



Mission: *Partnering with our horses, we challenge individuals with special needs to reach their fullest potential.*

Vision: *We envision a time when everyone who could benefit will receive our hippotherapy services.*

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Q. What is InStride Therapy, Inc.? InStride Therapy is recognized as the leading hippotherapy facility of its kind in southeastern United States, a top 15 center of 60 centers nationwide and is the only hippotherapy facility on Florida's west coast.

Q. What is hippotherapy? A highly effective physical therapeutic strategy that provides up to 1,200 kinesthetic stimulations, **six times** that of traditional therapies. Hippotherapy is unique in simultaneously engaging riders in physical, occupational and speech stimulations.

Q. What are InStride's credentials? InStride Therapy is a long standing member of Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, International (PATH). InStride's instructors are certified Therapeutic Riding Instructors. Our licensed physical and occupational therapists have at least 100 hours of hippotherapy experience and training through AHA (American Hippotherapy Association). PATH supports therapeutic riding centers by developing detailed guidelines to operate a center, offering continuing education and yearly regional and national conferences.

Q. Who does InStride serve? InStride currently operates up to 100 sessions weekly, serving up to 400 riders annually with varying challenges like cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injuries (including contracts with Sarasota County – Oak Park School and Special Olympics for equine assisted services).

Q. How is InStride paid for hippotherapy services? InStride accepts private pay, insurance, Medicaid and Early Steps and offers need-based scholarships. Medicaid, Early Steps and insurance reimbursement pays less than 1/3 of our actual rider hippotherapy costs.

Q. What is InStride's budget? InStride's annual budget is approximately \$500,000 with **30%** coming from fees, **50%** from individual donors, and the remainder from grants and events.

Q. How can InStride increase its services? Like almost every nonprofit, even with our new capacity, our ability to serve more riders will depend on our success in attracting increased support from current and new funders, donors and also finding more volunteers.

InStride Therapy, Inc.

941-412-9333 (o) 941-483-3653 (f)

1629 Ranch Road P.O. Box 365

Nokomis, Florida 34275

www.instridetherapy.org

Page 1 of 3



Q. How did InStride start? It all began in the summer of 1994 – Mary Nastan, a registered physical therapist, was operating a small Saturday AM hippotherapy program in a local barn on Laurel Road where Donna Blem, a recent business graduate, was boarding her horse. Mary recruited Donna as a volunteer. Within a month Mary’s and Donna’s shared vision for hippotherapy sparked InStride’s journey. During its early years, InStride moved 8 times – passion, determination and experiencing hippotherapy’s incredible value have kept the dream alive and brought into focus the vision for our new facilities and all of InStride’s programs!

Q. What are InStride’s biggest challenges and opportunities? We are very frugal, and yet we face rising costs and declining revenues. We now have one of the best hippotherapy facilities in the United States. Our challenges and opportunities are to decrease our wait lists, expand hippotherapy services, develop new programs (i.e. literacy, leadership), and build both revenues and our endowment to secure InStride’s long term future.

Q. Where is InStride? InStride is located on 76 partially wooded acres on Ranch Road in Nokomis, Florida. Our new state-of-the-art, debt-free facilities include: A state-of-the art 110 by 200 sq.ft. insulated, covered arena, all Buildings rated for Category 3 winds, an open air Family Center, two outdoor arenas, 28 stall barn, indoor therapy clinic for therapy services and consultations, administrative office, caretaker’s residence (built to US LEED Green Standards) and 6+ acres of riding trails.

Q. Why did we create a therapy clinic? We recognized the need for a dedicated space to augment hippotherapy sessions. This same space will be used to provide therapists and riders a private area for evaluations, conferencing, and therapist’s documentation.

Q. How will the covered arena be used? Primarily for therapy sessions, the arena will be much more comfortable for our riders and volunteers! The size of the arena is designed to maximize the benefits of hippotherapy. We also hold PATH, AHA and PARELLI workshops to increase therapist and horsemanship knowledge and skills. We may explore other events, always guided by our mission and vision and protective of our rider’s safety.

Q. What is the purpose of a caretaker’s residence? InStride is a 24 hour, 7 day a week operation. Our therapy horses need our constant attention, training and care. Our goal for the caretaker is to economically provide added security and care for our therapy horses.

Q. What do the commemorative signs around the facility represent? Several signs honor the individuals, corporations and foundations that have specifically given to the construction of our new facilities. The *Circle of Friends* sign recognizes donors who contribute to ongoing InStride operations with a multi-year gift. These “Friends” are our lifeblood! We will need many more new “Friends” to help us maintain our quality and expand programs.

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Page 2 of 3



Q. Will all 28 stalls be for therapy horses, or you also accept boarders? We plan to accept a small number of carefully selected boarders to supplement our revenues. As revenues grow, we hope to add therapy horses, reducing our wait lists and adding equine therapy services.

Q. What makes a great therapy horse? It is both mentally and physically challenging for our equine friends to become therapy horses. A great therapy horse is sound at the walk, trot and canter, with three rhythmic and balanced gaits. The quality of the horse's movement is what most benefits the participant. The horse should be obedient to both voice and leg signals, quiet and well-mannered on the ground and accepting of assistive devices and equipment. The horse must work easily in hand, and tolerate one or two people walking and trotting beside it.

Q. What is life like for an InStride therapy horse? Our horses live as naturally as possible. They are turned out a generous portion of time each day with their appropriate herds. They receive routine farrier care, vaccinations, regular worming and dental care. Daily care and feeding are provided by the barn staff and a dedicated group of volunteers.

Q. Where do you get your horses? Most are donated but we make exceptions if we find a perfect fit – it's actually cheaper to purchase the right horse than to have the wrong horse donated. Each horse is selected first based on his personality – is he a horse that has the mental ability to provide our unique services, is he gentle, patient, calm – then we look at the physical ability - is he sound, healthy – combine this with our needs, do we need a large horse, small horse, a horse with a specific movement pattern – if all things fit we take them in on a 30 trial period to get them used to our facility and fully evaluate. At the end of the trial period we decide if the horse needs to go back to its owner, if we need more time training or if we are ready to make him apart of our herd. A lot of time, effort and training happens prior to acceptance.

Q. Once you have a therapy horse are they always in the program? No – each horse is evaluated each day to make sure they are in the right frame of mind to provide services and are healthy – if any behavior issues come up it is discussed by the instructor team and will be addressed in the horse training program, they are formally evaluated 3 times a year by the instructor team – sometimes the horse might need a break for physical reasons or from burn out and we will give them a set amount of time off and re-evaluate – sometimes the best solution is to find them a different home – it is **not** our goal to **make** our horses provide services, they are part of our team and if it an any point it is not the right fit, we find placement for them where they will be happier. We have a training program that addresses each horse's physical and mental needs - to round them out with arena activities, training and trail rides so they do not just do therapy each week. Also we worked very hard to make sure the facility provides adequate support for our horses. They have large fields to be turned out in, helping them live in a natural environment with their herd – and keeping them moving around helps them stay fit and relaxed, especially the older horses that may have a touch of arthritis.

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Page 3 of 3