



State Senator Scott T. Rupp ~ District 2

The Rupp Report

*Serving Lincoln County & St. Charles County***Column For Week of: November 29, 2010**[Website](#) | [Biography](#) | [Newsroom](#)

Bringing Confidence To Riders: Therapeutic Horsemanship

As a founder of the Missouri Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders, one of my top priorities is making sure children with disabilities receive the learning opportunities they deserve. That being said, I am proud to acknowledge Therapeutic Horsemanship of Wentzville for their dedication to helping people of all ages find confidence through horseback riding. With a mission to “provide equine-assisted therapy programs for individuals with disabilities in order to develop their maximum physical and psychological potential,” this dutiful group of therapists and volunteers are making a positive impact on their community.

Founded in 1975 with a borrowed barn and horses, Therapeutic Horsemanship has brought happiness and self confidence to more than 3,000 people in St. Louis and in five neighboring counties. Therapeutic Horsemanship clients, whose ages span from toddlers to adults in their nineties, have experienced many benefits that can come from working and bonding with horses.

For clients needing physical therapy, horseback riding is therapeutic because the horse’s rhythmical pace transfers to the client the pelvic movements of a human walking. These continuous motions help clients improve their balance, coordination, strength, and muscle tone. One of the best physical therapy programs Therapeutic Horsemanship offers is hippotherapy, which can be translated to “treatment with the help of the horse.” Taught by occupational, physical, and speech therapists, hippotherapy is not intended to teach a client to ride a horse, but is based on neuromotor function and sensory processing.

Although many of Therapeutic Horsemanship programs provide physical treatment, they also give clients a great deal of personal satisfaction. By participating, clients gain a sense of accomplishment and control as they handle a horse. Clients’ social and communicative skills often improve as well, because they need to vocalize their thoughts to their therapists and to their horse during sessions.

Another very beneficial program that has been offered in recent years has been Horses for Heroes, which was created in 2007 by the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA). With thousands of soldiers returning from combat with injuries such as amputations and spinal chord damage, as well as traumatic stress, this program gives these honorable men and women a chance to receive physical and emotional therapy.

Clients with disabilities require a New Rider Evaluation and a physicians notice granting approval to participate in Therapeutic Horsemanship programs. The non-profit program relies on volunteers for help and support. I applaud Therapeutic Horsemanship for their outstanding efforts to assist those with disabilities, allowing them to feel proud of their accomplishments. To find out more about Therapeutic Horsemanship, please visit www.thstl.org and for NARHA information, visit www.narha.org.

If you have any questions regarding this matter or any other issues within state government, please visit my website at www.senate.mo.gov/rupp. You can also [e-mail me](#) or call my office toll-free at (866) 271-2844.

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