



Cummins Inc., Jamestown Engine Plant Sponsors Centaur Stride Project Horseworks

Cummins Engine of Jamestown awarded a grant to Centaur Stride Therapeutic Riding Facility to support their newest program

Westfield, NY (July 2010) Recently, Cummins Engine of Jamestown awarded a grant to Centaur Stride to support their new program called 'Project Horseworks'. In May, employees from the Jamestown plant volunteered their time and talent to build raised garden boxes, while the grant covered supplies and materials for the program. "The garden boxes are accessible for everyone, even those in wheelchairs, and also create a great barrier for ground critters", states Centaur Stride president, Claudia Monroe.

Centaur Stride is a 501 © 3 corporation formed in 1991 to address the needs of people with disabilities through animal assisted and nature programs. The mission of the organization is to enrich the lives of people with disabilities through a wide range of recreational and experiential learning activities. The horse is a great teacher, facilitator and motivator, which is a key element in creating effective and therapeutic outcomes. A need was clearly identified for programs that address the physical and emotional needs of people with disabilities. Over the past 17 years, as clients grew, in age and ability, and in the number of participants, another need has become evident through our participants, and a resolution, called Project Horseworks, has been implemented.

"We are aware that many of our clients who have graduated from school (with either IEP or general diplomas), are just at home with nothing to do," says Claudia Monroe, President and Co-founder of Centaur Stride. "They are not independent enough to become employed, or cannot find a job that will adapt to fit their abilities. There are not enough mentoring or volunteer programs available to provide opportunities for these students to develop their skills. We have individuals that have been riding at our center for years and want to be volunteers. They require direct supervision and mentoring, and we do not have the staff or volunteers to allow them to be safe in this role."

"Our plan of action was to establish a meaningful learning, social and community service experience for clients with disabilities, who need to work on their level of independence, including making healthy life-style choices, with specific individualized goals and objectives, and measurable outcomes. These outcomes would include increased potential for employment, integration, community connections, lifelong learning, financial "resourcefulness" and skill-building.", says Monroe.

Project Horseworks was launched on June 1, under the leadership of Barb Johnson and Kellie Roberts. Master Gardeners from the Cornell Cooperative Extension, Betsy Hite, Doug McCullor and Marty Carnahan serve as advisors.

Project Horseworks activities center around horse care with an entrepreneurial flare. They will identify that even the most unpleasant aspect of horse care can have its rewards for both the horse and the entrepreneur (ie. stall cleaning). They will learn gardening and sales as participants will sell the produce they grow and compost manure (from Centaur Stride) at nearby farmers' markets. These opportunities will give clients (identified in this program as "cadets"), to think for themselves about ways to earn more money. They will be engaged in meaningful and purposeful activity and improve self-esteem. Throughout the program, they will be working on areas of personal development and job readiness skills, such as: responsibility, following directions, completing assigned tasks, asking for help when needed, greeting others, adequate verbal skills, responding appropriately to criticism or change in routine, asking for more work when finished with assignments, prioritizing work, working in a group or individually, effective use of time and following a schedule. They will also gain exposure to proper work ethics including being on time, attendance, safe and effective choices and problem solving.

Eight cadets have registered to participate in the pilot project for the summer of 2010. Centaur Stride will continue to work to create partnerships with sponsors in the community. These partnerships will enable Project Horseworks to continue beyond the summer of 2010 and grow to meet the needs of more people without charge to the participants.

For more information, please visit our website at www.centaurstride.org. Seasoned manure is available for sale and/or delivery by calling 326-4318. Donations can be sent to Centaur Stride, P.O. Box 174, Westfield, NY, 14787.