

The first time I observed a person being supported and assisted to move from their wheelchair to the back of a horse, I was awestruck. I could only imagine the feeling. Moving from below eye level and rising to sit astride a horse. How freeing! **“WHAT A FEELING”** (Theme song from Flashdance, please feel the rhythm)

Flashdance forward to 2022 and I remain awestruck as my 30 year old daughter, Abbey, mounts her steed. She is rolled up the ramp to the mounting platform and with the assistance of three trained adults and her parents, she mounts Emma. All equipment and supports are checked and adjusted; stirrups, support cushion, gait belt. Then, Emma moves forward in step with Abbey's team of three. Abbey's smile widens as she sits taller. She shares her delight by looking to each individual team member. **“IN A FLASH IT TAKES HOLD OF MY HEART”**

Abbey requires a significant level of support and equipment in order to have a safe and successful therapeutic riding experience. Unlike her early years in therapeutic riding, she is now non-ambulatory and experiences more seizures. The path of least resistance would be to avoid activities that require so much support and orchestration. However, Abbey's love for horseback riding is motivating. **“TAKE MY PASSION, AND MAKE IT HAPPEN”**

At Horse and Buddy, therapeutic riding is a reality for Abbey as well as a diverse population of individuals with special needs. For each 30 or 45 minute session, scheduling, communication, coordination, training, equipment and of course a horse, are required. It takes a significant amount of rolled up sleeves and hands-on work by staff and volunteers. **“WHAT A FEELING, BEING'S BELIEVIN' “**

Beyond the well oiled machine that Horse and Buddy is, there is the affective aspect of the program. Passion, care and concern are all expressed by each and every staff member and volunteer who joyfully greet and interact with riders, parents, and support staff. Every person is welcomed and respected for who they are and just as they are. And, this treatment also applies to the horses. **“IN A WORLD MADE OF STEEL, MADE OF STONE”**

In an ever changing and growing area, the need for more therapeutic riding opportunities also grows as the wait list at Horse and Buddy gets longer. Expanding will require site development, increased staff, more volunteers and of course, horses and tack. **“FIRST WHEN THERE'S NOTHING BUT A SLOW GROWING DREAM”**

When Abbey's session ends, she has experienced a trail ride, slow trot, pole weaving, stepping over ground poles and a platform step-up. An expected apple is given to Emma who chomps and licks her lips with her large tongue, right from a basket positioned on Abbey's lap. **“WRAP AROUND, TAKE A HOLD OF MY HEART”**



“WHAT A FEELING, I CAN REALLY HAVE IT ALL”

Created by Abbey's mom on behalf of Abbey and for the support of Horse and Buddy Therapeutic Riding Program