

Special Strides Tales



What's in a tale? Tail?

What's in a tale? Tail? At Special Strides the words enjoy similar meanings. The Special Strides "tail" whisks away obstacles and wags with the happiness of functional accomplishments. Our once upon a time "tale" began in 1998 and continues to be written by our 140 clients, 21 horses, 50 plus staff and volunteers who tell the story of "improving lives... one stride at a time". We invite you to enjoy our inspirational "tale" each month.

This Month's Inspirational "Tail"

Our featured "Tale" this edition is submitted by an amazing high school student,

Mary Hicks. Mary's story represents the many, many students we have embraced over the past 19 years. There are many hidden gems of Special Strides, one of which is watching the transformation of youth find their purpose.

"The best way to find your self is to lose yourself in the service of others."

Mahatma Gandhi



A Volunteer's Story

Hello, my name is **Mary Hicks** and I am a junior at Freehold Township High school. I aspire to be an occupational therapist. Since my freshman year, I have been volunteering at Special Strides once a week. Each and every time I go I am amazed at what I learn and this experience has only enhanced my dream of becoming an occupational therapist. When I come to Special Strides, I am a side-walker who walks along the side of the horse, opposite of the therapist or riding instructor, during the session/lesson. It is my responsibility as a side-walker to always make sure the client is safe and secure, as well as assist the therapist or instructor with daily goals and activities.

Being a side-walker is a very rewarding position because you get to see the enjoyment of each client during their session, which is something I would not trade for the world. I have been able to make personal relationships with the clients and I get to experience how my actions are helping another individual. Each week I am able to see a glimpse into my future. I

would like to thank Laurie, Susie, Karen, and everyone at Special Strides for making this experience possible.

Not only do I volunteer weekly at the farm, but I am also Vice President of Volunteerism and Community Service for the Special Strides club at my school. I joined this club as a freshman and completely fell in love with it. Each year we raise funds for Special Strides and celebrate our efforts with the Annual Color Run. This event is a great way to bring everyone in the community together. During my Freshman and Sophomore years my team was top fundraiser out of everyone participating. This year we raised the second greatest amount. I look forward to 2018 with my personal goal to raise even more money than the past three years.

Altogether, Special Strides has had such a positive effect on my life that I will forever be grateful. I only hope that as the years go on, more and more people discover this farm and all it has to offer. Thank you for taking the time to read my story and I hope you got a glimpse into just how amazing Special Strides really is.

Mary

Program News

A soccer team has 11 players, with specific roles, on the field at any time with nearly that many substitutes ready to step in as needed. The team at Special Strides has many players also; a founding director (1), an executive director (2), a director of marketing and events (3), a development assistant (4), a barn manager (5), an equine trainer (6), part time physical therapists (7,8,9, 10), part time occupational therapists (11,12), part time social worker (13), adaptive riding instructor (14), barn staff (15,16,17,18,19), assistants (20, 21) and VOLUNTEERS (too numerous to count). We could field multiple soccer teams with just our volunteers. Our volunteers round out our team and meet the needs to hold our organization together.

Our volunteers do so many great things and so many things GREAT!



- They support our office answering phone calls, sending out mailings and helping with daily organization (Thank you Alicia, Marge and Terri)
- They support our daily therapy sessions and adaptive riding lessons-with the clients and with the horses (Thank you to ALL as there are too many to call by name)
- They support our fundraisers doing set up (thank you team Nordstrom's), gathering gifts, recipes, friends and providing support on Dance Night (Thank you Barn Dance committee), sending out donation letters (Thank you Junior Committee), and guiding us as an organization (Thank you to our board of directors)
- They make our environment clean, safe and beautiful (thank you to our Eagle Scouts, our corporate clean-up crews, boy/girl scouts and other community service groups)

Thanks to each and every one of our volunteers. Without your daily efforts we could not make a difference in the lives of so many individuals with special needs AND we could not help you on your journey to making a difference.



Donor Dollars in Action

Our Youngest "Fun"d raisers!

A wise person recently said "Giving is the Fabric of our Society" and the teens on our Junior Committee are learning this quality early! Thank you to all members who participated in a very successful

Color Glow Run on

April 1st. After spending 3 months raising money for The Steven Werthan Memorial Fund, over 400 hundred teens celebrated their success at the farm. They ran our track while being showered by our proud sponsors with glowing colors. This fund helps offset the costs of therapy services and recreational programs for individuals with special needs who cannot otherwise afford this opportunity for success. You can still support the Color Glow Run until April 30th by making a contribution here. Contact Karen Goldberg if you know a teen who would like to join the Junior Committee of Young Leaders. email Karen at Kgoldberg@specialstrides.com

To learn about current donation opportunities, visit our website www.specialstrides.com or email development@specialstrides.com

Upcoming Events

Mark Your Calendar!

July 7th-Summer Concert at the Farm

Sept 10th-Horse Show and Family BBQ

October 14th-Annual Barn Benefit Dance



Make a Difference

[Click here to make a donation](#)

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STAY CONNECTED:



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