

# STARS Equine Programs

STARS, one of the oldest non-profit organizations in Siouxland, has been offering equine assisted activities since 1984. What started as an adaptive riding program has grown to include: Therapeutic Riding, Equine Assisted Learning, Equine Assisted Psychotherapy, Horse Camp, and most recently, a virtual literacy program.

Each year STARS serves participants with emotional, intellectual, and physical disabilities from Siouxland and the greater tri-state area. Matching each participant with a specially trained horse and volunteer team to work on personalized goals while learning horsemanship skills. Classes are taught by certified instructors who work alongside the rider and family to set these goals and make adjustments as needed.

Mission: To provide equine services that enhance the lives of individuals with emotional, intellectual, and physical disabilities.



## Equine Therapies

Equine therapy is the practice of working with horses to improve the physical, cognitive, emotional, and social well-being of an individual. Equine therapies can be beneficial on horseback or through ground based activities. The simple movements of riding a horse rhythmically can move the rider's body in a manner similar to a human gait, so riders with physical needs often show improvement in flexibility, balance, muscle strength, circulation, breathing and more. The unique relationship formed with the horse and the special mirroring abilities of the horse provides benefits such as increased confidence, patience, and self – esteem.



**SPECIAL TROOPERS ADAPTIVE RIDING SCHOOL**

*Providing Equine Assisted Services Since 1984*

Please contact Samantha Martin, Program Director  
712-239-5042 or [samantha@scstars.org](mailto:samantha@scstars.org)  
OR visit [www.scstars.org](http://www.scstars.org) to learn more!

# Therapeutic Riding



Therapeutic Riding is mounted horseback riding for the purpose of contributing positively to cognitive, physical, emotional and social well-being of people with disabilities through the teaching of horsemanship skills. Horses have the most similar gait to that of humans, creating pelvic movement and core stimulation to work toward daily living goals. Some benefits and goals of those participating in Therapeutic Riding work toward include promoting strength, increasing flexibility, self-regulating, developing balance, improving coordination, help breathing & circulation, boost self-confidence, and build self-esteem. Therapeutic Riding is the program that started STARS and the program that continues to be the primary focus of STARS.

Therapeutic Riding is available to anyone ages 2 or older with a diagnosed disability. STARS works with a wide variety of diagnoses; autism, ADHD, Cerebral palsy, Muscular dystrophy, anxiety,

depression, Down syndrome, and many others. If someone is interested in participating in the TR program, they must first be approved to participate by their doctor. There can be contraindications that would prevent someone from being able to participate for safety related to their diagnosis. Once approval is given and all paperwork received a participant is paired in class, to the best of STARS' ability, with others that have similar goals or riding ability.

TR classes are typically offered Monday thru Wednesday at 5, 6, & 7pm. A participant will then come out for their hour-long class where they will groom, tack, and ride their horse. STARS offers five 6 week sessions throughout the year, so that participant will come out once a week, for an hour, for 6 weeks in a row. Many participants repeat session after session or choose which sessions they want to participate. Classes are taught by PATH certified instructors that work on individual goals of the participant by incorporating riding skills, games, walking, trotting, etc. Goals that a participant could be working toward are things such as strength building, increased flexibility, balance, coordination, and self-esteem.



## Ground Work



For participants who are not able to ride, STARS offers a ground work program. Participants attend classes on a weekly basis and work on goals associated with being physically active, learning horse parts, and building horsemanship skills including grooming and hoof care, haltering and leading, and how to care for a horse.

Individual ground work classes are offered during working hours and are 30 minutes in length. Participants are paired with a horse or our two mini donkeys and are taught by PATH certified instructors who plan lessons that work toward each participant's goals.

## Horse Tales @ STARS

Horse Tales @ STARS is our weekly virtual literacy program! Read to you by the Executive or Program Director these stories explore character development and life lessons with a little bit of seasonal fun thrown in! Our two mini donkeys; CJ and Rosie, enjoy this weekly event and help read, celebrate birthdays with party hats, and nibble on props as past and current rider families, volunteers, staff, elementary classrooms, and local daycares sign on to watch.

Join us on Facebook Live and be sure to add a comment or two so we can say "Hi!" If you miss the live feed—no worries—catch a replay on STARS Facebook page.





# Equine Assisted Learning

Equine Assisted Learning is an educational approach to equine-assisted activities. EAL content is developed and organized by credentialed practitioners with the primary intent to facilitate personal growth and development of life skills through equine interactions. Goals in EAL may include developing work ethic, building self-esteem & confidence, understanding non-verbal communication, developing team work and listening skills, and becoming more self-aware.

EAL, similar to EAP, uses ground based activities to build on the interactions with the horses. At STARS we offer EAL in the group setting for various organizations and also offer cooperate TEAM BUILDING opportunities.

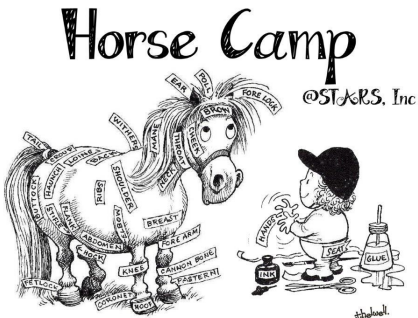


## Equine Assisted Psychotherapy



EAP is a participant lead process in which a licensed Mental Health Professional, working with an appropriately credentialed Equine Specialist, partner with equine to address psychotherapy goals set forth by the mental health professional and the participant. Horses have a unique ability to mimic or mirror the human interaction. They only respond to what is presented to them at that moment. They do not have bias to hair color, clothes, etc. It is this pure/unbiased approach that allows horses to show a participant areas needing work without having to sit in an office talking. EAP is an amazing and unique approach to Counseling. Instead of sitting in an office the arena is the office, the horse your teacher, and the facilitators your guide. At STARS, we facilitate using the EAGALA model with all ground based activities between the participant and horse.

## Horse Camp



Each summer STARS hosts four, 5-day horse camps for children ages 8-14. Horse camp is for individuals with no previous horse experience and for those that want to learn more! This is a great opportunity to learn about horses, how to ride, meet new horse loving friends, and gain tons of hands on experience and time in the saddle. Along with experience, horse campers will get a daily snack and a horse camp t-shirt. The final day, we will have a horse show followed by refreshments open to family and friends of the camp riders.

## WITCC Life Long Learning

STARS partners with Western Iowa Tech Community College to provide two Life Long Learning Courses each summer, Learning to Communicate with Horses & Silver Saddles. A Lifelong Learning Membership with WITCC is required for both programs.

**Learning to Communicate** with Horses is a non-riding horse class for adults 50 and over who are interested in learning how horses communicate with each other and humans, how to safely interact with horses and engage in activities that encourage building a relationship between horse and human.

The **Silver Saddles** is series of 4 classes that are 1.5 hours in length where riders 50 years or older will learn basic horsemanship skills such as grooming and tacking, walk-whoa transitions, steering, and trotting.

Interested in registering? Contact Life Long Learning Office at (712)317-3417.



# Volunteer

STARS cannot operate without the help of our very amazing Volunteers. In one night, we could possibly need to fill 36 volunteer positions. We have two positions for volunteers, side-walker or a horse leader. At STARS we try to have every volunteer begin as a side-walker for the experience of how TR works. A side-walker walks next to a participant on horseback for the entire class and assists that participant with grooming and tacking. No horse experience is necessary. Everything you need to know as a side-walker will be taught at STARS. Horse Leaders go through additional hands-on training and evaluation prior to being able to volunteer in that position. We are always in need of volunteers! Our orientations are offered at the end of each session. Must be 14 years of age and able to walk in sand for approximately 45 minutes.

We also have other opportunities for volunteers to help with office related tasks, clean pens, general cleaning of the facility, events, and other special projects. We always welcome groups that wish to volunteer for projects and work with several businesses and colleges to provide volunteer opportunities.



# Horses



At STARS our horses are the most important element in ALL of our programs! STARS is home to 10-14 horses, 2 donkeys, and 3 cats. Our horses have to fit a very specific job that requires them to have a special temperament & personality! Not only is temperament key in finding our horses but also the build and age play a big part! We look for horses that are between 10 to 20 years of age, mature but still able to provide a stable ride for program participants. Due to participant needs and the use of volunteer support in class we look for horses that are of average height and a variety of builds. Some participants need a horse that has a narrow build and others need a wide base of support. A horse's gait (or movement) plays a unique role when pairing a participant with their horse. A quick moving horse will provide the participant with constant feedback or help improve muscle tone while a slow and steady horse may help calm anxiety. These are just a few of the factors involved in selecting a program horse.

Our horses come to us in several different ways and from many different backgrounds. We take horses through donations or by purchasing. When horses come to STARS, they are evaluated for 90 days to determine if they will work in our Therapeutic Riding program. This assessment is completed by our full time staff team, who determine: 1) if the horse is sound, rideable, and able to integrate into the herd, 2) has the temperament required for Therapeutic Riding, and 3) has a body type we need. Our horses are all very unique.

The care of all our animals is performed by staff or under direct supervision of staff. Our donkeys and cats are pets that everyone enjoys when they visit the Riding Center! The donkeys are incorporated into our EAL and EAP sessions occasionally and sometimes the cats are extra therapy for family and friends watching class.



# Contact Information

Please contact Samantha Martin, Program Director  
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