

PUBLISHED: JULY 3, 2011 12:01 AM EST

Erie Snapshot: Helping hooves

Story and photos by Greg Wohlford - Erie Times-News



Michael Washburn tosses a beanbag from his horse Charmer while riding at Therapeutic Riding Equestrian Center in Fairview Township on June 22. Volunteer Stephanie Clark is at left. GREG WOHLFORD//ERIE TIMES-NEWS

"Here we go! Here we go!" called out Brett Maney, 42, as he is called to mount a horse on June 22 at the Therapeutic Riding Equestrian Center in Fairview Township.

"He looks forward to it all week," said Trisha Swindell, an aide who helps Maney, who has a neurological disability.

"As soon as it's Wednesday, he starts talking about it. His favorite horse to ride is Buzz," says Swindell.

Clients of all ages with physical, mental or emotional challenges ride around the spacious indoor ring with volunteers walking on either side. Riders stop the animals with a loud "whoa" and toss beanbags through a hoop, guide the horses around a set of cones or over an obstacle course.

"It's great to see their reactions and their smiles. They exercise and don't even know it. They think they're just having fun," said Beth Racine, who has volunteered about 10 hours a week for 28 years. It takes a lot of volunteers to staff the 14 classes held each week, both in the morning and evening. Shelley Curry brings her daughter Alexis, 12, to ride in an evening session. "It's great for her. She can't wait. She's been diagnosed with attention deficit disorder and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and this is something she really enjoys."

Alexis added, "I like riding them. It's such a good time. The horses are calm. They're all special."

The next session runs from Aug. 22 through Oct. 3. For information, contact Kimberly Danylko at 474-5276, Ext. 12.



Brett Maney, 42, adds a ring to others on a post while riding at Therapeutic Riding Equestrian Center in Fairview Township on June 22. Volunteers Diane Majewski, left, and Mary Zurn help guide Maney's horse Annie. GREG WOHLFORD



Alexis Curry, 12, pets one of the barn cats while waiting to ride at Therapeutic Riding Equestrian Center in Fairview Township on June 22. GREG WOHLFORD



Michael Washburn, 17, rides Charmer at Therapeutic Riding Equestrian Center in Fairview Township on June 15. GREG WOHLFORD



Riders and volunteers circle the ring at Therapeutic Riding Equestrian Center in Fairview Township on June 22. GREG WOHLFORD