

RideAbility Mission Statement:

Serving families of children or adults with special needs;
providing horseback riding and related activities.

We create a fun and therapeutic environment **where everyone is able!**
(*enhancing physical, emotional, spiritual and mental health*)

RideAbility's Vision:

To provide the best possible therapeutic, educational and recreational year-round equine activity program for persons with disabilities and their families, by embracing opportunities (now and in the future):

- An well functioning facility, included a heated barn, training and therapy rooms and an office (plus!).
- Multiple site offerings (using whatever facilities are offered to us).
- Working with other programs to create the best community offerings
(Ironwood Springs, Rochester Park and Rec, 3 Feathers/Goodhue, Cannon Falls, We Can Ride, Outta the Barn, other programs as they start up and PATH Intl.)
- Growth and improvements in class offerings:
 - Registered Group lessons
 - Private/Semi-private lessons
 - Community group offerings of One-Time-Fun-Time visits
- Creative and Educational additions to all offerings:
 - Ground program (including *showmanship, horse science, spirit painting, grooming* and more)
 - Sensory trail
 - Vaulting and other ideas incorporated to offer creative lessons
 - Rainbow Curriculum (goal oriented classes incorporated into our 5 week curriculum)
 - Driving program training and certifications

Further potential (vision related) goals:

- To provide support, networking and therapeutic recreation for families affected by disabilities.
- To become a premier PATH Intl. accredited center.
- To provide a therapeutic equine-activity setting for our volunteers (and recognize volunteers are secondary clients for our program, especially benefitting from mental health benefits).
- To provide Special Olympics training in our program.
- To provide accredited Hippotherapy in our program.

RideAbility History and Background:

Program history and philosophy: RideAbility began in 1997, founded by Ellen Newman, Mary Lubahn and Lynne McCutcheon. Mary had given birth to a daughter with a disability and was afraid she would never get to take her daughter horse back camping or share the enjoyment of horses with her daughter. Mary, her neighbor (Ellen) and her daughter's pediatric physical therapist (Lynne) decided to research therapeutic riding.

The first year was financed by a grant from the Minnesota 4-H Foundation and the volunteers were members of the Roscoe Rockets Minnesota 4H Club. Their Community Pride Project won a State Fair trip!!!

RideAbility was recognized for providing therapeutic recreation for children with disabilities and also for:

- (1) emphasizing mental health rewards of interacting with peers (with and without special needs)
- (2) including parents as active program participants and
- (3) providing a support network for the parents with common life difficulties.

The program grew from three riders on a warm night in June 1997 to more than eight riders with disabilities by the end of the summer. Ellen, Mary and Lynne set-up and ran the program for 5 years and finished incorporating it as non-profit, setting up a board of directors, gaining United Way funding and completing processes and forms, etc. as suggested by PATH Intl. (previously NARHA - North American Riding for the Handicapped Association). Jim and Jeanie Michelizzi volunteered to host RideAbility at their farm. In 2001, Jeanie became the volunteer executive director and program director.

We are very family centered, inspired by the original idea of providing horse back riding for children with disabilities **and** their siblings. This implementation of inclusion is quite unique for a therapeutic riding center. RideAbility received an award for inclusion in 1999, presented by Arc SE MN.

We also provide events each year for the whole family, including:

- Annual luncheon with silent auction
- Barn Dance fundraiser (w/riding time for children and young at heart)
- Red/White&Blue Open House at the Barn
- Mile Ribbon Ride at the Barn (w/extended horseback riding for the students)
- Student Horse Show (where students and their family and friends ride&show the horses)

We encourage families and volunteers to help with these summer events at the barn, or with the Olmsted country fair or with a RideAbility float or horses in local parades during the summer months.

After more than 20 years of RideAbility, Mary Lubahn's daughter learned to ride independently, owned 3 of her own horses, and (YES!) went horse back camping with her mother, before she went off to school to pursue her dream of a veterinarian assistant.

We view our students as our main clients, and our volunteers as secondary clients who also need an enjoyable and therapeutic environment! Let's have fun with our kids!