PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Changing lives one stride at a time!

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Founded in 1989, EQUI-KIDS is a 501c3 nonprofit organization that provides life-changing equine-assisted services to a large and diverse community of children and adults with special needs in the Hampton Roads community.

**Our mission is to provide, promote, and support equine-assisted activities for individuals with mental, physical, emotional, social, or learning disabling conditions.**

The organization is accredited by the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.) as a Premier Accredited Center. PATH Intl. is the international professional organization that sets the standards for the equine-assisted services industry and certifies credentials for PATH Intl. centers and instructors.

EQUI-KIDS serves an average of 80 to 100 participants each week, and all services are provided by credentialed providers. We have ten outstanding programs including therapeutic riding, therapeutic horsemanship, EQUI-VETS (serving our military service members), EQUI-HEROES (serving first responders), Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy (mental health services for individuals or groups), Equine-Assisted Learning, inclusion camps, job coaching, school partnership programs, and educational workshops. Participants range in age from 5 years to seniors in their 90s.

We focus on providing therapeutic interventions to help develop healthier, more productive citizens, creating a positive impact for our community today and in the future. Connecting with our horses empowers our participants to focus on their abilities, opens up a world of possibilities, and provides both physical and emotional benefits in a unique and supportive environment.

EQUI-KIDS has the ability to create sustainable, long-term programs that provide measurable objectives that carry over into the participant’s life at school or at work, at home, and in the community. Now, more than ever, EQUI-KIDS is an invaluable resource for children and adults with special needs and their families as well as our military heroes and first responders.
EQUI-KIDS Therapeutic Riding Program is located within the Heritage Park community in Virginia Beach, VA.

Our 92-acre facility was built specifically for equine-assisted services and the individuals we serve, with every nook and cranny deliberately considered.

From the calming, soothing color scheme to the interactive classroom with handicapped learning access to a teaching stall, no detail was overlooked. The entire facility is ADA compliant, offering handicapped parking, six handicap-accessible restrooms, zero transition flooring, and decor lighting and paint colors designed by a regional specialist. Every detail incorporates sensory considerations, ensuring that those we serve have the greatest opportunity for reduced environmental distractions. This environment has allowed the program to expand beyond our child-focused origin to offer a broader spectrum of services across a larger population base.
**OUR PROGRAMS**

**Therapeutic Riding** provides mounted activities for the purpose of contributing positively to the cognitive, physical, emotional, and social well-being of individuals with special needs. Therapeutic benefits include increased muscle strength, balance, coordination, motor skills, communication, self-confidence, self-esteem, and independence.

**Therapeutic Horsemanship** provides unmounted activities that focus on teaching participants various equestrian skills while improving their cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral skills.

**Equine-Assisted Learning** is an experiential learning approach, which promotes the development of life skills. This focus on life skills can be related to academic achievement and classroom behavior, personal growth and exploration, or professional pursuits such as leadership development, team building, and executive coaching.

**Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy** (mental health) is an individual or group-based service. EAP fosters an organic approach to helping participants reach their clinical goals. These services are provided by Licensed Mental Health Professionals and Equine Specialists in Mental Health and Learning.

**EQUI-VETS Service Program** offers physical and mental healing through equine-assisted activities for armed service members wounded in the line of duty. Offering therapeutic horseback riding, horse care activities, and outdoor experiences; this program is offered to active duty and retired veterans at no cost in honor of their dedicated service to our country. Interacting with the horse strengthens emotional bonds and builds trust and confidence with each session. The goal of the program is to assist in physical and mental healing through equine activities to help our heroes reconnect to their families and their lives.

**EQUI-HEROES Service Program** is a collaborative program with the Virginia Beach Mounted Patrol that provides equine-assisted services to first responders and other support personnel affected by the mass shooting that occurred in 2019. This program launched in 2021 and is offered at no cost to the participants.
School Partnership Program is a collaborative program with schools in the Hampton Roads area that assist students with special needs from local public elementary and middle schools. Participants work on improving learning comprehension, social interactions, and self-esteem. The curriculum enhances their focus and attention, both inside the classroom and at home. This program meets many of the state of Virginia’s Standards of Learning.

Job Coaching is a collaborative program with the Virginia Beach City Public Schools Office of Exceptional Children. This program provides job coaching, in partnership with the school, to young adults with special needs. This helps participants acquire life skills and receive hands-on training for the social and task-related skills needed to prepare for entering the workplace after aging out of the public school system.

Girl Scout Program offers a Therapeutic Horsemanship Patch to the Girl Scouts of America. This program teaches scouts about the benefits of equine-assisted activities and how scouts can become involved in volunteering in order to give back to their community.

Summer Camps are offered for children as inclusion camps that are open to the public as well as our participants. In addition, private camp weeks can be developed as contracts with an organization or business. These camps are customized based on the learning objectives and criteria provided to us.

Professional Education Opportunities such as Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship Intl. approved workshops, other continuing education for EAAT professionals, and collaborations with local colleagues and universities is offered.

Professional Retreats customized to the needs of your organization to include leadership development, team building, and professional development.
GOALS & STRATEGIC PLAN

EQUI-KIDS’ strategic plan is the overarching guidance document that includes measurable outcomes for the organization. Services are evaluated against predetermined goals and objectives for both the organization and each individual participant. EQUI-KIDS is dedicated to providing exceptional and quality-based services with enjoyment and safety in mind. EQUI-KIDS’ team of certified professionals creates lesson plans that focus on measurable objectives and include engaging activities to assist the participants in meeting their short-term, long-term, and life goals. Ultimately EQUI-KIDS’ equestrian athletes are able to stride toward independence and feel proud of their accomplishments.

STRATEGIC PLAN: 2019 TO 2024

GOAL 1
EQUI-KIDS continues to be a financially stable organization capable of supporting program goals, facility maintenance, and an operating reserve fund.

GOAL 2
EQUI-KIDS continues to implement quality, evidence-based best practices across its equine-assisted programs.

GOAL 3
EQUI-KIDS’ mission is supported by a highly qualified team of staff and community volunteers.

GOAL 4
EQUI-KIDS is governed and led by an engaged Board of Directors.

GOAL 5
EQUI-KIDS is supported by a high-quality infrastructure.
The tireless dedication and devotion of our volunteers enable us to carry out our mission every single day. We are so grateful for each and every person who selflessly offers their time and compassion to support our equine-assisted services and programs. To successfully operate the organization and facility, we need the help of 400-500 volunteers each week. Without this generous donation of time and support, we would not be able to serve our participants.

No experience? No problem! We provide all of the necessary training to help you be successful in whatever volunteer role you choose. Volunteers must attend an orientation followed by the specific trainings for their area of interest (lesson, barn, or office). We encourage all of our volunteers to sign up for a consistent schedule, which helps us to ensure the success of our participants as well as their comfort levels.

**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

- **Side Walkers**
  Side walkers assist with grooming and tacking the horses before the lesson. During the lesson, side walkers directly assist the participants by providing guidance, physical and emotional safety, and encouragement.

- **Horse Leaders**
  Horse leaders assist with grooming, tacking, and warming up the horses before the lesson. During the lesson, horse leaders are directly responsible for leading the horse and ensuring the horse stays focused and comfortable during the lesson.

- **Barn Volunteers**
  Barn volunteers help clean stalls, tack, equipment, and assist with repairs around the farm.

- **Office & Special Event Volunteers**
  These volunteers help with fundraising events, assist with administrative projects, and greet participants and guests at the reception desk.

- **Volunteer Teams**
  We always welcome corporate workgroups, community services teams, and other parties looking to offer their time on special projects.
Become a part of the EQUI-KIDS family today!

We hope to see you at the farm soon! Please reach out to a member of our team and we will be happy to get you connected with EQUI-KIDS!

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