young adult cancer survivors. We have also collaborated with the Bluegrass Rape Crisis Center to provide Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) as adjunct sessions to BRCC's psycho-educational group. The goal is to provide experiential learning that reinforces group sessions and focuses on life and coping skills for adult survivors of sexual trauma.

Since 1981, CKRH has served thousands of people with disabilities. Thanks to the generous support of many people and organizations in Central Kentucky and beyond, we look forward to bringing the healing power of the horse to as many people with special needs as possible.