



Central Kentucky Riding for the Handicapped (CKRH) was established in 1981 as a Kentucky non-profit corporation. It began with a chance encounter between Dr. Peter Bosomworth, then Chancellor of the UK Medical Center, and Debbie Marcum, a Somerset horse lover. A discussion of the benefits of horsebackriding for individuals with disabilities ensued. Intrigued by the possibilities, Dr. Bosomworth contacted the then Executive Director of the Kentucky Horse Park, Rusty Chevront who in turn contacted Becky and Jim Howard owners of the Bluegrass Riding Stabled located at the Park. Following discussions with their chief riding instructor, Mary Quattrocchi, the first classes were held that fall for four students. These first classes were so successful that those concerned enthusiastically went forward and began CKRH later that year.

Because of these founders and many volunteers who joined with them, the dream of sharing the physical, mental and psychological benefits of riding with students with disabilities has grown tremendously. This ongoing hope for the future was translated into the current name of Central Kentucky Riding for Hope, Inc. in 2004.

In 1987, CKRH became nationally accredited as a riding center by the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association. In 1998, it received the status of a Premier Accredited Center by NARHA, a status it still holds today. It is one of two accredited centers in the state.

During the past twenty four years, CKRH has served over 1,000 students with disabilities. Its mission is to enrich the community by improving the quality of life and health of children and adults with special physical, cognitive, emotional and social needs through therapeutic activities using the horse. Disabilities have included visual impairments, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, down syndrome, mental retardation, etc.

The staff of CKRH currently includes an executive director, program director, equine director, a part time secretary and a capital campaign coordinator. Essential to the program are the nine instructors all of whom are certified at various levels by NARHA. In addition, many occupational therapists, physical therapists and social workers are part of the program. The hippotherapy program includes four therapists registered with the American Hippotherapy Association plus two licensed clinical specialists in hippotherapy. Tremendously important to the program are the more than 250 volunteers who work in many capacities. People from all walks of life help in the barn, in the classes and treatment sessions and in the fundraising efforts of the program.

This community support extends as well to discounted or donated services from our veterinarians, farriers, hay and feed suppliers, tack shops and many of the area horse farms. A report prepared in 2004, totaled these volunteer hours to 12,167 hours valued by \$175,620. The Kentucky Horse Park itself provides the current facilities of a barn, stalls and fields for the horses, several riding arenas, office space and riding trails.

Very important to the program are the 19 horses and ponies that provide the therapeutic riding and hippotherapy. To be part of this program, these animals go through a very rigorous testing process not only to look at their soundness, the suitability of their gaits but very importantly, their dispositions. Many of these horses are older horses retired from the show world or other disciplines whose owners want them to enjoy usefulness in their later years. They are a most essential part of what makes this program what it is.

In 2002, CKRH developed several new partnerships to add to its program. Cardinal Hill began a pilot program in the special area of hippotherapy in which clients receive one-on-one treatment from a licensed therapist using the horse as a tool for that therapy. In addition, Shriners Hospital patients participated in a summer camp. Both these programs thrive today with hippotherapy having grown to a full day Tuesday and a half day on Friday.

In this same year, a partnership was begun with the U. S. Pony Club specifically with members of the Keeneland Pony Club acting as mentors for our CKRH students during a winter stable management program. That program has to date finished three winter sessions greeted with enthusiasm by both the pony clubbers and our students.

The University of Kentucky also uses our facility to help expose students in physical therapy to hippotherapy. Students from Eastern Kentucky University in occupational therapy have also been part of our program. Also, Midway College students in equine therapy work on our horses during their classes.

Because of these growing demands in our community plus the desire to serve our students and clients year round, CKRH has announced plans with the ultimate goal of constructing an indoor complex. To this end, in 2004, the first Night of the Stars gala was held raising approximately \$200,000 to provide seed money and increase awareness of the program. In 2005, this party again successfully fulfilled its role. In addition, a campaign coordinator was hired to implement the board's goal of breaking ground in the fall of 2005

CKRH provides currently an outstanding program that stresses its motto of "Ability not Disability." The program gives people with disabilities something that they CAN DO in a world that may tell them all they cannot do. As the father of one of our students says. "the amazing thing is, when Kevin is on a horse about fifty percent of his disabilities go away. When he sits up on that horse, he becomes a different person."

We hope in the years to come as we expand and with the addition of new facilities to be able to bring the healing power of the horse to all those possible with disabilities in the Central Kentucky region.