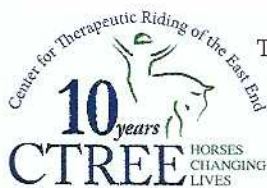


The Center for Therapeutic Riding of the East End

By Stephanie Villani, Photos courtesy of CTREE



The Center for Therapeutic Riding of the East End (CTREE) provides therapeutic riding lessons and equine-assisted services to children and adults with cognitive, physical or emotional disabilities. CTREE is a not-for-profit, 501c3 organization, and is the only premier accredited member center of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH) in Suffolk County.

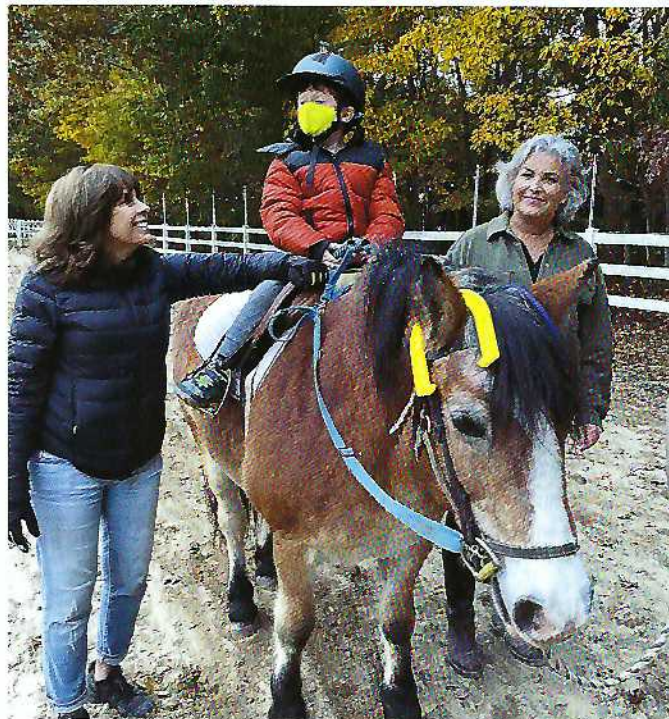
The mission of the group is “transforming lives through the therapeutic power of horses.” CTREE lessons follow PATH guidelines and are taught by certified PATH International Instructors. Program horses (there are currently five) and volunteer staff are specially trained; all lessons are held at their private facility in Sagaponack.

Managing Director Karen Bocksel, who has been with the group since its beginning, recalls that the group started in 2009 with one rider (now in college), and a three-person Board of Directors. Currently CTREE serves 30+ participants, with plans to expand.

During the Covid shutdown in March of 2020, several local construction companies, who were on forced hiatus from their own work, completely renovated CTREE's new facility, donating their skills, supplies, and labor that enabled the group to move in July of 2020. “They made the facility accessible to our participants and completely redid our office,” says Bocksel. “Three of us can happily work in there.” The expanded facility enabled the group to add more programs to serve the community.

Private and semi-private lessons are offered in multi-week sessions. Lessons include basic riding skills, trail riding, exercises, games, grooming and tacking. Other programs available are:

- The Horses Heal program for first responders and those on the front lines of the pandemic
- The Patriot's program for veterans
- Inclusive Summer Camps that serve those with and without special needs
- Fieldtrips for local school groups (soon to be expanded to local group homes and senior groups)



As a non-profit, fundraising efforts are integral to keeping the organization afloat. “Horses Changing Lives” is CTREE's annual fundraising event—a silent/live auction and cocktail party at Sebonack Golf Club, happening this year on August 25th from 6 to 9 pm.

The group also sponsors a 5K race, the CTREE Giddy-Up 5K, which this year will be held on September 25th at Sagg Main Beach in Sagaponack.

According to Bocksel, what the group needs the most is volunteer help, especially for their camp program, which will run for four weeks in July and August this year. Volunteers help with tasks like grooming and leading the horses, walking with riders, and maintaining the barn and paddocks. One must be 14 to volunteer, but CTREE has a Junior Volunteer program for those under 14; Junior Volunteers work directly with the campers.

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JULIE FROELICH
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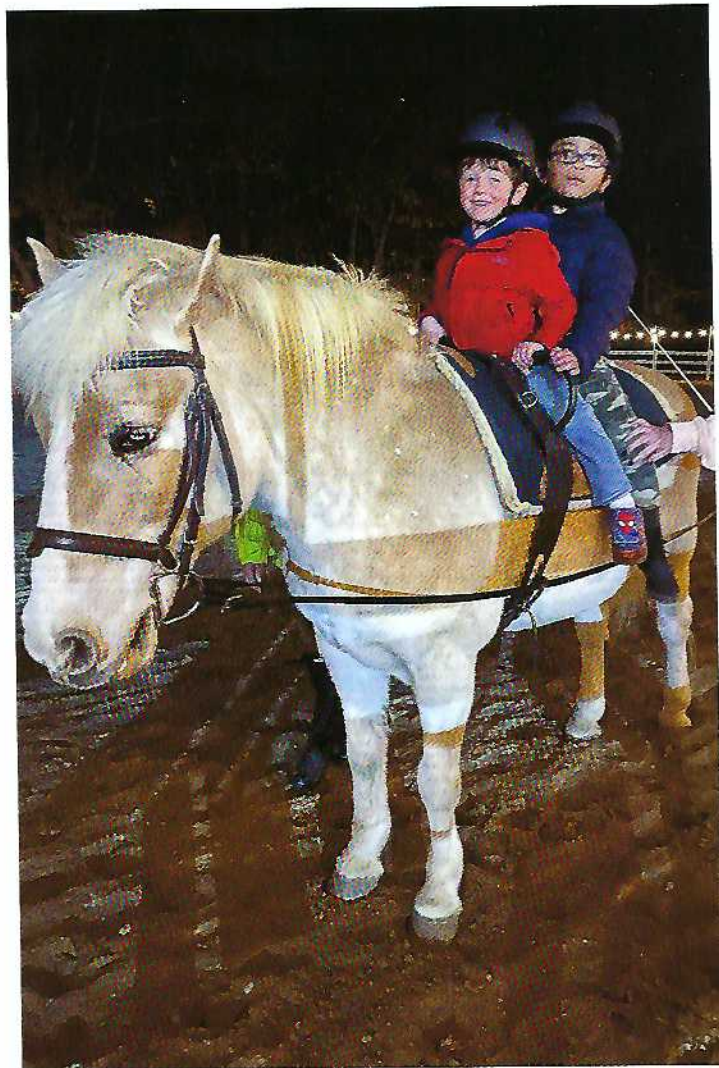
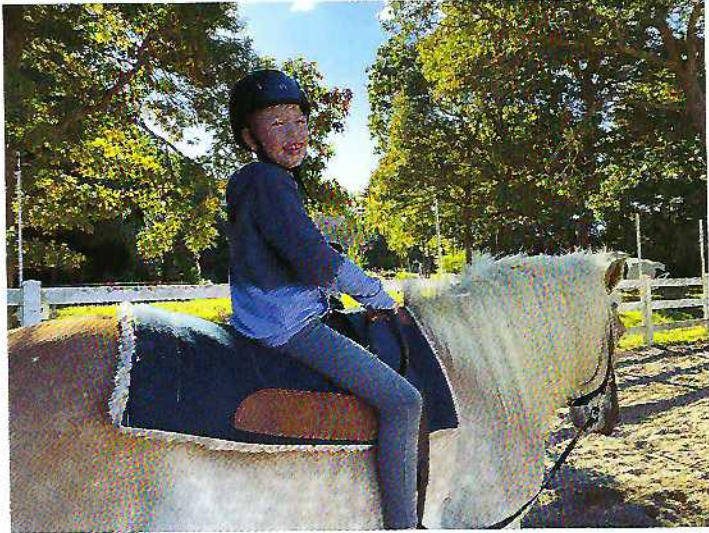
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CTREE maintains a registry of needed items (accessible through their website) that anyone can purchase—perhaps a horse hydrator, equestrian poles, or mane and tail shampoo. Of course, cash donations are always welcome, and there is a beautiful, locally made candle by Hamptons Handpoured available for sale, with all proceeds going to CTREE.

Camp will be offered the weeks of July 11th and 25th, and August 1st and 15th, on Monday-Thursday mornings from 9 am to 1 pm.

For more information, see www.ctreeny.org.



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