Horses boosting handicapped kids in Chippewa County

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Marcy Misner/Amy

Horse—wrap

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The 4H horseback riding program for handicapped kids in Chippewa County has a little giddyup in its step this year, thanks to help from some volunteers  and a new partnership with Sault Schools.

Marcy Misner reports.

Ten students from Sault-area schools took part recently in a 4H horseback riding program for handicapped kids in Chippewa County. The Proud Equestrian Program benefits kids with emotional, physical, and social challenges up to age 19.

This is Norma Osborn, the woman who’s  coordinated the program for the past 40 years. She says many people have never heard of the nationwide program, even though it’s long in the tooth.

**(What does PEP stand for?) 4H Proud Equestrian Program. You say therapeutic riding program, well that makes it a little more simple. And when you tell them it’s a handicapped riding program, then they kind of understand it a little more. (:14)**

For the first time, school staffers brought students to the ranch as part of their 6-week summer school program.  At least one administrator says students have the potential to regress over the summer break and administrators continue special education services for them. Border Patrol agents and other volunteers came out for the week to aid the extra numbers of riders.

The program relies on help from volunteers, even down to the location of the program, at a half-million dollar horse farm in the Sault that’s currently for sale. The owner boards his own horses elsewhere during the program and even barbecues lunch for the volunteers each day.

Horseback riding program benefits handicapped kids in the EUP

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Marcy Misner/Amy

Horse—1

(:2) (:18)

Sault public schools are putting a little horsepower in their summer program for special education students.

The 40-year-old horseback riding program for handicapped kids in Chippewa County benefits riders physically, socially and emotionally. For the first time, Sault Area school staffers have brought their students to the riding camp.  At least one administrator says some students have the potential to regress over the summer break and administrators continue special education services for them.

Fade in quote with Karen **: Riders can get their lead ropes (:2)**

This is Karen Kucharczyk,(kuh-HAR check)  the 4H program’s riding instructor. She said the horses are valuable tools in improving kids’ overall development.

**Simply put, a horse will fill in some of the gaps that a rider has challenges with. For those who can’t walk, the horse is a set of legs. For the person who has autism it’s simply a connection of acceptance. Physically they gain core strength, confidence, speech. (:18)**

The 4H Proud Equestrian Program is a nationwide group that relies on volunteers

Horseback riding program benefits handicapped kids in the EUP

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Marcy Misner/Amy

Horse—2

(:7) (:22)

A 40-year-old horseback riding program for handicapped kids in Chippewa County offers uplifting benefits for both riders and volunteers.

Fade in quote with Karen

**Okay guys - You guys are all set? Silas, your horse is ready, you can go get your lead rope. Riders can get their lead ropes. (:7)**

This is Karen Kucharczyk,(kuh-HAR check)  the 4H program’s riding instructor. She explained volunteers steady the horse and assist the rider during the hourlong lessons. Kids learn quickly their state of mind is reflected back to them by the sentient horses.

**But every one of the kids has their own amazing moment.  We’ve had kids that have started talking that never spoke to anybody or made any eye contact with them. Their personalities come out just being around the horses. And they feel special, they feel loved. They are just a better person when they leave. And so are all the volunteers that come in contact with them. And myself. (:22)**

For the first time, Sault Area school staffers have brought students as part of their summer school program to the riding camp.  Some students have the potential to regress over the summer break and administrators continue special education services for them. The 4H Program is a nationwide group which benefits kids with emotional, physical, and social challenges up to age 19.