



Impact Report 2023

Mission Statement

In Step With Horses provides a safe place to rebalance mental health through a connection with animals and nature.

Vision Statement

A core connection to a healthier, kinder, and more accepting community.

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Connection is Key

2023 was exceptional! With a full year at the new farm, we anticipated many opportunities to serve additional clients and to learn about our physical space, the land, and its many possibilities. It did not disappoint. We added several new programs serving young clients and their families, effectively doubling the number of teens served. Our mission of being a safe place to rebalance mental health through a connection with animals and nature is our spark of inspiration as we continue our evolution as a premier provider of animal-assisted mental health support in our community.

In 2023, the need for healthy connection to animals, nature and others, became a theme for our work and the nation. The 2023 Surgeon General's report, *Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation*, detailed the importance of connection for overall physical and mental health. Human beings need social interaction and community to thrive. We witness the importance of connection every day at the farm and strive to help our clients build (or re-build) healthy connections to family, friends, and social groups. We are also committed to building connections within Northeast Ohio, partnering with like-minded organizations to carry out our mission and deepen interactions within our local community.

We are grateful for those that connected with our organization to propel us forward. We cannot provide the services we do without our amazing volunteers and donors. These connections help build a powerful In Step With Horses community and improve the lives of all involved.

Hannah Builds Confidence

Hannah loves horses and wanted to take riding lessons. Bonnie, her mother, found In Step With Horses (ISWH), and it's made an incredible difference for Hannah. Bonnie states: "we want Hannah to participate in an activity that she enjoys, looks forward to, and can feel confident doing. We need a place that is intentional and positive about helping her do those things."

Hannah tried occupational therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy, but she didn't enjoy either of them, and they did not improve her confidence. In fact, both modalities made her feel worse. Since Hannah started riding at ISWH, she is happy and confident! She has grown in her ability to handle the horses and willingly attends her lesson every week. She loves talking with Haven, her riding instructor, and is eager to ask questions and listen to instruction, which is different from previous therapies. She has something to look forward to each week.



Hannah received services initially through a grant from Hope For Kids Geauga. Her family is very grateful for the opportunity.

Donations and grants support equine assisted services for many of our families.



Hannah enjoys learning new skills and being encouraged to use them, with just the right amount of support. She adores the connection she makes with each horse, telling her mother about their personalities. Before learning to ride, Hannah participated in gymnastics. She felt badly when she compared herself to other gymnasts. At the barn, she is welcomed, encouraged, and loved for who she is.

Bonnie says *"I cannot thank you all enough! It's a valuable part of Hannah's life and I know that it would benefit many others. **Growing up and dealing with anxiety and fear is hard. You provide a loving way to help those struggling with those emotions. It is a joy and not a chore.** Hannah is finally learning what she CAN do rather than focusing on what she CAN'T."*

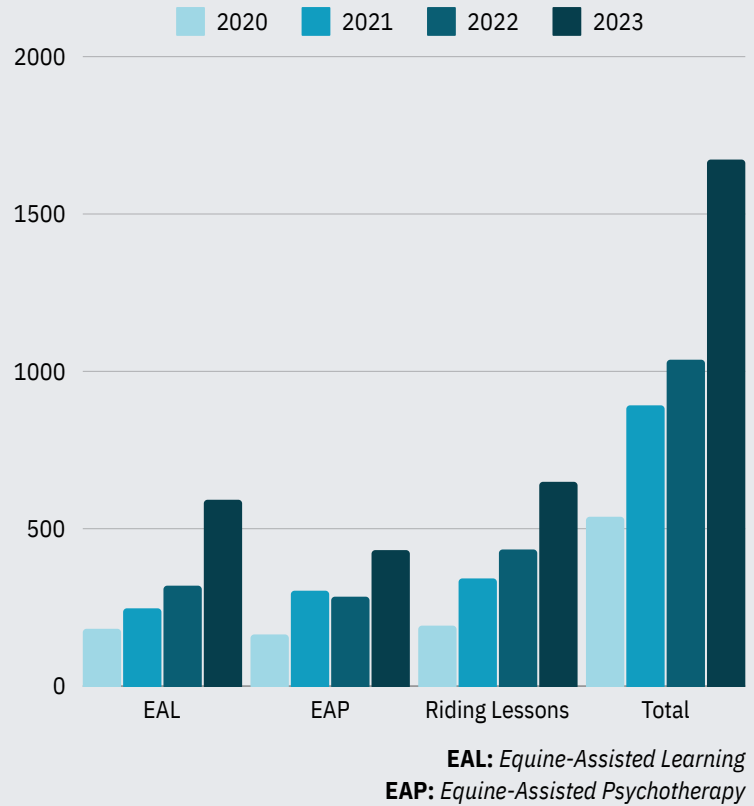
Our Programming

All of our services center around equine assisted activities and therapies. Incorporating the unconditional acceptance and biofeedback of the horse helps our clients recognize unproductive habits, heal from trauma, build resiliency, and learn new skills to improve their wellbeing.

- Individual & Family Counselling
- Equine Empowerment for Kids & Teens
- Military, Veterans & First Responders
- Programs for Organizations & Counsellors
- Individual & Small Group Horsemanship Sessions
- Therapeutic Riding Lessons

We have effectively doubled in size every two years. In 2023, we expanded our services in the community to serve many additional clients, including twice the number of teens as in 2022, thereby helping to address the growing mental health crisis amongst youth.

Client Sessions



Financial Overview

Our non-profit is funded by a combination of grants, private donations, fundraising activities, and program fees.

Please note that 82% of our expenses goes toward the programming we offer to our community, and only 5% goes towards fundraising. The result of this is that we utilize our donors' contributions to provide maximum benefit to the local communities we serve.

Income

Programs	33%
Fundraising Events	21%
Individual Donors	23%
Grants	18%
Other	5%

Expenses

Program	82%
Administrative	13%
Fundraising	5%



Helping Youth Connect

There has been a measurable decline in youth mental health since 2019. The ever growing rates of depression, anxiety, and mood disorders are impacted by a number of factors, including social media. Additionally, academic performance expectations, global events such as climate change, economic challenges, and the isolation created by COVID-19 have all contributed to the decline.

The Crisis Text Line (988) and Common Good Labs analyzed 87,000 text conversations between Crisis Line counselors and youth. The data shows that young people in crisis have common needs that are often unmet. Primarily, **youth crave opportunities for social interaction**. Additional needs include engagement with art, music and writing; mental health services; exercise and sports programs; books; and outdoor spaces and nature. These needs have two things in common: they can be linked through research to improved mental health, and they can be found at In Step With Horses.

In 2023 we doubled the number of teens served in our program. This growth was intentional and needed in the community. A majority of our youth programs take place in small groups. Teens are able to develop connections with peers that have similar interests, struggles, and needs. This builds resilience, improves mood, and helps engage young people in a way online relationships cannot.

Our signature youth program, Hoofbeats and heART, incorporates time in nature with horses, art, music, writing, movement, and exercise. **Outcomes show that a majority of our young clients have decreased depression and anxiety** after participating. Riding lessons are offered in small groups to encourage building supportive relationships and working in cooperation with others to accomplish a goal. Plans to incorporate more youth programs in 2024 are underway.

Client Demographics

