

Autism & Communications Disorder

What is Autism?

Autism is a neurological disorder characterized by developmental delays in language skills and social interaction. Mental processing is generally uneven, with some skills at or above "normal", and others delayed. In addition, many people with autism are extremely sensitive to certain sensory input like bright lights, new smells, sounds, textures, or being touched. . Autism, and its milder cousin "Asperger's Syndrome", can affect individuals of any race, religion, socioeconomic level, and level of intelligence. It is important to know that people with autism may have normal IQs, despite their social or language delays. The cause(s) of autism, Asperger's Syndrome, and other pervasive developmental disorders are unknown. While there is no known medical "cure", individuals with autism and other communication disorders can improve their learning, processing, and socialization skills through specific interventions.

How can Therapeutic Riding help people with Autism?

SPF has developed therapeutic riding programs specifically designed for children with communication disorders such as autism. A team of specially trained instructors, volunteers, and horses make it possible for these children to participate in horseback riding activities that encourage learning, verbal and nonverbal expression, positive social interaction, and bonding with the horses. Classes are structured to accommodate each child's particular strengths and weaknesses. Instructors may use icons or other picture symbols as aids in communication, and every attempt is made to keep lessons consistent and predictable. Our staff and volunteers have witnessed many children smiling, laughing, or uttering their first words during a therapeutic riding lesson. The rewards are priceless!

How can I get my child involved?

Classes to accommodate children with autism are offered several times throughout the year. Interested parents/guardians may contact Springpoint Farm at any time to schedule an evaluation and discuss our programming. (207) 926-5789. Individual or group lessons are available, depending on the needs of the child.