



angie
FALCONITE



**THERAPEUTIC
RIDING IS
FOR A GREAT
CAUSE...AS IN**

ASSIDY'S CAUSE

Mike and Angie Falconite have their names on a variety of community developments, but one project has a special place in their heart—Cassidy's Cause Therapeutic Riding Academy.



CASSIDY'S CAUSE



The couple began riding horses a few years ago, and through an acquaintance of Angie's they got involved as volunteers in an equine therapy program that served adults and children with special needs. Recognizing there was a need to expand these services in Western Kentucky, the Falconites got to know Dara Triplett, a riding instructor who had lost her daughter Cassidy to tubular sclerosis about ten years ago. Cassidy and Dara shared a mutual love for horses and when Cassidy passed away, Dara found comfort and healing from her own pain as she spent hours working with the horses and special needs individuals.

"When Cassidy first passed away, I had no desire to ride anymore," Dara says. "But my friends kept pushing me and encouraging me, and eventually my work with horses led me to Angie and Mike."

Funding from the Falconites, paired with Dara's teaching experience and certification, allowed this trio to build a state-of-the-art horse therapy center that serves children and adults who suffer from a wide range of disabilities, including autism, cerebral palsy, developmental disorders, and a variety of other handicaps.

Today, Cassidy's Cause Therapeutic Riding Academy is a certified Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH) program. It houses nearly a half-acre of space for an indoor riding ring, as well as horse stables housed





within the complex. The horses spend most of their time roaming freely in the pastures, an activity that helps the horses to be calm, docile participants with the people they serve. The center is complete with outdoor riding rings and wooded trails.

Though difficult for Angie and Dara to put into exact words, the benefits they've seen for individuals involved in equine therapy are astounding.

"Some people connect better with a horse than they do with other humans," Dara says. "Working with the horses allows the individual to develop confidence, strength, balance, and even self-control, as they have to learn to control their horses."

Because the walking pattern for a horse simulates the same walking pattern as a human, trail riding often aids in physical healing for individuals suffering from physical handicaps, according to Dara. One child who came to their program with a terminal brain tumor was able to learn how to ride a bike as a result of the therapy he received with his horse. For individuals suffering from autism, working with the horses has a very calming effect and often a positive effect on their verbal communication skills.



Kristal Wall's daughter Asialyn is autistic and struggles with sensory issues and verbal communication. "My daughter is much more calm since being part of this program. Because she has to learn to communicate with her horse in order to get him to walk, it is forcing her to communicate better verbally and we're able to reinforce this at home," Kristal says.

Cassidy's Cause held its first session in March, and through the generous support of volunteers and donations from individuals and businesses in the community, the academy now houses seven therapy horses, including a 23-year old horse named Jack that used to belong to Cassidy.

Volunteers take on a variety of roles at Cassidy's Cause, from farrier and tacking services, to veterinarian services, to helping instructors with the sessions held at the academy twice each week.

For more information on getting involved in the program as a donor, volunteer or to enroll an individual, call 270.554.4040, or find them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/pages/Cassidys-Cause-Therapeutic-Riding-Academy. 