

HOOFBEATS



Monthly Newsletter from the Jester Park Equestrian Center

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www.polkcountyiowa.gov/equestriancenter

FRECKLES

LESSON HORSE OF THE MONTH

Say hello to Freckles! A long time lease horse for public trail rides and lessons, Freckles was recently purchased by JPEC and will continue his career as a therapeutic horsemanship lesson horse. His solid and willing nature makes him a favorite among riders - in fact, Freckles is one of the most versatile horse at Jester Park Equestrian Center working almost every avenue except driving! He also loves to be filthy and staff can guarantee that his fluffy white coat will be COVERED and stained... especially if we have a big event to work that day. But regardless, Freckles is a prized member of our team and he's one of our favorites!



FEBRUARY

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7 Dog Training Seminar
8 Dog Training Seminar	9	10	11	12 Sweet Heart Blue Rides	13	14
15 S.H.S.R.	16 Therapeutic Riding Lessons Begin!	17	18	19	20	21
22 Volunteer Training Session	23	24	25	26	27	28 ACTHA Trail Event
	M	A	R	C	H	

- **Special JPEC Sponsored Events**
 - Sweetheart Sleigh Rides
 - Volunteer Training Session
 - Jester "Winter Wonder" AOC ACTHA Indoor Trail Challenge
- **Outside Events**
 - Canine Performance Dog Training Seminar

Find a detail calendar of events of all the happenings at JPEC on our facebook page!

"Our riders don't need perfect, they just need possible."

JPEC Therapeutic Horsemanship Program Motto

WINTER WEATHER RIDING • WHEN IS COLD, TOO COLD?

Here at JPEC, we cancel lessons in the extreme cold temperatures. Therapeutic lessons are not conducted if our indoor arena has a temperature of less than 32 degrees.



JPEC Commanche romping around in the snow!

Why you ask? Well, for most of our students extreme cold is bad for their condition. Cold stress is an environmental hazard. Also, because of their unique physiology, children are more susceptible to temperature extremes and their health effects. Children are less able to regulate their body temperature compared with adults. As a result, children are more likely to develop significant health effects when they are exposed to environmental temperature extremes. These effects are more easily felt by persons with disabilities that are more sensitive to extreme temperatures. The temperature of 32 degrees or higher for lessons keeps all our riders healthy and safe!

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THE 4-LEGGED INSTRUCTOR

In a therapeutic horsemanship program, there are a lot of important components needed to provide a safe, fun learning experience for our students. You need a safe and clean facility, knowledgeable instructors, and a variety of lesson plans to aid many different students. But, one of the most important - if not THE most important components are our 4-legged instructors! Horses can be outstanding teachers and friends to all of us. So how is it that we pick which horses can find a place in our program? There are a few factors we use to help determine if a horse may be the correct fit for us!

Age: For a lesson program, a horse younger than 5 years may not be chosen due to inexperience and playful, and unreliable antics. While older, what are considered "senior citizens" may not be chosen, because as they get older it is not fair for them to have to work as hard as a lesson horse must in order to teach their student. The ideal age for a therapeutic lesson horse is from 8-12 years old. This allows them to be old enough to be mature and steady, as well as enough longevity for them to be a regular in the program!

Size: Since the Therapeutic Horsemanship Program here at JPEC serves people of all ages, we use lesson horses of all sizes from ponies to larger horses. Often to assist our students, volunteers serve as sidewalkers, so the height of the horse must be considered. The horse must be strong enough to carry their rider and also short enough for the side walkers to easily be able to assist their rider without resting on the horse. Stocky horses tend to be a good choice for therapeutic programs.

Conformation: Good conformation is desirable in a Therapy Horse as that relates to how smooth their gaits will be as well as how long they will remain sound and healthy. We want to love and enjoy our horses as long as they allow us to.

Manners & Disposition: A lesson horse, and especially one in a therapeutic program, is handled by a lot of volunteers and students with varying degrees of horsemanship knowledge, so it must be calm, kind, and willing. A horse that has a history of bad habits such as rearing, bucking, biting, kicking, or a horse that is very high strung or nervous would not be a good choice for a therapeutic horse.



Veteran Therapy Horse and this issue's "Horse of the Month", Freckles, showing off how a good therapy horse must be tolerant of all sorts of shenanigans and display a calm, steady nature. Colored rings are frequently used in classes and Freckles doesn't even bat an eyelash at them.



A new therapy horse going through many forms of training, he must accept being touched all over his body from various angles and be comfortable with enclosed spaces - Airo is handling it like a seasoned pro!

All of the above are helpful to JPEC instructors in narrowing down the field when choosing a therapeutic program horse, but in order to see if they will be a good fit in the program, they must pass a series of training exercises. These are real-life scenarios include some of the types of class work that the horses may be asked to do, for instance a horse must be calm with people walking along side of them as side walkers. They also must be tolerant carrying an unbalanced rider. Props and toys, like poles or cones, and stuffed animals and rings are commonly used in class so lesson horses must become familiar with them before they are put into lessons! Ultimately they must be prepared for any unpredictable situation they may be in.

Once a therapeutic program horse has passed all of the criteria, you can count on them to be a huge help! These horses will begin to care for their students without being asked to. One way the horse will demonstrate this is by bracing so that when a student is mounting or dismounting they can use the horse to push against or maintain their own balance. They will learn different ways to listen to directions from the student because not all students use the reins or their legs to communicate the way a traditional rider would. Some horses have even been known to be able to predict a seizure and alert the lesson instructor in time to safely dismount the student before the seizure begins. Our equine partners are so special to us and we are so glad for the great group of horsey pals that we have here at JPEC! Without them, there would be no Therapeutic Riding!