

Marianna Greene Henry Special Equestrians
Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind Foundations
29401 AL. Hwy 21 S.
Talladega, AL 35160

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Name & Address

Unbridled Joy

Holiday Edition



Pell City Lions Club Donates Funds to the MGH Foundation



The Pell City Lions Club donated \$250 to the Marianna Greene Henry Foundation. The program serves students at the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind and provides a way for students to participate in not only equine therapy but competitions such as Special Olympics and Challenged Riders Shows. In the photograph, from left, are Lions Club member Phil Anderson, Lions Club President Jim Crews, Blossom the horse, Arena Coordinator Tim Greene, Instructor Courtney Carbone and Lions Club member Jesse Bishop.

Compliments of the Daily Home Newspaper

How do we pick our therapy horses and why are they so special?

The first thing we look for in our prospective horses is an excellent temperament. Is the horse gentle? Is he friendly? Does he like being around people? We also look at how the horse acts around people and how he handles from the ground. We want a horse that is very calm, not spooky. The horse needs to stand quietly while tied, and for grooming and saddling. Most important, the good therapy horse must have a willing attitude and want to please. We call this “*Therapy Heart*”.

The next thing we look for in a therapy horse is soundness. In our program, our horses have to be able to do mounted classes, so soundness for riding is extremely important. Ideally the horse must be able to work under saddle, preferably at the walk, trot, and canter with no inconsistencies of gait.

The horse’s size must also be taken into consideration. Our program services students ranging from age three through adults; therefore the horses must be able to carry a variety of students. The ideal horse for our program is between thirteen and fifteen hands high. Because a lot of our students need side-walkers, horses taller than fifteen hands are more difficult to use. Horses smaller than thirteen hands can not carry as much weight, and are limited to serving only the smaller students.

Breed, age, and training are not extremely important qualities to consider for a therapy horse. Our program prefers not to use gaited horses, and we like to acquire horses that are between the ages of ten and eighteen. A horse that shows great potential but is outside this age range will still be considered. We also accept horses from a variety of backgrounds, including western pleasure, dressage, and trail horses. The horse doesn’t have to be a show horse, but he should be able to easily respond to basic cues.

**Hello, I am a therapy horse - trained to give you what you need
If you come to me as a friend, I will be your friend
If you come to me with an argument, I will argue
If you come to me as a leader, I will follow
If you come to me with uncertainties, I will lead**

Adopt-A-Horse today! For an annual donation of \$1000.00, your donation will help to feed, shoe and provide preventative health checks through veterinary visits. For more information on the *Adopt-A-Horse Program*, email Tim Greene (Arena Coordinator) greenetim@aidb.state.al.us

CONGRADULATIONS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR 2010/2011

- **Volunteer of the Year** – *LoJuana Hurdle*
- **Volunteer Family** – *The Miller Family*
- **Jr. Volunteer of the Year** – *Cassady Bassett*

Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart. ~Elizabeth Andrew

How You Can Get Involved in Therapeutic Riding

Are you inspired to experience the magic of the horse / human connection firsthand? The MGH Equestrian Center depends on a team of volunteers to keep our programs running. MGH offers this service so you may be able to spend time with horses and see how they can help a wide array of people.

MGH has an extensive training program and some volunteer positions may include:

- **Walker** - walk along side the horse to ensure the safety of the person riding, or leading the horse on a designated path
- **Grooming & Tacking**- Cleaning, brushing and preparing the horse before a session and caring for the horse after, sometimes with the help of the rider
- **Barn & Arena Care** – It is very important to keep the facilities clean and organized to not only help in preparation for the next session, but for safety purposes also. MGH is a premier accredited center through PATH International and follows strict guidelines to retain this status.

The work may be hard and you will definitely get your hands dirty (your boots too) but the rewards will be amazing!

Call or email Courtney today and ask how you can get started – carbhone.courtney@aidb.state.al.us or call 256-761-3364

A Testimonial from MGH/AIDB Psychologist – Kathryn Duncan

Through the years of incorporating and using Equine Facilitated Mental Health, we have been blessed to experience and witness some very touching moments between horse and client.

One example that really was so touching is that the horse and client bonded to such a degree that the student was able to play soccer, run through the fields with the horse, have the horse mimic what the student was doing (both behavior as well as mood and attitude). Because the horse and client were so well "mirroring", it opened up great discussions and personal reflecting on how behaviors, attitudes and moods impact us as well as others.

Another example involved a student that had experienced trauma and hence was/is having issues with self-confidence and assertiveness. By going to the arena and working with the horses via tacking, brushing, leading the horse, and riding, the student began to exhibit more and more confidence. The teachers reported that the student was more talkative in class, responded to peer situations in a more confident manner and was more assertive in requesting information in class.

Those are just two of the examples of using EFP/EFMH and how it has benefited the students as well as myself. :) It certainly has been a blessing to be a part of such a wonderful program. The horse/child bond is amazing to witness.

Melissa Irving - ASD Adjustment Specialist

MGH Horse Arena has been a Godsend for the children of AIDB. I can speak specifically for the Deaf kids I work with as an Adjustment Specialist. The impact on their lives has been tremendous. I think of the young student whose own energy and strong will has posed problems for her in the dorm and classroom but at the Arena her energy and strong will makes her an outstanding worker and horse rider. The confidence, self esteem and joy this program brings to the lives of the students is precious. My other 8 year old student asks me everyday about going to horses. And on the days he knows he is going he is ready with cowboy boots, a big red cowboy hat and a smile on his face. It has become part of his identity, how he defines himself. Other students may approach the horses with a little more fear or uncertainty. For them it is truly rewarding to watch them blossom from frustration to confidence. The instructors at the Arena encourage this growth and independence. They have learned the language and how to communicate with the children and reached the minds behind the wall of deafness. They know their students as individuals each grappling with their own life story. The Arena with its horses, its instructors and its approach is bringing God's hand into the lives of AIDB students and for that I am grateful.

NARHA changes name to PATH International

NARHA is now the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.)!

The Board of Trustees and staff are proud to announce that NARHA is now officially the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.). The association tagline is "Ensuring excellence and changing lives through equine-assisted activities and therapies." This name change will open doors to a myriad of inclusive possibilities and matches the growth of the equine-assisted activities and therapies (EAAT) industry. PATH Intl. vows to continue to provide its membership with an ever-evolving and progressive level of quality. The association promises that the service members receive will be positive, knowledgeable and friendly. The educational opportunities offered will continue to challenge and enlighten.

Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.), a federally-registered 501(c3) non-profit, was formed in 1969 as the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association to promote equine-assisted activities and therapies (EAAT) for individuals with special needs. With over 3,500 certified instructors and 800 member centers around the globe, more than 6,500 PATH Intl. members help more than 42,000 children and adults with physical, mental and emotional challenges find strength and independence through the power of the horse each year. In addition to therapeutic riding, our centers offer a number of therapeutic equine-related activities, including hippotherapy, equine-facilitated mental health, driving, interactive vaulting, competition, ground work and stable management. More recently, programs offer services in human growth and development to serve wide-ranging audiences for such educational purposes as leadership training, team building and other human capacity enhancement skills for the workplace and for daily use.

Through the certification and accreditation programs, plus a wide variety of educational resources that includes a national annual conference with hundreds of attendees, the association helps members start and maintain successful EAAT programs. There are more than 30,000 volunteers, 3,500 instructors, 6,300 equines and thousands of contributors from all over the world inspiring and enriching the human spirit at PATH Intl. Centers.

For more information go to www.pathintl.org or call (800) 369-RIDE (7433)

PATH Internationals mission is to change and enrich lives by promoting excellence in equine-assisted activities and therapies through centers such as the Marianna Greene Henry Foundation.

Please help support the MGH Program financially or by donating some of your time as a volunteer. For more information please visit our website or call Tim Greene – 256-761-3364. You can also follow us on:

