

SHHRC: Where Magic Happens



Serving Our Community

Nestled in the rolling hills of Tewksbury Township is a 12-acre farm where magic happens. The name of this place is Somerset Hills Handicapped Riding Center and the magic is the connection between the SHHRC horses, volunteers, and riders.

Since 1974, SHHRC has endeavored to improve the quality of life for children and adults who are physically, emotionally and cognitively challenged by providing a diversified equestrian program. SHHRC enjoys "premier accredited center" status with the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) and offers recreational riding instruction for individuals with disabilities, hippotherapy and a summer camp. The SHHRC programs, therapeutic riding, hippotherapy and summer camp, combined serve approximately 140 riders who come from communities throughout central and northern New Jersey as well as New York and Pennsylvania. SHHRC serves a diverse client base and accommodates riders with many different disabilities including: autism, brain trauma, cerebral palsy, Downs Syndrome, spina bifida, multiple sclerosis, and spinal cord injury.

Therapeutic riding is a recreational program designed to provide beneficial

physical activity and emotional benefit through learning and applying horsemanship skills. Riders develop improved balance, stamina and coordination. The emotional or psychological benefits gained are primarily the result of meeting the challenges presented by riding and achieving goals while striving to accomplish riding independently. Both therapeutic riding and hippotherapy clients also benefit from the emotional bond that grows between horse and rider. The intangible benefits that result from the development of a relationship between horse and rider are increased independence and the building of self-esteem and self-confidence.

Hippotherapy is a treatment tool whereby a licensed occupational, physical, or speech therapist uses a horse in sessions to help achieve a client's goals and objectives. Licensed therapists of each discipline are cross-trained in the movement and behavior of the horse and in the application of horses as an innovative tool in therapy. The three dimensional movement achieved while a client sits astride a horse is unique and mimics the stimulation experienced by the musculoskeletal system while a person is walking. The sensory input that a client is challenged with during a hippotherapy session cannot be reproduced in traditional clinic settings, mak-

ing the horse a valuable part of rehabilitative treatment.

The organization's commitment to providing an exceptional program is characterized by the dedicated core of more than 150 volunteers who give of their time and keep a weekly commitment so that riders can participate in this enjoyable and therapeutic activity. An additional 200 volunteers support SHHRC activities on an occasional basis by providing staffing and organization of special events and other annual functions. In many cases, our volunteers gain insight into the challenges individuals with disabilities face on a daily basis. In all, SHHRC draws volunteers from 114 communities in more than eight counties in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania.

The most striking aspect of SHHRC is that it embodies the concept of JOY. Riders, instructors, volunteers, and one could almost say the horses, alike, both give and receive the gift of joy. This is evidenced by the smiles everyone wears from the time they arrive at the twelve acre farm. Is it magic? Stop by and see for yourself.

Nichola Redmond
Executive Director



If you would like to become part of the magic by making a donation or volunteering your time, please call (908) 439-9636 or mail your donation to SHHRC, PO Box 305 Oldwick, NJ 08858 (SHHRC)