

A CHRONOLOGY OF THE 2018 SUMMER SESSION AT EAGLES' WINGS STABLE

Saturday – Classes 4 & 5

June 16, 2018, 9:00 a.m.: I was not able to make this class as we were out of town. We had one new and two experienced riders. When I asked around about how the class went, people said it was not as smooth as the Monday class that had two new riders. The new rider was experiencing some anxiety and was not bashful in letting everyone know. Sometime it takes more than one class for a new student to relax and get used to this new activity. So I was interested to find out how the second class would go. There was no 10:15 a.m. class as all the students were still on vacation.

June 23, 2018, 9:00 a.m.: The second class for the new rider went much better – there was still some anxiety, but the rider was definitely becoming more comfortable on the back of her horse. Gail had switched horses from Tommie Girl to Winnie for her and all seemed more comfortable. I talked with her mother and she was relieved that her daughter was having a better time. I think we all can relate to being in unfamiliar situations and being anxious about what was going to happen next.



The other two experienced riders were having a great time. Ted had no problem in hearing what his rider wanted him to do – his rider had a very commanding voice - and Ted responded very well. Both riders followed instructions from Gail – stopping at certain buckets, picking up certain rings and flags, and weaving in and out of the cones. The class ended on time and our new rider rode for the whole hour.





June 23, 2018, 10:15 a.m. – Two of the students in this class were still on vacation, but I was pleased to see the young student that I had observed last year had returned – her smile made my day. This picture was from last year – but her smile hasn't changed. Her mother remarked on how much the therapeutic riding lessons had improved her core strength. I believe she was originally referred to Eagles' Wings by her physical therapist and her doctor. The horses' muscles make over 100 movements with each step they take and no machine can

duplicate that effect! Many times the student is willing to work harder because riding is fun and that was clearly visible in this young rider. All went well and as usual, Gail was busy writing notes for her progress reports – we are blessed to have such gifted and caring instructors.



*"And He will raise you up
on eagles' wings,*

*Bear you on the breath of
dawn,*

*Make you to shine like
the sun,*

*And hold you in the palm
of His Hand."*

Michael Joncas

SUCCESS STORY: "35-years-young with a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis. I was in a wheelchair in 1998 but not confined due to hippotherapy. My therapeutic riding horse lent me his powerful body when mine was so weak. When I first started riding I didn't have sensation from the waist down, no balance and didn't have fine motor coordination in my hands. I was a mess but my horse was ready to show me the he would work my muscles and move for me until I could do it for myself, but most of all I believed that he needed to teach me that I was safe on him.

My instructor and all of the other wonderful volunteers treated me like an able-bodied person but of course took precautions for my safety. I needed to be treated like everyone else and in many ways once I was on my horse I became an equal. It was that one hour a week the kept me going through those rough times. I had to figure out a way that I would be able to be mobile, I reflected back on my childhood and how I would canter through the fields on my horse.

Riding a horse would be my solution. I then told the doctor that if I could ride I could live, not knowing that hippotherapy even existed at the time.

Over time and many months of therapy slowly my function improved to the point that at times I only needed a cane to walk around. My horse and my therapeutic riding instructor saved my life by keeping me in motion.

Due to cervical cord compression that required emergency surgery in April, 2000 I'm having to face many of the challenges that I had before, but I didn't have the luxury of ignorance for I knew how difficult the journey to recovery would be. After surgery I went into a coma and it's been a long road just

getting back into physical therapy. Before surgery I was basically quadriplegic but upper body movement is returning. I must confess that I didn't think I had what it took to recover from this challenge.

Once again my therapeutic riding instructor and my volunteers were there reminding me that I would be back on a horse again. There would always be a way to be mobile. My physical therapist told me that if anybody could make a recovery again that I could, that along with hippotherapy has given me a renewed hope. I want to thank everyone for all of the support and prayers. I know that it's a very long road ahead of me, but I came to the realization one night to let go and let God. I believe that God not only works through people but he works through horses too."



June 30, 2018, 9:00 a.m.: Another hot day in Ohio – there were just two riders for this session. Our new rider seemed happy to get on her horse and ride. She was definitely feeling more comfortable with each passing session. Again she rode for the entire session and afterwards, she gave hugs to her volunteers.

Our other experienced rider had a different horse for this session, Joe instead of Ted (pictured here). Joe is not as big as Ted and our experienced rider, who is big for his age, made Joe look smaller. Ted will be back next week. This rider has been coming to Eagles' Wings for some time. His Dad was very happy with the progress he has made.



June 30, 2018, 10:15 a.m.: We had all three students present for this class. All three have previous riding experience at Eagles' Wings. The youngest has been riding since she was one and one-half years old – she is now six. She was accompanied by her Dad – Mom was here last week. Working on her core strength was the focus for this rider – and it is working.

The other two riders are brothers, each with their own special needs. Their older brother was volunteering as a side walker. I talked with their Dad during the session – he was extremely pleased with the progress the boys had made and was very proud of his older son for the caring and support he provided as a side walker.



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A common thread across all three riders was that this was their activity, it was personal to them - they all had brothers and sisters without special needs who had activities of their own. Now all three riders had something of their own – a huge deal! Pictures of all to follow next week.

SUCCESS STORY: A mother, watches as her 9-year-old son is led around the ring. He has a rare genetic defect, agenesis of the corpus callosum that affects the white matter that connects the hemispheres of the brain.

"We were trying so many things that we were overwhelmed with therapies," she said.

When her son found horse riding, she described the connection as something akin to souls communing.

"It's so good to know there's always a way for them to participate in the world," she said. "You realize it's just in a different way."

July 7, 2018, 9:00 a.m.: It was a beautiful day in the neighborhood! All three riders were present and all three performed remarkably well. Our two experienced riders maneuvered their horses back and forth through a series of cones, making a lot of turns. Ted, our big white Percheron, was back in the arena and his rider was glad to have him back. I think our students come to believe that their horse actually belongs to them. The transformation of our new rider was amazing – she held her horse's reins, smiling as she rode back and forth across the arena. Her anxiety from her first session was gone – both Mom and Dad were very pleased with her performance.

July 7, 2018, 10:15 a.m.: All three riders were present and the class started with a series of hugs between the riders and their volunteers. Tammy, one of the volunteers, had been with her rider ever since he was a little boy. She gestured to him about how tall he was when he first came – now he has grown and is catching up to her. This rider's younger brother was also in the class and was being assisted by his older brother who was a side walker – lots of tenderness between the two brothers. Our other rider was able to sit up tall in the saddle – she received lots of compliments on her performance - her core strength development is showing! Her two side walkers, Tina and John, wife and husband, made their rider feel like one of their own – that is more of the magic and love going on at Eagles' Wings. Towards the end of the session, their young rider was very tired from all her hard work, but she rode Tommie Girl until the session ended. Therapeutic riding is fun, but it is also very hard work.



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Success Story: A rider who I will call "Roberto" is a perfect example of the benefits available through participation in therapeutic riding. Roberto is a thirteen year old boy who has cerebral palsy. Roberto uses a wheelchair for mobility, but has great verbal and cognitive skills. While Roberto is a huge sports fan, he is unable to participate in sports activities with his peers at school. During his weekly riding session, Roberto is able to experience the freedom and mobility of therapeutic riding, which helps him loosen his spastic muscles. In addition to the benefits of the physical therapy, is the valuable time Roberto spends with a youth volunteer each week. For over an hour, Roberto gets to talk sports, compare notes on subjects at school, and bond with a peer.

While Roberto gains much from his involvement in therapeutic riding, Roberto's father also remarks at how much he enjoys his experience. Not only does Roberto's father enjoy walking the trail with his son, he also appreciates the acceptance and positive atmosphere that greets his son each week. Finally, he values the opportunity to speak with the parents of other riders who understand his unique challenges, and can help him with his problems. Sometimes he feels that he is benefiting as much as his son.