



30 Years Serving the Community

Key Messages

Little Bit Therapeutic Riding Center

- Evolved from a small, volunteer-run effort in 1976 to a highly professional, accredited program.
- Industry leader in therapeutic riding program delivery and a model for other centers in its field. There are currently 700 centers in the country.
- The first nationally accredited program (by the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association) in the Pacific Northwest; currently one of only three Premiere Accredited Centers in Washington State.

One of the largest programs in the United States

- Over 250 students each week receive therapy and instruction through our seven days-a-week program with the assistance of our 26 staff members, 450 volunteers and 17 specially trained horses. One of 11 programs with a budget over \$1 million.

Comprehensive Services

- Riders represent more than 75 different disabilities.
- Riders range from 2 ½-60 years old, with 67% under 18 years.
- Five different therapeutic riding programs geared to the specific needs of riders:
 - Hippotherapy
 - Adaptive Riding
 - Developmental Model
 - Developmental Vaulting
 - MS (Multiple Sclerosis) Group

Adaptive Riding involves a highly individualized lesson plan taking into account the rider's physical, emotional, and mental strengths and limitations and goals.

How it works

- A horse produces a three-dimensional movement pattern very similar to the human pelvis during normal, upright walking.
- Hippotherapy and adaptive riding stimulates trunk muscles, increases head control, mobilizes the pelvis, and stabilizes the body core. This movement pattern cannot be duplicated in traditional clinical settings, and the results offer an improved potential for walking and normal hip development in individuals with disabilities.

Tremendous Results

- Riders experience freedom of movement never felt before.
- Benefits include: increasing muscle tone and strength, regaining the use of muscles, improving hand/eye coordination and balance, improving peer interaction and communication, increasing self-esteem, and developing a sense of control.
- As overall health improves, so also does life expectancy, socialization skills, self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Sense of achievement is strong medicine; it replaces self-doubt with self-confidence.
- Rider retention is 85% from one quarter to the next.

Hippotherapy, from the Greek "hippos" meaning "horse", involves a physical or occupational therapist utilizing the movement of the horse.

Current Challenges

Demand Continues to Rise

- We have a waiting list of about 200 potential riders - a wait of up to two years
- Each year, more parents become aware of the positive benefits of therapeutic riding
- Physicians and therapists continue to refer riders, despite the waiting list
- Waiting for service is most difficult for the youngest riders; studies demonstrate that early intervention is critical in reaching developmental milestones such as walking or speaking

Current Location Limits Growth

- We are close to reaching maximum capacity at current facility
- Only 20 horses can be stabled; which can serve no more than 240 riders per week
- Insufficient space to provide the ongoing exercise and training needed by our horses
- Only one covered arena, impacts services during the cold, wet winter months
- Our single outdoor arena is inadequate during good weather months
- Multiple classes scheduled simultaneously creating a significant safety and quality challenge
- Very limited parking

Need for Further Research and Trained Professionals

- Anecdotal evidence about the value of therapeutic riding and hippotherapy abounds, but a lack of scientific, clinical research in the field hinders its development.
- Insurance companies and the medical profession are hesitant to provide reimbursement or formal recognition of therapeutic riding programs
- There is a national shortage of instructors, physical therapists and occupational therapists trained in therapeutic riding.
- Only five training facilities exist in the United States, none in the Pacific Northwest

Vision for the Future: Building Capacity and Sustainability

Expanded facilities

- A larger facility has been purchased to double rider capacity and provide space for research and training
- Forty to sixty horses can serve over 400 riders and 80 Hippotherapy clients
- Two covered arenas, an outdoor arena, round pen and individual turnouts for each horse
- Outdoor and trail riding has additional therapeutic benefits for children with disabilities accustomed to spending much of their time confined to a wheelchair with views no higher than three feet

Research and Training

- Increase Little Bit's pool of staff resources
- Provide trained staff throughout the country to help the industry grow
- Carefully controlled research will help create a solid body of scientific evidence supporting the benefits of therapeutic riding and hippotherapy
- Advocate for insurance coverage

Community Partnership

- \$11 million volunteer-led campaign to increase capacity, provide sustainability during transition and build a reserve fund or endowment for innovative research and training initiatives
- The need is urgent and growing, and can only be met with the continued support of our community.