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Health and Wellness Magazine

FREE!

WALK ON

THERAPEUTIC RIDING FOR KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS



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Odessa • Physical • Therapy

WALK ON

by Ben McCampbell

We've heard for many years about how dogs are so valuable helping guide the blind, "hear" for the deaf, and improve the day-to-day lives of people with other disabilities. But horses? Absolutely! Through a field called Equine-Assisted Activities and Therapies (EAAT), horses enrich the lives of thousands of people with dozens of physical and psychological challenges, such as autism, developmental delay or disability and ADD, learning disability, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, mental retardation, multiple sclerosis, head trauma/brain injury victims, spina bifida, muscular dystrophy, stroke rehabilitation, and other conditions.

It's called Therapeutic Riding, and once again kids with special needs in the Midland/Odessa area will have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from "Walk On," an event presented by the Sherwood Christian Academy of Odessa and Helping Our Riders Succeed in Education (H.O.R.S.E.) of Midland. This year's event will be held on September 25 from 10 AM until 2 PM at the Ector County Coliseum Outback Arena in Odessa, and it's **free** for all participants.

Lunch and snacks will be served for the kids and their families, and Odessa native and Nashville resident Cowboy Dan will be performing a free concert. In addition to the therapeutic horse program which introduces riders to the joys of horsemanship, the riding part of the event will include some friendly barrel racing and pole bending, complete with numbers for the riders' backs, just like a real rodeo. Also on hand will be therapeutic dogs for the kids to pet, hug, and get to know. It will be a great time for photos, with smiles all around.

"Walk On" is blessed to have a host of sponsors, including Chili's, Taco Villa, Complex Community Federal Credit Union, Sand Hills Stock Show and Rodeo, Odessa Downtown Lions Club, Wienerschnitzel, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Midland RockHounds, Odessa Jackalopes, Odessa Roughnecks, and Hunt Advertising and Consulting. And the sponsors bring their mascots for the kids to meet and enjoy. Blue Bear will be there from Blue Cross Blue Shield, as will Rocky, the Midland RockHounds mascot, along with SlapJack from the Odessa Jackalopes. And don't be surprised to see Digger and Derrick from the Odessa Roughnecks there, too.

Not only do sponsors participate in this worthwhile event, so do more than a hundred volunteers, some from as far away as San Antonio and Dallas. They serve snacks and lunch and help with the therapeutic riding, and they also run the carnival games and activities that are just another part of this fun-filled Saturday. Among the volunteers are people from area churches, students from the Odessa College Nursing Program, the Autism Society, Odessa Fire Department, Mounted Patrol, and Share Ministries, which is an ongoing program in which volunteers take care of the special needs children for a few hours, enabling the parents to spend some time away at the movies or a quiet dinner out. And once again this year, the Gideons International will be at "Walk On" to present all the children with Bibles.



THE HOPPER FAMILY



**THE UNIQUE
RELATIONSHIP FORMED
WITH THE HORSE CAN
BOLSTER CONFIDENCE,
PATIENCE, AND
SELF-ESTEEM.**

The concert by Odessa native Cowboy Dan promises to be a highlight. After earning a degree in Agriculture from Abilene Christian University, Daniel Harrell eventually moved to Nashville. He was in both the agriculture and music businesses for a while until he was approached by the Tennessee Beef Industry Council to develop an assembly program for elementary-age students. Since 1996 Cowboy Dan has performed his high-energy show for more than 450,000 kids, parents, and teachers. His shows are all about positive messages and attitude, with songs that emphasize doing the right thing and being a good citizen, and the salvation message of Christianity. There is more about Cowboy Dan at www.cowboydan.com.

The activity in EAAT of riding and interacting with the horse can be very beneficial to the one in the saddle. The rhythmic motion of the horse moves the rider's body in a manner similar to the human gait, and riders often show improvement in flexibility, balance, and muscle strength as a result. The unique relationship formed with the horse can bolster confidence, patience, and self-esteem. Other benefits include the improvement of cognitive, educational, social, and emotional well-being, in addition to the positive physical effects.

"Walk On" raises funds for both the Sherwood Christian Academy and Helping Our Riders Succeed in Education (H.O.R.S.E.), and additional sponsors and donations will be warmly welcomed. And there can never be too many volunteers, so if

you would like to donate and/or volunteer, please contact Brenda Sharpley at (432)362-7447 or at brendasharpley@yahoo.com. Mrs. Sharpley also has registration forms for participants to sign up for the event. Early registration will be appreciated, though registration at the event will be accepted. Information about "Walk On" can also be found at www.helpingourriders.com.

Between horses and riders, sponsors and their mascots, Cowboy Dan, games, and lots of good things to eat, this year's "Walk On" promises to be a terrific event. Please give it your support. 🍎



WALK ON
SATURDAY, SEPT. 25 - 10 AM TO 2 PM
ECTOR COUNTY COLISEUM OUTBACK ARENA