



Heartland Equine Therapeutic Riding Academy

HETRA ■ PO Box 260 ■ Valley, NE 68064 ■ (402) 359-8830 ■ www.hetra.org

HETRA's mission:

To improve the quality of life both physically & emotionally of adults & children with disabilities through equine assisted activities.

November 27, 2006

Dear HETRA Supporter,

Most of us know what HETRA technically stands for -- Heartland Equine Therapeutic Riding Academy. But, in our opinion, that does not quite capture all of what HETRA means to us, our volunteers, the students, and the animals who work so willingly and patiently with each rider. So in this holiday season, we began to consider what HETRA means to those involved with this wonderful program, and we found that to us HETRA also stands for **H**eroes **E**ncouraging **T**remendous **R**ider **A**bilities.

H is for Hero - We have heroes of all shapes and sizes here at HETRA.

We oftentimes describe heroism as running into a burning building and saving a life, and it is, but here at HETRA we experience another level of heroism. HETRA's Heroes are the volunteers who dedicate so much of their time; the wonderful horses who impact not only their rider, but everyone around them; the riders who each week challenge themselves to achieve new goals; and our wonderful donors, whom without their help, the spirit of HETRA would be unable to reach so many people. We would like to share the story of three of HETRA's heroes – Sally, a HETRA volunteer; Addy, a HETRA rider, and Skippy, a HETRA horse.

Sally's Story: Volunteer? Why would I do that? I have challenges just trying to take care of myself, pay my bills, plus I have my own personal crisis situations, my job, relationships, and worrying about whether I have money for this and that. I feel need to work so I can be somebody. My evenings and weekends were full of the day to day tasks that consume our lives.

I was, living day by day, when out of nowhere was blind-sided by a blast to my health. My personal independence and mobility were threatened. I couldn't lose my independence, because really that was all I had. My fierce attitude and dedication to physical therapy brought me full circle so quickly that I amazed the medical professionals. Within the next year, I would continue to face many more personal challenges.

All this and more led me to the inspection of what I wanted to be as a person. I realized that I wasn't where I wanted to be. What is success? To laugh often, to win the respect of others and the affection of children, to appreciate beauty, find the best in others, to leave the world a bit better, to know even one life had breathed easier because I was there. This to me is success.

I was now faced with the task of getting myself where I wanted to be. I relocated to Omaha and knew very few people let alone potential sources of an outlet for my energy. I narrowed my focus to horse activities. After many internet searches I found HETRA! As an ex-farm kid and horse lover I knew I could devote myself entirely to such an endeavor.

E is for Encouraging - The encouragement is felt by all who enter the barn.

The horses, the students and the other volunteers are now some of the best parts of my life. During sessions I have been amazed at the horse's dedication to their riders and their job, especially their patience as a rider mounts and dismounts. I felt an instant connection with the other volunteers, because we are all there to achieve a common goal to help these very special riders. Everyone shares in the work and also the joy in completing a successful session.

Skippy, Odie, Waldo, Crawford, Twyla and every horse in the HETRA program are so well trained and cared for that they are an absolute joy to work with. I have personally nominated myself to furnish them all with extra special attention on a regular basis. Should anyone view this activity they would see me in the midst of all these horses giggling as they all vie for my attention!



HETRA Heroes: Addy, Sally and Skippy

HETRA Board of Directors:

Kathy Lewis ■ Katherine Smith ■ Sarah Isaacson ■ Deb Miller ■ Kathy Sangimino ■ Vicki Krecek ■ Kristina Lehr
Steve Probst ■ Lynette Singer ■ Tim Kirkpatrick

T is for Tremendous – *It is a tremendous experience for everyone who is involved with HETRA.*

I witness the most tremendous moments: the rider dismounts and the horse turns and gently reaches out to him/her for affection and recognition; a rider atop a horse trotting with the air blowing her hair; the intense smile when they first ride without a leader; a vocal command given by a rider that has never spoken. These are all successes witnessed in our arena. I am so lucky to be a part of this!”

R is for Rider - *Ask anyone at HETRA, why we do what we do and they will tell you it is for our exceptional riders.*

Addy’s Story: Most 13-year-old girls dream about making the basketball team or being the most popular girl in school. **I have a dream that most of you learned to do when we were still in diapers --learn to walk.**

I was born with cerebral palsy, which requires me to wear braces on my legs and use a walker for mobility. I have spent countless hours in physical and occupational therapy, and while both have been very beneficial to me, we felt like I needed something more. That’s when my family learned about a wonderful organization called HETRA.

I have been riding for three years and the results have been amazing. Physically, the riding has helped strengthen my legs and improve my balance, both of which help in my ability to walk independently. **When I’m riding my favorite horse Skippy, I feel a sense of accomplishment and that nothing can stop me from conquering the world.** Skippy and I have developed a special bond that most people will never understand. This gentle giant has helped me learn to be proud of myself, be more vocal and assertive, which has improved my self-esteem and self-confidence.

The encouraging words and caring demeanor of the instructor and volunteers who work with me make me feel special and set me up for success. It amazes me how they adapt the session to meet each rider’s special and unique needs.

Even after three years, it still brings a tear to my Mom’s eye when she sees me riding Skippy with a huge smile on my face because my mom knows I am chasing my dream of learning to walk. **I honestly cannot imagine a world without HETRA.** It’s an amazing organization doing wonderful things for some very special people.



Addy and Skippy conquering the world!

A is for Ability - *Here at HETRA we focus on our students ability, not their disability.*

HETRA would like to invite you to become a HETRA Hero. You can help Encourage the Tremendous Riders at HETRA maximize their Abilities and continue to conquer the world through your generous donation. Your contribution will help the spirit of HETRA reach more people throughout the coming year. The cost of a new riding helmet for a student \$30.00. The cost to sponsor one 30 minute riding lesson \$75.00. The cost to heat the arena for the winter \$1000.00. The cost to care for a therapy horse for a year \$2,340.00. **The miracles that happen every day at HETRA...PRICELESS.** You can help us to create more miracles!

Sincerely,

SKIPPY 

Sally

Addy