



# AHA Clinic

By: Ellen Davis, OT

In August, The Red Barn hosted a clinic for the American Hippotherapy Association. The clinic was attended by 10 therapists, 5 from the Birmingham area.

The Level 1 course covered the basic information about how to incorporate the movement of the horse into a therapy session for OT, PT, or speech. They looked at safety concerns, team training, and how to analyze and evaluate the movement of the horse.

Participants observed treatment sessions with some of Red Barn's current clients. Then the participants held mock therapy sessions with each other as clients. The Red Barn horse team and some of our horse handlers audited the course so they would have a deeper understanding of how the horse affects the clients.

Ethical and legal issues were discussed, especially concerning terminology. Hippotherapy is not a separate therapy and there is no such thing as a "hippotherapist".

There are OTs who are incorporating hippotherapy into the treatment sessions, as appropriate, to help their clients reach their therapy goals. Therapy sessions that include hippotherapy have all the same regulations as therapy sessions in a traditional clinic.

Participants gave the Red Barn great reviews as a host site. Everyone was very complimentary about the quality of our horses and our staff. Fun fact; Traditionally PTs made up the vast majority of therapists incorporating hippotherapy. Now OTs make-up 48% of the therapists incorporating hippotherapy nationwide. The 5 Birmingham therapists that attended are all OTs, so we are following the trend.



*The Red Barn was honored to host the AHA clinic, and are happy to work with these wonderful professionals who will offer OT services to some of our participants beginning this Fall term.*



"Treatment with the help of the horse"

# University of Alabama Study

## Evaluation of the Impact of Equine Assisted Activities on Child Behavior and Family Wellbeing

Recently, The Red Barn was asked to participate in research that is being conducted by the University of Alabama Department of Social Work by Dr. Laura Hopson and Dr. Amy Traylor. We are thrilled at the opportunity!

Their research is evaluating how services received at the barn impact the student's behavior in everyday activities, and even whole family implications—how work and learning at the barn applies in life, school, relationships, and all other environments. The study will continue over an undetermined length of time as the researchers hope to reassess students and interview the families several times to see how things are progressing.

So far, families of six students have been interviewed and completed surveys. The early findings are that The Red Barn is awesome! This comes as no surprise. These results are thanks to huge collective effort. Every single student is impacted by every donor, volunteer, horse, staff member, and supporting family member that fills a role at the barn. It is truly a community and whole group effort. Everyone from the person who donates toilet paper from the wish list, the dedicated volunteer who helps in the lesson, the family who brings their student, to the student who is engaged and working so very hard; everyone involved is a part of these positive results. It is simply beautiful, and it cannot be accomplished without every role filled.

Drs. Hopson and Traylor report that the families are seeing improvements in self-control and awareness, confidence, gross motor skills, and social interactions. One of the most commonly mentioned benefits is the deeper bond being formed between the family members because they can all talk about their experiences at the barn. Being around animals is helping to develop empathy, compassion, and understanding as well as providing a reduction in anxiety, and increasing relaxation. Parents also note that the students are taking more responsibility at home because being responsible for your horse helps teach self-awareness about being responsible for not only tasks and work, but also actions.

As with all research studies and evaluations, articles about the work being done will bring attention and awareness to the life changing benefits of animal assisted activities, and hopefully more funds for additional research.

One additional finding worth noting is the mention of how the volunteers are dedicated, devoted, and amazingly wonderful. The students and families share a feeling of belonging at The Red Barn. Not just of being a student or participant in a program, but being a member of a family, The Red Barn Family.

**Families are seeing improvements in self-control and awareness, confidence, gross motor skills, and social interactions.**



To make an appointment to visit The Red Barn, call (205) 699-8204



# Volunteer Spotlight

## Jodi Aumann

By: Joy O'Neal

Jodi Aumann is the 2018 Red Barn Volunteer of the year. She started her service with the barn in 2016 and we are so thankful for her dedicated, devoted, willing to do anything asked spirit!

I sat down with Jodi and asked what it is about The Red Barn that keeps her always wanting to serve more. Jodi said, "I have always had a sincere love of children and horses. Through various paths and events throughout my life, I discovered that I enjoy, and am passionate about working with children who have special needs, or have experienced special circumstances. I have a solid belief that children can learn anything, and heal from anything if given the opportunity. I love making a difference, any difference in their lives. Even if the difference is simply to be in service at the place that they can find the tiniest amount of relief from their daily struggles. I also really love the staff here. They care for each other, and they are my barn family! I feel that all of the staff have the same goals and feelings about the precious children and families served. Providing wonderful, life changing support for the kids, families and also the community. I love the individualized lesson approach because it gives more opportunity for the students to connect using something they enjoy, which helps them learn, heal, and grow. As long as The Red Barn will have me, I will continue to serve!"

*Jodi has over 1000 hours of service with the barn. The Red Barn is blessed to have several unbelievably devoted volunteers. You are so very loved and appreciated Jodi, keep on serving!*



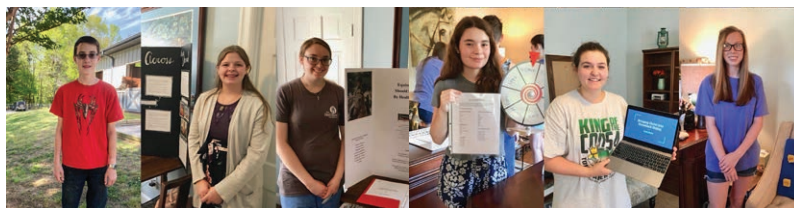
# Thank You Summer Interns

By: Connor Samples

The Red Barn could not operate with just our staff alone. As hard as we work, it is physically impossible for our small staff to serve 100 kids a week, while caring for 25 animals, and a 31-acre property that needs constant upkeep and repair. Thankfully, the barn is blessed with help from an amazing group of volunteers! And every summer, several high school volunteers pursue an internship at The Red Barn. This year we had six such interns: Abi, Alyssa, Cianan, Emily, Olivia, and Taylor.

Our summer interns help with everything! From side-walking and horse-handling in group riding lessons, to assisting in unmounted camps, and helping complete the daily tasks necessary to the Barn's operation. Their help is invaluable, especially when factoring in the grueling summertime heat and humidity. It's not easy mucking stalls when you are sweat-soaked and exhausted after an 8-hour day, but our interns never complained.

The interns also fill important roles as peer helpers to our students. Teenage interns and volunteers help bridge the age gap between instructors and students, enabling younger students to feel more



comfortable and willing to engage. Every child and young teen needs someone close to their age that they can both relate to and look up to. I can't think of better peer role models than our six summer interns.

We cannot thank our interns enough for their hard work, and sincerely hope our symbiotic relationship provided them with plenty of valuable knowledge and experience. Working with the population we serve can provide insight for any young person interested in pursuing careers in education, counseling, occupational therapy, and many other fields. Furthermore, and possibly even more importantly, this kind of work serves to build empathy and compassion.

*From everyone at The Red Barn, Thank You Summer Interns!*



2722 BAILEY ROAD  
LEEDS, AL 35094

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## Student Spotlight

By: Laura King (parent)



I find it hard to put into words what Red Barn does for Ella - for us. I've asked her what makes Red Barn the favorite part of her week and she said, "Just... everything! Obviously, I love the horses! But I really love the people! I love the time I get to spend with them!" For her it is a safe place where she can be herself and enjoy an activity that wouldn't typically be easy in a safe and encouraging environment. So, in that there is freedom to JUST BE ELLA. And oh, how beautiful that freedom is on Ella!

When we drive through the gates at Red Barn and I slow the van down to the "Walk" speed limit, it's honestly like EVERYTHING slows down and we are at peace. For me, as a mom and a nurse, I spend so much time pouring into others - but the one hour I get at Red Barn with the kindness of the people and walking around breathing in the horses fills me with peace and encouragement in ways nothing else can.

*Thanks just doesn't even seem enough to say, but oh how we say it over and over—we are so thankful for the Red Barn!*

*I love the way that the Lord weaves our lives together,*

*and it never ceases to amaze me that He does so in ways that we may not fully understand for a while. For me, having Ella as a student at the barn brings Mrs. Cowart's legacy full circle. You see, Ella's mom Laura was one of Mrs. Cowart's many "barn daughters." Laura knew how riding had changed her own life and had concerns that perhaps Ella may not have that same opportunity. So, imagine the surprise when Laura discovered The Red Barn and learned we were founded on Mrs. Cowart's vision. The Lord really does work all things together, just as He promises!*

*—Joy O'Neal*