



2019 Program Evaluation

If you don't have time to read the entire report, these quotes sum it up quite nicely!

She leaves the barn with confidence, which is not always the case when she leaves other activities. This is about her and what she can do and how she can grow. It's not about being compared to others.

We do three hours of therapy each week at other places. But, this is the only one she looks forward to attending.

It's pretty special to know that my daughter has one activity that brings her joy while strengthening her at the same time. The relationships with the instructors and volunteers that she has made are beautiful to watch.

It's a place where our girl can come to feel accepted and loved. She doesn't have to worry about her struggles at the barn. I know the Lord put you guys in our path for a reason. Our sweet girl has a place where she belongs no matter what.

The Red Barn has been such an amazing place for us over the past four years. It has changed my girl's life and has been a respite for me as a single mom. When she rides, I get to spend a few minutes to myself and feel the peace that is at The Red Barn. When my girl rides, she is at peace. I love that we both feel at peace here.

How can I adequately put into words the gratitude I feel when my children are at the barn? Their time there provides me with much needed respite. It provides them with independence, yet individualized attention. We all leave the barn better than when we arrived. It truly does mean so much to me to have my children participate in the activities here.

It brings me such joy to see Susan come out of her shell. She is confident in her capabilities when she rides. It not only empowers her, but encourages me to continue putting her in activities where she gains not only more self-confidence, but also daily happiness.

2019 Overview

In 2019, we revised our lesson documentation process, so this year's evaluation will look slightly differently than those of previous years. An update to Salesforce (our CRM) required significant changes in our data entry methods. When we originally began using Salesforce in 2014, we were not aware of its vast capacity and had modeled our lesson documentation on similar agencies that primarily only offered group horseback riding lessons. As our programs expanded, we modified the group lesson documentation notes, but it was never an ideal fit. It wasn't quite as bad as putting a round peg in a square hole, but more like putting a round peg in an oval hole. So, we used the required update of Salesforce to create a documentation system that was better suited to the variety of programs that we offer. To continue the metaphor, our new system allows us to put round pegs in round holes, oval pegs in oval holes, and square pegs in square holes.

However, we still use the Results Based Accountability framework based on Mark Friedman's work at the Fiscal Policy Studies Institute. This framework asks four simple questions:

How much did we do? This is a question of quantity and is most easily answered. This is simply a count of the program hours. For example, a school might say that it taught 700 students in a given year.

How well was it performed? This question moves the focus from quantity to quality. For example, there is most likely a distinct difference in educational services when one teacher has a class of 20 students, compared to 35 students. This question also looks at the resources available to those students. Were they adequate or exceptional?

What difference was made in the lives of those served? Is anyone better off? This is the most difficult question for agencies to answer because of the long-term implications that must be considered and measured. For example, if a school only measures college admissions, does it miss considering that trade schools might be a better route for some students? This becomes further complicated when considering that some agencies, such as The Red Barn, work with such varied students. For some, "better off" might be that the student is less anxious. For others, "better off" might be having the fine motor skills to learn to tie shoes. To answer these questions, the organization must intimately know each student and their unique situation.

Making these significant changes to our internal record keeping system while also trying to learn an entirely new version of Salesforce, was an ambitious challenge even under the best of circumstances. However, we soon found out that the Salesforce revision would be one of the simpler challenges we faced in 2019.

Almost every single person working at the barn faced a major life challenge or significant life event. The following events are just some of what our 15 FTE employees faced in 2019:

- An employee had a high risk pregnancy, requiring her to be reassigned to office work so others had to cover her lessons for six months and then was out for three months on maternity leave.
- An employee injured her foot (not work related injury) and was out for several weeks and then returned to light work only for three additional months.
- An employee had neck surgery from a sports injury and was out for three months before able to return to work.
- An employee had a car wreck and was out for six weeks.
- An employee had a tumor removed from her knee and was out for two months.
- An employee had complications from gall bladder surgery and was on restricted work for several months.
- An employee had a difficult miscarriage and was out for several weeks.
- Three employees were married and each needed to be off work for multiple weeks.
- An employee's husband died.
- An employee's father died.
- Two employees resigned because they moved out of state.

Additionally, four of our horses died. This was a tremendous loss for everyone at the barn, especially students.

- Jessie from a cancerous tumor in her stomach.
- Dottie from a stroke.
- Missy from colic.
- Elvis was humanely euthanized due to spinal stenosis.

We were stretched thin to cover for each other, but this allowed for excellent cross training. We were under enormous stress, but it drew us closer together. We became laser focused to take things one week at a time, always being revitalized by seeing our students each week. More importantly, we survived!

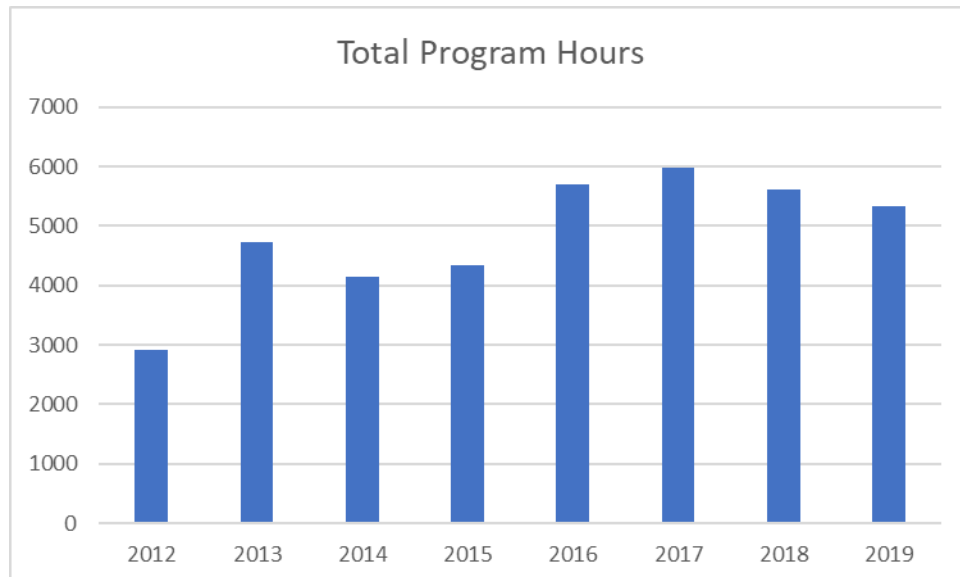


How much did we do?

We have divided our programs into two categories:

1. Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies offered to individuals with disabilities.
2. Training Programs offered to individuals wanting to learn more about volunteering or working in the industry of equine assisted activities and therapies.

Over time, our program hours have generally increased. There was a noticeable jump in 2013 as we were able to hire our first staff. We dialed back hours in 2014 in order to focus more on weekly students rather than one-time groups, giving us a “deeper” program impact. In 2017, we decided to again slightly reduce one-time groups. The program hours for 2019 were down to 5,336 from 5,603 in 2018. However, given the amount of disruption in our 2019 schedule, we are very proud of this number.



Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies

As mentioned earlier, one unique aspect of our programming is that we offer more than riding lessons for low-income children with disabilities. And, many of our students participate in multiple programs throughout the year. In 2019, we provided 4,184 hours of direct service in this category. The list below summarizes the different opportunities.

- **Therapeutic Horseback Riding Lessons:** Traditional horseback riding lessons are adapted to accommodate the disabilities of the student. In these lessons, the goal is for the child to learn to ride the horse. In doing so, the child may make physical, cognitive, and/or emotional improvements.

- **Groundwork Lessons:** The child does not ride the horse, but learns how to work with the horse from the ground. Among other benefits, this increases communication and relationship building between the child and horse which can later be transferred to communication and relationship with other people.
- **Equine Assisted Learning Classes:** These experiential classes incorporate horses into academic based subjects, such as pre-reading skills, literature, science, history, math, and character development.
- **Job Skills:** Students learn how to perform tasks around the barn, such as cleaning stalls, filling buckets, and routine tasks. They also have the opportunity to develop soft skills, such as problem solving, communication, and prioritizing tasks.
- **Camps:** One-time camps offer students the opportunity to learn more about horses in a farm-based environment as they attend traditional day camps.
- **Occupational Therapy:** An occupational therapist incorporates the movement of the horse into the student's treatment plan. In these sessions, the movement of the horse is benefiting the child physically, cognitively, and/or emotionally. The goal of the session is to address the child's functional skills at home, school, and/or other environments.
- **Equine Assisted Counseling:** Group homes come to the barn and bring their counselor with them. Our staff work alongside the home's counselor to facilitate group counseling sessions for the home members.
- **Evaluations:** Students on the waiting list are invited to the barn for a standard evaluation and interview. This allows us to understand their participation goals and place them in the activity best suited for them.

Training Programs

These programs are offered to individuals who want to learn more about working the equine assisted activities and therapies industry. In 2019, we provided 1,152 hours of direct service in this category. The list below summarizes the different opportunities.

- **Volunteer Training and Enrichment:** These programs are offered to our own volunteers, as well as volunteers from other organizations. These classes are about horsemanship and disabilities.
- **Instructors in Training:** Individuals wanting to become Certified Therapeutic Horseback Riding Instructors (CTRI) must have mentorship hours, in addition to passing numerous written and hands-on tests. Our staff assists these individuals by providing mentorship, horsemanship lessons, and other support.
- **Certification Clinics:** We host certification clinics for those wanting to become certified.
- **Current Riding Instructor Continuing Education:** Once an individual earns their Certified Therapeutic Horseback Riding Instructor credential, they must complete 25 hours of continuing education each year. We provide affordable and quality CEU opportunities for current CTRIs.

- **Agency Training:** Informational clinics and one-to-one mentorship is offered to those wanting to either start their own similar agency or to existing agencies that want to learn more about best operating practices.



How well was it performed?

Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies

Trained Employees

For safety, it is important for employees to be well trained and certified in their respective responsibilities. All programs were delivered by employees trained in the following methods and/or certified by the following organizations:

- Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH)
- Certified Horsemanship Association (CHA)
- New Trails Learning Systems
- American Hippotherapy Association (AHA)
- Special Olympics
- Natural Lifemanship
- JAYC Foundation
- Transitioning Families
- HERD Institute
- Hocus Focus
- Remo Healthy Rhythms

Program employees have college degrees in equine science, religion, psychology, history, education, and occupational therapy.

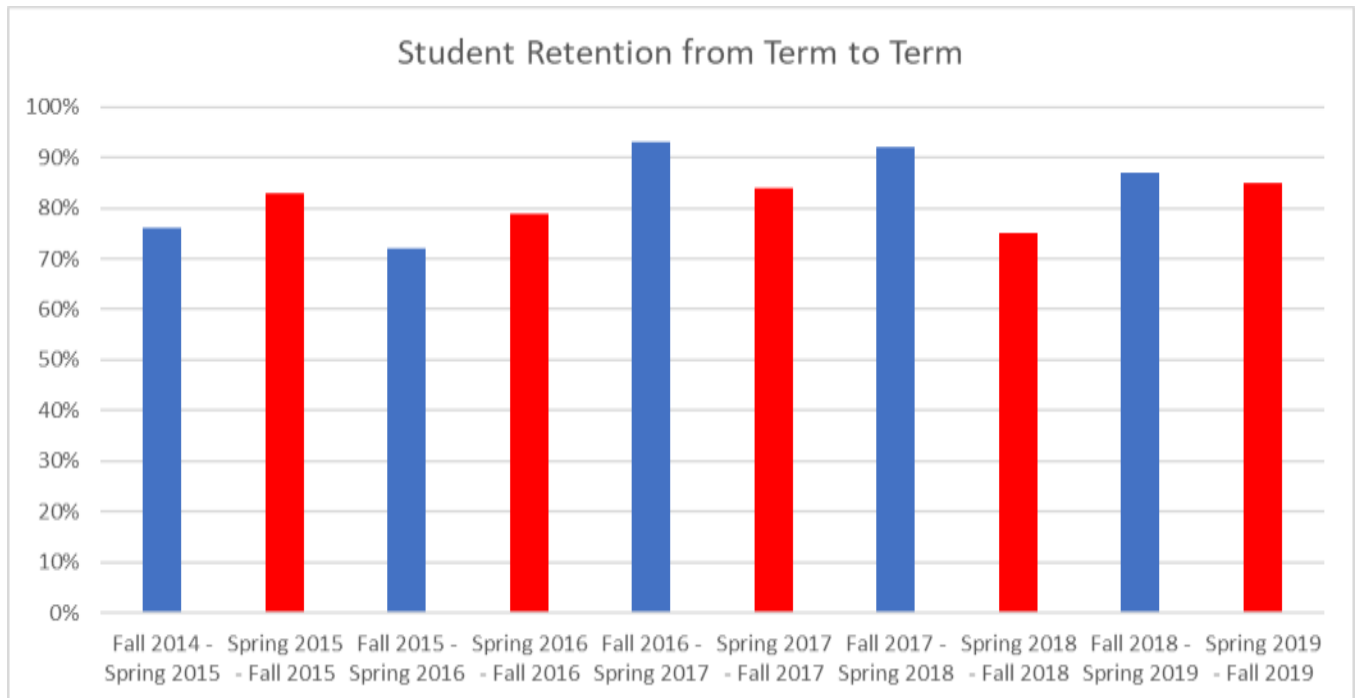
Additionally, we created a tiered job description for our program staff to encourage them to pursue advanced certifications and trainings. This also allows interns and program assistants to see a career path if they want to work in the industry.

Incident Reports

An incident report is completed every time someone falls off a horse or requires more than basic first aid. We had one incident report in 2019 when a horse broke a volunteer's toe by stepping on it.

Retention

One way to assess the quality of services is to look at whether or not students want to return from term to term. The most common reason for not returning is scheduling difficulty, especially from the spring to the fall term when a new school year begins. Our 2018 strategic plan had the goal of trying to even out our term-to-term retention for weekly students in order to become more efficient. For the first time, our fall to spring retention was almost even.



It is more difficult to determine retention rates for other programs because of their one-time nature. But, there are many organizations that have been bringing groups to us for numerous years, including The Amelia Center, Lakeshore Foundation, JBS, Mitchell’s Place, just to name a few.

Demand for Programs

In 2019 we also changed the criteria for accepting students onto our waiting list. In the past, anyone completing the registration form was added to the list and evaluated when a lesson time became available. Our new method is that a student is only added to the waiting list after they have been evaluated. The evaluations are offered multiple times throughout the week and also help us recommend the best suited programs for the student. Additionally, since our waiting list has grown so large, we are contacting parents throughout the year to determine whether they want to remain on the waiting list. This allows us to remove students who may have found another activity and makes it easier to see which students are seriously interested. We currently have 85 students on the waiting list to participate in individual programs.

Satisfaction Surveys

Unmounted Classes and Camps – Participant Surveys

At the end of each unmounted class or camp, participants are given a survey. We continue to have high scores in satisfaction, with 94% of participants answering that they had fun and 96% answering that they would like to come back to the barn. Of course, we strive for those numbers to be 100%, but realize that some participants are only coming because they are part of the larger group.

Riding Lessons and Occupational Therapy – Parent Surveys

At the end of each term, parents are asked to complete a survey about their experience. The results for 2019 are summarized below.

	Percent Satisfied
Services your child received	100%
Progress your child made	98%
Communication with your child’s instructor	98%
Volunteers working with your child	100%
Facility appearance	100%
Safety features provided at the barn	100%

The survey also asks for suggestions for improvement. Some of the suggestions are listed below, along with our plan to address them.

- **Being able to ride multiple times a week.** Without adding more staff and horses (which means significantly more money) we cannot offer multiple lessons per week right now. But, it is on our long term plan.
- **Longer lesson times.** See above.
- **Air conditioned spaces to wait.** We have opened an air conditioned room in the red house for parents to wait in if they want.
- **More programs for teenage social skills.** We are looking to add these into our 2020 schedule.
- **Instructor consistency.** We do try to keep the student with the same instructor when possible. But, this is difficult when schedules change (either for employee or student). This is somewhat out of our control.
- **More horse show opportunities.** This is on our long term plan.

Riding Lessons and Occupational Therapy – Student Surveys

Once a year, students are sent a satisfaction survey. The responses are below.

	Percent Satisfied
I like coming to the barn.	96%
I like to groom.	92%
I like to ride.	100%
Coming to the barn is my favorite thing to do.	96%
I want to come back to the barn.	96%
Safety features provided at the barn	100%

Students are also asked how they feel when they are at the barn. Some examples of their answers are below:

How do you feel when you're at the barn?

Really good

How do you feel when you're at the barn?

happy, calm, relaxed, at peace

How do you feel when you're at the barn?

I feel safe & happy

RIDES Skills for Riding Lessons

In 2014 we began using the Rider Instruction and Evaluation System (RIDES) to track the mastery of riding skills. RIDES is divided into five levels, with each level containing both mounted and unmounted skills. Mastery of the skill is checked at the end of each term. In 2019, 457 riding skills were mastered by students taking riding lessons.

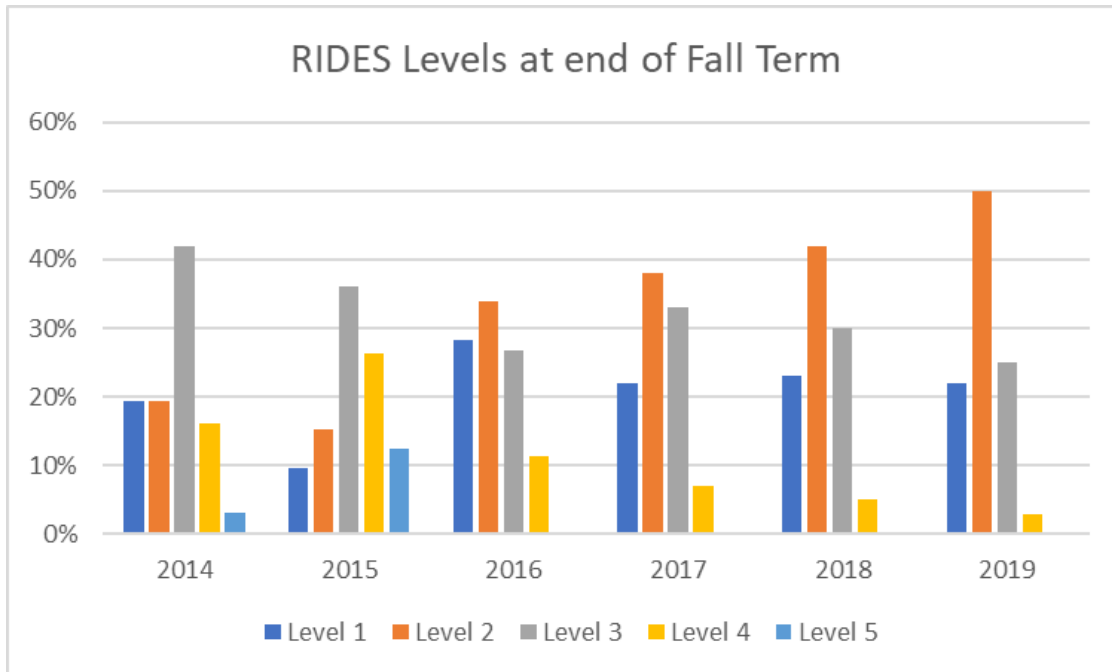
The levels are:

- Level 1: Student rides at the walk only on lead. Trotting is minimal.
- Level 2: Student is learning basic riding skills at the walk and trot on lead.
- Level 3: Student is learning to ride off lead at the walk and on lead at the trot.
- Level 4: Student is proficient at riding off lead at the walk and is learning to ride off lead at the trot. These students are near graduating our programs and often can begin riding at traditional riding academies.
- Level 5: Student is working on more advanced skills off lead at the walk and trot, and the student is beginning to canter. When a student completes this level, we consider them to have graduated from our programs.

Students progress at their own pace, but in a methodical way. Some skills are mastered quickly and others may take longer. The point of the RIDES system is not to compare students to each other, but only to identify that mastery of skills is taking place over time and to outline logical riding skill progression.

RIDES levels also help us identify horse and volunteer needs. For example if the majority of our students are in levels 1 and 2 , then we will need more volunteers as sidewalkers and leaders than if the majority are in level 3 or 4 when they can ride independently. We also know whether or not the horses need to be capable of independent riding and steering by students.

In 2016, several of our Level 4 students left to ride at traditional riding academies. This opened up space for us to accept new students. You can see the growth of these students by the rising orange line of level 2 riders.



Job Skills

Our job skills program began with the goals of students learning soft skills and being able to complete the same task with direct supervision each week to work on speed and accuracy. Many of our students have now accomplished those goals, so we have added new “Level 2” goals where they are provided a list of multiple chores to complete. They are learning to decide the order of completion and are working more independently. During 2019, students in Level 2 job skills showed an average of 62% increase in tasks they were able to complete independently and accurately.

Training Programs

A variety of training programs were offered to employees, volunteers, and others interested in our industry. All were offered by qualified instructors and clinicians. The certification clinics (PATH and HERD) were at full capacity and we have been asked to host them again in 2020. See the volunteer program evaluation for more information about the trainings provided to volunteers.

What difference was made in the lives of those served? Is anyone better off?

This is the most difficult question of all to answer, but the most meaningful. Our goal is that everything learned at the barn can later be transferred to daily life and relationships with others.

Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies

Riding Lessons and Occupational Therapy – Parent Surveys

Parents were surveyed to determine if they saw growth in a variety of areas when their child was at the barn and if they saw improvements carry over into other areas of life. The top six answers are listed below, as well as some parent comments.

	Saw improvement while at the barn	Saw improvement carried over at home
Self confidence and self esteem	77%	68%
Following directions	81%	67%
Communication	60%	65%
Sequencing steps of a task	49%	56%
Physical strength	46%	42%
Coordination	61%	55%

She is remembering she is responsible for certain things and asking to do things on her own. He has been more independent in his self-care, as well as more conscientious about grooming the dog.

It has given her self-confidence in other areas, such as making friends and being with peers. She loves doing chores and helping.

We went to the beach and she approached some children at the pool that she didn't know. Normally, that wouldn't have happened.

He seems to now accept more responsibility for his actions and behaviors. It seems to make him a better "team player."

My daughter had the best school year ever. She made friends this year and has kept them.

Yes! Working with horses and working on communication has helped her open up with other people in various settings. She is becoming better able to communicate when something is bothering her or when she is anxious or upset.

It has helped him learn responsibility, confidence, and skills for every day life.

Riding Lessons and Occupational Therapy – Student Surveys

Once a year, students are sent a survey to ask their thoughts about coming to the barn. One of the questions is about what they have learned. In addition to listing skills like grooming and steering, some students are beginning to make the connection between what they learn at the barn and their daily lives.

What have you learned at the barn? to trete animals
kilee

Note: This says, "To treat animals kindly."

What have you learned at the barn? compation & freindship

Occupational Therapy Outcomes

- Improved posture and head control allows for the use of augmented communication devices.
- Increased verbalization and communication on the horse lead to increased communication at home through conversations about the horses. It also includes an increase in children expressing their feelings and their ability to describe physical feelings (feel crooked, something tickles, knee hurts, etc.).
- Parents received education about movement and the importance of attention to the details of movement during a functional task.
- Improved body awareness leads to using their body more effectively in everyday tasks.
- Improved balance for daily tasks such as dressing, sitting on the edge of the bed, climbing in and out of the car, etc.

Instructor Focus Group

Instructors were asked to consider how coming to the barn had impacted their students at home and in school. Their answers are below:

2019 had a lot of changes for students because of all that was happening. Students had to learn to adapt and be comfortable with changes in instructor, horse, and schedule.

Using checklists at the barn has helped them realize the importance of using checklists at home for things that can be completed. The parents can also see how that helps the child and may ask for those adaptations at school also.

We talk a lot about connecting grooming the horse with personal care.

It develops a work ethic when they help with chores or have to keep trying to learn a skill.

Opportunities for problem solving. Yesterday, my student had to figure out why her horse kept stopping. She finally realized it was because she was pulling back on the reins without meaning to. Once she focused on her core, she didn't use the reins for balance and the horse didn't stop anymore.

I encourage my students to ask questions if they don't understand what I'm telling them. This helps them to know it's okay to speak up if needed with their parents, teachers, or friends.

The physical strength they gain at the barn will help with their everyday life. When Ann first started coming, she could barely lift her head for very long. Now she's able to hold it up for several seconds at a time.

I see my students learning to process two or more things at once – like steering, talking, and deciding which direction to go on the obstacle course.

The self-confidence is life changing. They are learning that with effort and support, they can do more than they thought possible.

As they rode different horses, especially those who had ridden the horses that died this year, they learned how to figure out a new relationship.

For their safety, we teach them that they must immediately follow some directions if given sternly and quickly. Understanding that sometimes you have to immediately obey directions or commands will benefit them in emergency situations.

It's okay to take a breath and think about what to do. You can't make a decision about what to do with your horse if you aren't thinking clearly. That's true for any situation that gets you rattled.

Training Program

The impact of the training program is difficult to define because it is the most far reaching and ongoing. We have not been able to develop a method for answering this question quantitatively for the training program, but do have some anecdotal answers.

For volunteers attending the training programs, our students receive better quality services. But, the volunteers also learn skills that they can use outside of the barn. For example, one of our volunteers decided to become a foster parent. The skills that she learned while volunteering have helped her become a better foster parent.

We held two certification clinics this year (PATH and HERD), with twelve individuals become certified. Think of the number of students that each attendee will be able to serve in the years to come.

We helped a drug and alcohol rehab facility for teenagers establish an equine program, walking them through operational procedures and policies and assisting them their first week of operation. How many participants will benefit from that training over the next few years?



Conclusion

This program evaluation was written in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. While we thought 2019 was difficult, we had no idea what would lie ahead in 2020! Many children typically served at the barn haven't been able to come out. And, even the students that do come, have their smiles hidden behind a mask. We miss having volunteers and the incredible effort they put into lessons and barn chores. Staff meetings have moved to the upper barn hallway, where we have to rely on fans rather than air conditioning in the office to keep us cool.

Because of social distancing, we realize that human connection is more important than ever before. In creating this program evaluation, we have been reminded of the undeniable connection between every life that is involved with The Red Barn.

Program evaluations are usually created to help the organization see where it can improve and to show donors the impact of their donations. This one though, reminds us that our programs are making a lasting impact on the lives of students. During this difficult time, compiling this report gives us a determination to work harder than ever to continue offering programs to improve the lives of low-income children with disabilities.

