

Special Strides

"Improving Lives... One Stride at a Time"

Our Staff

Our physical therapists, occupational therapists, social worker, certified adaptive riding and driving instructors, educators, equine specialists, horse handlers, and safety assistants uphold the highest standards in the field of equine-assisted activities and therapies. They are active members of state and national professional organizations and work to stay current in their field through continuing education. Following rigorous inspection, Special Strides has achieved Premier Accreditation through the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl). The Special Strides staff is dedicated to igniting the physical, emotional, social and intellectual spirit in all.

THERAPY - NATURE - DISCOVERY
LEARNING - PLAY - HOPE

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Mission

Special Strides, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, is dedicated to improving the lives of individuals with special needs. Located on beautiful Congress Hill Farm in Monroe, NJ, children and adults are inspired to discover their strengths through engagement with horses and other farm activities. Special Strides offers physical therapy, occupational therapy and psychotherapy services as well as adaptive horseback riding, adaptive carriage driving, experiential learning, and equine-facilitated learning programs. A strong team of experienced therapists, instructors, equine specialists, and dedicated volunteers utilize therapeutic strategies that foster growth based on an individual's strengths and goals. Special Strides is a multidisciplinary therapy clinic and equine center. Therapy, adaptive riding & driving, and learning programs can provide a wealth of positive results including:

- Development of motor skills, balance, posture, coordination, strength, and body awareness
- Motivation for speech and communication
- Enhancement of skill acquisition, self-confidence, and self-awareness
- Improvement in overall physical, cognitive, social, and emotional well-being

How Do Therapists Use Hippotherapy?

When incorporating hippotherapy into a plan of care, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and speech language pathologists integrate the motion and "E-motion" of the horse to facilitate functional changes in areas such as sitting, walking, communicating, playing, and learning. The impact of these techniques on strength, mobility, balance, and coordination allows therapists to create a powerful individualized plan of care to achieve treatment goals. The emotional connection that develops between horse and client improves awareness, communication, and self-esteem. During a therapy session at Special Strides, clients may also explore sensory playgrounds and wooded trails. All of these therapeutic tools are offered in a peaceful natural setting not found in a traditional treatment clinic.

What is Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy

Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy (EAP) is a unique and powerful methodology providing counseling services to those in need. Difficult to replicate in an office, the horse is able to provide feedback in a way that enables an individual to investigate their communication strategies and attachment possibilities in an experiential manner. With the affordances of the equine and the equine environment, changes can be made in the emotional health of individuals with anxiety, PTSD, relationship anger issues, depression, and those in recovery from abuse.

What is Adaptive Horseback Riding?

Adaptive horseback riding is a recreational horsemanship program taught by PATH Intl. certified adaptive/therapeutic riding instructors. Learning horsemanship skills including riding, care of the horse, grooming and tacking helps to build confidence, teach respect for others, foster communication, and promote exercise and recreation.

What is Adaptive Carriage Driving?

Adaptive carriage driving provides an alternative to activities on horseback. Learning to control a horse while driving from the carriage seat can improve balance, self-confidence, communication, eye/hand coordination, and spatial relations, in addition to team cooperation skills.

What is Experiential Learning?

Equine Facilitated Learning (EFL), Nature's Classroom and EQUUS Learning all provide opportunities for exploration of educational concepts and of self. These models use the natural environment of the farm and the social attributes of the horse to attain learning objectives. Sessions are guided by educators and trained equine specialists.

What are the Volunteer Opportunities?

There are many opportunities for volunteerism and community service in support of programs at Special Strides.

- Special Strides Junior Committee (ages 12-18)
- Volunteer horse handler (ages 14 and up)
- Volunteer sidewalker (ages 14 and up)
- Corporate volunteer projects
- Community group service projects
- Administrative projects
- Special Strides Ambassadors

What are the Educational Opportunities?

Special Strides provides professional clinical education internships for physical therapy and occupational therapy students from many universities. Other university level internships (such as exercise science, nursing, marketing, therapeutic riding and public relations) are also available. Special Strides offers American Hippotherapy Association training courses throughout the year. Mentorships are available upon request.

