



## Capital Campaign Case Statement

*Be Part of Something Special ...*

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### **Our History and Origins**

HorseAbility was founded in 1993 when Katie McGowan witnessed the vast and immediate benefits of a Hippotherapy session when she donated her time and the use of her horse, Bandit. HorseAbility established a 501c3 status in 2001, and has continued to grow over the years, meeting the increased demand for the unique services that are offered.

HorseAbility has expanded from a small, therapeutic riding program and a one-week summer day camp to be the only full-time, all year-round “Premier Accredited Center” – recognized by the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH, Intl.) located on Long Island.

HorseAbility’s participant population ranges in age from 2.5 years old to senior citizens in their nineties. Our sessions are tailored to each individual’s needs and particular therapeutic goals. We believe in collaboration in order to achieve the most comprehensive therapeutic benefits. Our intake process encourages input from a variety of sources, and includes a private session with a certified therapeutic riding instructor/program specialist. Sessions are carefully planned with precise physical, cognitive and social goals outlined for the individual, and tracked weekly to measure progress.

HorseAbility has a stellar reputation – both in our community as well as in the equine therapeutic industry. This long-standing, positive track record has brought many opportunities to the organization. A milestone was realized when HorseAbility relocated to the SUNY Old Westbury campus, and took charge of a property dedicated for the sole use of the program. This relocation has allowed our program to grow from an average of 150 weekly participants in 2011 to 300 of weekly participants currently being served.



## **Mission, Vision and Core Values**

### *Mission*

HorseAbility is committed to improving the lives of children and adults with special needs through facilitated interaction with horses.

### *Vision*

HorseAbility's vision is to be a leader in advancing and implementing continued education, while further developing innovative programming by embracing and sustaining the best business practices in the equine therapeutic industry. Our long-term view is to partner with our local community to provide hope and opportunity, stimulating positive change in the lives of people. Our vision for the near future is to develop as an educational center that will partner with institutions such as Henry Viscardi School, LIU CW Post.

Moreover, we look to become more formally affiliated with SUNY College at Old Westbury to offer equine activities that align with their courses, resulting in new major and minor curriculum paths. These new programs, courses and workshops in conjunction with SUNY will be available to college students as well as to our current staff and volunteers, who are interested in a specialized certificate program in the field of Therapeutic Horsemanship and Activities.

### *Core Values*

HorseAbility's core values emanate from being a center of excellence in the important world of equine therapeutic service providers. The predominant ideologies our center is based around are approachability, belonging, leadership, education, impact, progress, professionalism, collaboration and honesty. To make a difference, our entire staff understands and advances these qualities. HorseAbility is a unique blend of compassion, commitment and courage.



We firmly believe in the benefits of equine facilitated programs, and we remain committed to educating those interested in entering this unique profession. Our core belief is that such training requires the highest standards – the kind that has defined our culture at HorseAbility over the past 24 years. Raising awareness of the industry, demonstrating safe and effective practices and being an educational center, helps us fulfill our mission on a greater scale.

## **HorseAbility in Action**

### *The Value of Therapeutic Riding*

In therapeutic riding, the horse is both a platform and a partner. Therapeutic riding engages all the senses as well as a participant's cognitive and emotional capacities in a manner unlike any other form of therapy.

The horse's swaying gait resembles that of a human, and is therapeutically useful in producing a kinesthetic reaction in a rider that can benefit muscle tone, balance, posture, and strength. Smooth-gaited or rough-gaited horses offer a range of experiences to riders, requiring adaptation and problem solving, as well as improved body awareness, balance, and physical control.

From a cognitive perspective, therapeutic riding offers a fun alternative to classroom or clinical settings. Lessons can be learned on horseback – whether they are directional notions such as forward, backward and clockwise, or letters, parts of the body or the ability to memorize a complex sequence of maneuvers. When those lessons engage the entire body, they are more likely to be retained.

Emotionally, a rider who can overcome a fear of the unknown, or gain mastery around a large animal, has gained valuable self-confidence that is a product of authentic achievement, rather than the false self-esteem that comes from empty flattery. Group riding classes offer safe opportunities to interact with peers, and for some individuals, the bond created with a horse can open a window that's been closed to human interaction.

Therapeutic riding is not a fad or a trend; it is a proven strategy that shows real results for a wide range of children and adults with special needs. In April 2010, the National Horses and Humans Research Foundation released the second study of its kind to evaluate and



quantify the impact of therapeutic riding on the social functioning of children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The results indicate therapeutic riding is a beneficial intervention for this population ([www.horsesandhumans.org](http://www.horsesandhumans.org)). Those physical, social and emotional benefits extend beyond the riding ring, and into the activities of daily living.

Therapeutic riding benefits a wide variety of disabilities – from autism spectrum disorder, down’s syndrome, emotional disabilities, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, visual impairment, developmental delay, multiple sclerosis, brain injuries, spinal cord injuries, amputations, learning disabilities – to attention deficit disorder, deafness, cardiovascular accident/stroke and traumatic stress syndrome. The list of disabilities that can benefit from therapeutic riding is even more comprehensive than those mentioned.

In addition to therapeutic riding, HorseAbility offers Hippotherapy sessions provided by licensed therapists. Hippotherapy – which literally means “treatment with the help of a horse” from the Greek word “hippos” for horse – involves an occupational, physical or speech therapist who utilizes the horse’s movement to achieve functional outcomes. In hippotherapy, the horse influences the participant rather than the participant controlling the horse. The person is properly positioned on the horse in order to actively respond to its movement.

### *Hippotherapy*

Hippotherapy seeks to increase postural strength, range of motion and endurance, as well as cognitive abilities such as following directions and concentration. Specific riding skills are not taught (as in therapeutic horseback riding) but rather provided as a foundation to improve neurological function and sensory processing.

HorseAbility also offers a variety of un-mounted programs; utilizing the horse for this unique type of work on the ground. Horses, like humans, are social beings. Observing the interactions amongst the herd of horses can help humans to recognize behaviors in themselves and others. Un-mounted programming is an excellent tool to learn and practice daily living skills, such as hygiene, nutrition, boundaries and the benefits of routine.

Without question, there is reliable medical evidence that equine facilitated programs can be helpful for a wide range of individuals. Seeing the look of confidence on the faces of the people we serve is without a doubt a significant measure of success.



## **What are HorseAbility's Strengths?**

HorseAbility has been leading the industry standard of excellence in equine facilitated programs on Long Island and the metropolitan area for over 24 years. The families of our participants and volunteers comment on our experience, knowledge, welcoming environment, and flexibility.

HorseAbility is known as a safe, ethically focused center. Our utmost concern is offering secure, protected and effective programs to support our participants. After two decades of operation, we continually tweak and adjust our policies and procedures to ensure we are offering the best possible programs, taking into considering the well-being of all involved.

HorseAbility is truly a transparent organization. We open our doors, financial information, policies, procedures and standards on a regular basis. We welcome the opportunity for intern placements that we feel can continue to develop our business ethics and standards. We have hosted countless industrial psychology, business, and accounting interns to examine our practices. We sustain high ethical and moral standards in dealing with our program participants, volunteers, horses and our supporters.

Flexibility is also a central characteristic of HorseAbility. This quality has been a constant theme in our organization for many years. Our staff is fully committed to finding a way to accept a participant into our program and "make it work". At HorseAbility, obstacles are seen as opportunities. Such thinking has created some of the best customized "outside the box" program solutions. Because of this high degree of flexibility, HorseAbility has developed some very specialized programs, including silver saddles, life skills training, barn buddies and more. The most heartwarming testimonials we receive are those from families who say that they have tried dozens of programs and could not find a place to accept and accommodate them – until they found HorseAbility.

## **What are HorseAbility's Challenges?**

HorseAbility's most pressing challenge is the lack of an indoor arena. We can only hold programming weather permitting, and in our industry that excludes times of rain, extreme wind, extreme heat, freezing temperatures, thunder/lightning storms and after dark. Due to these limitations, we can only offer programming 75% of the time we are actually open.



Aside from the scheduling constraints, many medically fragile participants who are otherwise appropriate to participate cannot do so with only outdoor programming. For example, some of our wait-listed clientele have respiratory issues and cannot ride due to dust and sand inhalation in an outdoor ring. Other participants have sensitivity to sun exposure, either due to diagnosis of such or from taking required medications. While individuals suffering from the complicated and often debilitating effects of multiple sclerosis can be significantly helped with therapeutic riding, extreme temperatures can minimize the impact.

Parents of our children participants understand how hard it can be to juggle an afterschool program. For such parents, a whole new set of weekly appointments is introduced in conjunction with meeting the demands of customary afterschool routines. Furthermore, bad weather conditions can often be the major reason parents cannot commit to our program. However, when we are able to offer climate controlled therapeutic riding services with dust free footing, we will be able in a better position to accommodate more children and families and expand even further. By eliminating the problems associated with bad weather with the construction of an indoor arena, HorseAbility will better serve the people who so desperately need our services.

HorseAbility's other main challenge is fundraising. Our long-term goal is to establish an endowment to guarantee sustainability of such a worthwhile program. We currently run between six to eight fundraisers a year to offset our overhead. Our true cost per lesson would be too exorbitant for our clientele to manage. Fortunately, the majority of our fundraising initiatives offset the cost of lessons for our clients. We will never refuse services to a participant due to lack of finances. With an endowment, we will be able to continue to function on this principle.



### ***What's in Our Future?***

HorseAbility's future is bright. Every goal that has been set for this organization since its inception twenty-four years ago has been realized, especially having property and a facility solely dedicated to our mission. Building an indoor arena will be our greatest accomplishment to date, and we will simultaneously celebrate this success, while we reach for our next goal. We continue to foresee a projection of growth; more seats in the saddle, more students on the farm, more awareness of what our center for equine facilitated programs has to offer. We believe strongly that the people we serve truly benefit from facilitated interaction with horses. Therefore, we will continue to expand our programming to accommodate generations of people for many years to come.

### **Advancing HorseAbility – Our Case for Support**

Today our facilities and programs strive to meet the needs of people with special needs. In order to enlarge our mission and resourcefulness, we are launching in two phases the *“Be Part of Something Special”* Capital Campaign.

The first phase is the construction of an indoor arena. The unique features of the arena include dust free footing, natural lighting and ventilation. The benefits will be seen in uninterrupted programming with no more weather-related issues. The estimated cost of the indoor arena is \$750,000. It is expected to take approximately 4 months for completions. The arena will have a full set of naming opportunities for donors.

The second phase of the Campaign will include the renovation of the historic Barn on the property. The Barn will provide offices, classroom space and therapy rooms. The cost will approximately be \$1.5M. The second phase will not commence until all the funding is secured for the indoor arena as part of the first phase.

The Board of Trustees of HorseAbility is firmly committed to this project. Along with the administrative team, the Board will guide the Campaign with a communications plan, Campaign Committee and comprehensive campaign plan and timetable.

Now is the time to advance our case for support to meet the ever-growing needs of our clients. Our new facilities are so desperately needed to meet the physical, emotional and social well being of those we serve. We owe it to our clients, staff, volunteers and



community to offer hope and opportunity to those who need us the most. HorseAbility is now poised and ready to enter this next stage of growth – to care for our participants while transforming our quaint campus setting into a facility that reflects and supports our modern mission, ideals and standards.

Finally, HorseAbility is at an exciting point in its history. With twenty-four years of growth and success, helping hundreds of people of all ages, the Campaign is designed to widen the corridors of possibility and offer additional essential services more regularly. The story of HorseAbility is a story of humanity, bringing hope to the hearts and minds of those who embrace each and every day with immense courage.

Thank you for considering your support of the Campaign. Please join us and ... *be part of something special.*