
Matt's Success Story

Matt has been riding at Centaur Stride for 17 years



Pictured above is Matt with his beloved partner, Dude, a therapeutic riding horse at Centaur Stride. The two of them had an incredible heart-warming relationship over many years.

Matt has an extremely rare disorder, a DNA repair deficiency disease called Trichothiodystrophy. It affects his skin, hair, bones, blood, immune system, hearing, and cognition. Matt has been in a study for this disorder at the National Institute of Health in Bethesda, Maryland since August 2003. He is one of their oldest living patients with this rare diagnosis. There is no cure.

Matt started his adventure coming to Centaur Stride during a middle school field trip. That simple trip ignited a passion for riding, horses, and Centaur Stride that has only strengthened during the past 17 years



Not only is riding therapeutic --emotionally, physically, and socially -- but Matt loves the relative independence that riding provides

"Their bond was indescribable"

Claire, Matt's mother, fondly recalls, "Matt's favorite memory is Dude! For a good 13 years everything revolved around Dude. Matt would talk about him like they were best buddies. One time when Matt was sick and unable to ride for a while, he asked me, 'Do you think Dude has missed me?' I told him, 'Absolutely!!'"



Matt enjoys riding year-round in the indoor riding arena.



Before COVID, Matt was able to have Dude walk right alongside of him - no lead rope or anything. To witness that was an amazing sight to see. Their bond was indescribable.

Matt has clearly benefitted from working with the horses at Centaur Stride. According to Claire, "Physically, he's enjoying himself and does not even realize how all of the tasks he loves to do are actually helping him. From the lifting of the tack all by himself to the brushing of the horses. From walking/leading the horse into and around the arena to the strengthening of his leg and core muscles. Riding has also helped his eye /hand, coordination, especially when he does the ring toss or throws the ball into the basketball hoop – all while on the horse. These are not easy tasks to do!"

"Centaur Stride is Matt's happy place!"

"It's not only physically that he has benefitted; socially, he's Centaur Stride's Ambassador! So many people in the community know him!" (Claire)



"Over the years I feel riding has definitely been a very positive experience for Matt cognitively. He learned the basic lessons of riding and horse commands. He remembered how to steer the horse. He could easily do a figure-eight. He could ride through and around the cones. I was very impressed with how well he could ride. He made it all look easy. Unfortunately, things are changing for Matt cognitively, but he is happy. Riding is definitely his happy place." (Claire)



Dude was laid to rest in 2023 and Matt continues to ride in his memory. He misses Dude but is continuing his riding passion now on his new steed, Pixie.



Matt's story is inspirational and shows everyone that we can all learn to enjoy the magic of horses at Centaur Stride.