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## Healing through Horses



Laura's volunteer story began when she learned that she needed to complete community service hours for class in high school. At the time, her mother heard about the Therapeutic Riding Equestrian Center (TREC) from the newspaper and Laura knew that it was an organization she would like to learn more about. She states, "I've loved horses my whole life, but I've never been able to own one."

TREC provides various equestrian classes for individuals with physical and mental limitations. Their students range in age from 6 to 80 years old and attend classes for a variety of reasons. TREC incorporates therapy into their classes for individuals with autism, cerebral palsy, dementia, and multiple sclerosis. They also work with stroke victims, car accident survivors, and paraplegics. Horse riding improves coordination, balance, muscle strength, and socialization. The great part about TREC's approach is that participants don't even consider it therapy because they are enjoying themselves.

During classes, volunteers like Laura walk next to the rider to ensure safety, repeat instructions, and give encouragement. TREC's executive director, Beth Racine, comments that Laura is an excellent volunteer because "she is confident and comfortable around the horse and the students." While Laura joined TREC as a high school student, she has continued volunteering for the past 7 years. TREC is a small organization so volunteers get to know the staff and families very well. Laura states, "It's the organization and the people that keep me coming back."

Laura volunteers with multiple groups so she's able to watch the progression and improvement as students work through each class level. She feels that watching this progression is one of the most valuable and rewarding parts of her volunteer experience; "Students progress from never being on a horse to riding independently without a side walker."

Laura loves her volunteer role and goes home on a happier note after classes. Volunteers are a crucial resource for TREC to ensure they can offer classes to students. Beth Racine comments, "Without the volunteers, we couldn't do what we do."

To learn more about opportunities with TREC, check out their [Get Connected profile!](#)



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