Boundaries in Motion
About High Hopes

High Hopes Therapeutic Riding, Inc. is a premier therapeutic riding center and international instructor training site. We have served people with physical, emotional and developmental disabilities for more than a quarter of a century.

Our year round programs in equine assisted activities include therapeutic riding, carriage driving and equine learning. We also offer experiential learning through outreach programs, an integrated summer camp program and a variety of volunteer opportunities.

We offer the PATH Intl. approved instructor training course, attracting students from all over the world as well as continuing professional education for anyone seeking increased education and lifelong learning. Our training is conducted by highly qualified professionals, widely recognized in the field of therapeutic riding.

High Hopes is a place where people come to heal, to learn and to make friends that last a lifetime. We strive to provide support and growth opportunities for all of our participants, families and caregivers.

Ages of our Riders

Primary Disabilities of our Riders

- Autism Spectrum
- Mental Health Disorders
- Language Disorders
- Sensory Disorders
- Intellectual Impairments
- Development Disabilities
- Learning Disabilities
- Neurological & Physical Impairments
- Cerebral Palsy
Most of us learn experientially, through challenging ourselves to go beyond what is known and what is comfortable. For a well-established organization like High Hopes, we are pretty comfortable at our wonderful facility on Town Woods Road in Old Lyme with our amazing staff, well trained horses, committed volunteers and the generous support of our community. For us, moving beyond our physical boundaries, considering providing services at additional sites, developing distance education opportunities, venturing into other service areas, can all seem a bit overwhelming at first. Here at High Hopes, we run a pretty tight ship and we look to control our environment, allowing us to offer the safest and most rewarding experience for our riders. Pushing ourselves to look beyond what we are currently offering takes High Hopes into uncharted territories, but also forces us to examine our fundamental values and mission. Accepting new challenges and embracing change is a critical step in every organization’s life. It is also what so many of our participants, staff and volunteers learn to do each time they walk into High Hopes’ riding arena. The stories within this report highlight our ability to explore and expand boundaries as we challenge ourselves to go beyond our comfort zone and develop opportunities that will increase High Hopes’ positive impact on an ever expanding community.
Chairman of the Board Letter

For the past few years High Hopes has focused on providing the highest quality service to our participants while developing our staff, governance and infrastructure to best sustain High Hopes during times of uncertainty and into the future. It is now very exciting to be looking at and evaluating opportunities that expand and deepen the spectrum of those served by High Hopes. It amazes me when I consider the number of people who can be positively affected by what High Hopes has to offer, from our community here in Old Lyme to children served by High Hopes trained instructors in South Korea! The next few years should be an exciting time for High Hopes and I look forward to the hard work and the huge return!

Cheryl Kelly Heffernan, Board Chairman

High Hopes Board of Trustees

PROGRAMS LIKE HIGH HOPEs ATTEMPT TO SHIFT THE RISK-REWARD EQUATION IN A WAY THAT MAXIMIZES POTENTIAL GROWTH, WHILE MINIMIZING RISK.
Most forms of personal growth involve some sort of risk and, most of us would agree, fear of that risk should not keep us from trying. It has been Emma’s dream for many years to canter on her horse and she, along with her family and High Hopes specially trained staff, volunteers and horses, were willing to accept the risks inherent in fulfilling this wish. At age six Emma was treated at Yale/New Haven Hospital for the surgical removal of a large brain tumor. After months of treatment the tumor was defeated but Emma’s ability to talk, sit, stand, walk, hear and see were all impaired. From the beginning Emma was determined to regain her physical independence and focused her considerable spirit into achieving that goal. A year after her diagnosis Emma came to High Hopes and here she found a community that allowed her to try, fail, try again and eventually succeed. You see, Emma didn’t fear failing. Her biggest frustration and fear was that too often she wasn’t being given the chance to even try. Try and try again she did and this past spring, ten years after her surgery, Emma cantered around the High Hopes arena to an appreciative audience of family members and High Hopes supporters.

Now nineteen, Emma has made remarkable gains since her surgery and coming to High Hopes, however she continues to struggle with physical and psychological challenges consistent with recovery from a traumatic brain injury. Like most teenagers Emma also struggles with both the academic and social side of school. People often mistake her shy demeanor and flat facial appearance (a lingering affect of her brain injury) for lack of understanding and don’t give her active and curious mind a chance to join in the conversation. According to Michael, Emma’s father, at High Hopes she feels both heard and
understood and the confidence she has gained in the riding arena allows her to take critical and rewarding risks at home and school.

Programs like High Hopes attempt to shift the risk-reward equation in a way that maximizes potential growth, while minimizing the possibility of harm. There is nothing magical about this but it does require a tremendous amount of dedication, expertise, talent and resources. It also requires faith in what can be accomplished – faith in the riders, faith in the horses, faith in the programs, staff and volunteers. Faith that we all deserve the opportunity to push our personal boundaries, regardless of the risk.

*In the photo above* Emma holds her right hand on her hip to help stabilize her ataxia and improve her posture when riding at a posting trot.

A year after her diagnosis Emma came to High Hopes and here she found a community that allowed her to try, fail, try again and eventually succeed.
Surrounded by the gently rolling sounds of surf, the buzz of electric wheel chairs and the laughter of family and friends, Candy, Lightning, Buddy, Half Pint and Hummer have all experienced life away from High Hopes this past summer. Each week they travelled down Route 1 to the beautiful, waterfront campus of Camp Harkness in Waterford and the site of High Hopes’ first pilot satellite program. Camp Harkness is one of only a few state parks in the country dedicated exclusively to providing a summer camp experience to people with disabilities and for many years provided campers with the experience of riding and caring for horses. Several years ago the riding program was discontinued, the barns were shuttered and the pasture grass grew tall. Last year, looking to bring horseback riding back, the Camp administrators and High Hopes devised a program where campers were bused to our facility in Old Lyme. The response was overwhelmingly positive and this year, with the State of Connecticut’s enthusiastic support, High Hopes brought the horses to the camp.

The logistics of loading horses and equipment, scheduling volunteers and staff have been reminiscent of our beginnings when we were nomadic. Taking our services to another location to positively impact a population that might not be able to enjoy the recreational and therapeutic benefits of the horse has been a wonderful opportunity for High Hopes. For those campers who enjoyed a ride on Buddy or a drive with Candy, another dimension was added to their summer experience and for the accompanying High Hopes staff and volunteers the experience opened their eyes to new ways of providing services to a wider population.

High Hopes quick facts: 672 volunteers contributed their time and talents for approximately 31,600 hours.
The pastoral setting of nearby Lord Creek Farm in Lyme offers another opportunity for High Hopes to expand its service. For many of the participants at High Hopes riding within the safety of the arena and on our well groomed, relatively flat trail system is challenging and promotes critical skill development. However, for some of our participants with more advanced skills who are looking for additional challenges, riding at another location with variable terrain, or even jumping, is the next horizon. This past spring High Hopes began collaborating with the Lyme Trails Association, a newly created nonprofit charged with preserving the trails and jumps within the 280 acres of Lord Creek Farm to explore ways in which both organizations can mutually benefit from a partnership. High Hopes recognizes that as an individual achieves proficiency in one area, the need to seek additional challenges is necessary to promote learning and growth. In the past, we have accomplished this by graduating participants to other non-therapy programs outside of High Hopes governance. This graduation frequently poses a new challenge to our participants as they leave our safe, accepting environment and find their confidence shaken. The use of the miles of beautiful trails and cross-country riding at Lord Creek Farm offers these graduates the challenging terrain they seek and allows High Hopes to expand its service model and keep these riders within the “family.”

16,739 hours were given to our programs as horse leaders, side walkers, carriage drivers, and unmounted class assistants.
During 2012–2013 High Hopes fulfilled a long range goal of creating a planned giving program, the Legacy Society, that will help ensure our future sustainability. Members of the Legacy Society have made a financial commitment that underscores their deep belief in High Hopes’ mission and the positive impact we make on our participants, volunteers and community.

In 1974 High Hopes began with an after school program for eight riders, 10 volunteers and borrowed horses and equipment. Over the intervening 39 years, we have developed into a 120 acre facility with 27 horses, indoor and outdoor rings, sensory trails, over 650 volunteers serving 240 participants and a renowned training and education program that attracts students from around the world to come here to learn to become certified instructors.

At each crossroad, every juncture or addition to programs, our aim has been to subsume change within the framework of exacting standards for excellence. Today we provide services for people from 4 to 84, with a broad range of disabilities, with the same care and enthusiasm as we did for our original 10 riders almost 40 years ago.

It is through the High Hopes Planned Giving Program and the Legacy Society that we seek to create the financial stability to continue our work into the future. With a proven track record and increased demand for services, every corner of our facility is utilized to its maximum extent. Our current challenges are to continue programs and instruction that set the bar for excellence well into the future, while evaluating viable expansion options for developing services off site. To do this we need the security of knowing that the needed resources will be available.

4,539 hours were spent in the barn working on horse care and facility management.
The Legacy Society has 35 current members who believe in our future. Perhaps you have a friend or family member who has been helped by our program. Perhaps you are a volunteer whose time at High Hopes has helped you grow. Or maybe you just love horses and want to ensure they continue to be part of the peoples’ lives who need them most.

Sue Chodorov was one of the first Legacy Society members, having established a gift to High Hopes even before the Society was officially launched. A volunteer since 2007, here in Sue’s own words are her reasons for choosing to leave a planned gift.

“I began as a volunteer in 2007, with duties such as feeding horses, working in the barn, side walking, leading and long-lining. For a horse lover, these physical tasks were heaven. I’ve also been privy to exciting times that ushered in changes and improvements in the training of staff, volunteers and the sophistication of the programs.

“Today, I’m no longer as active in the barn as I’d like to be and my volunteer responsibilities have shifted, but I carry on as a member of the Legacy Society because I believe this “horse magic” must be fostered and allowed to continue. It is here that I can make an enduring difference by helping to secure a future for the life-changing programs offered at High Hopes.

“It is here, at this most special place fittingly named High Hopes, where many children and adults with a variety of challenges in their lives reap the benefits of some “wonder and magic.”

1,565 hours were spent working in the office and on special mailings.
Instructor Training

Training and Education has been embedded in the vision and mission of High Hopes for many years.

As a PATH Int’l Premier Accredited Center and premier training facility, High Hopes has the unique opportunity and ability to attract instructor candidates from around the world. In turn, High Hopes provides high quality education and experiences to the students, who take the High Hopes tenets of equestrian instruction and the philosophy of treating individuals with disabilities back to their respective communities and countries.

Until last year prospective students applied for and were accepted into scheduled sessions. Since 1996 High Hopes has trained hundreds of students from 14 countries in this formalized class structure. The ever expanding field of equine assisted activities has generated a need for new ways to meet the industry’s educational demands. To meet this need High Hopes has responded by implementing ‘On-Demand’ mentoring and certification to individuals, as well as providing targeted consulting services to new and existing centers and center administrators. One example is the relationship that has developed with staff members from Horseability in Long Island, New York.

Katie, Executive Director of Horseability, attended our Business Management Workshop in February 2012. The consulting relationship began with a conversation at the workshop where Katie and High Hopes staff discussed new challenges at her center, and her desire for some guidance. Horseability, one of the older, more established centers in New York, had just moved to a new facility.

6,452 hours were given in committee meetings, board meetings, and planning special events.
which brought significant changes. Having the opportunity to utilize the expertise and talent of a center like High Hopes appealed to Katie and the objective perspective would enhance Horseability’s ability to thoughtfully manage the transition process.

From here, several phone consultations resulted in High Hopes staff traveling to Horseability to meet on-site to consult with Katie and her staff and make recommendations to meet Horseability’s challenges. Said Katie,

“It is amazing to work with people who ‘speak our language.’ So often we must adapt and take relevant ‘pieces’ from mentors…they are either experts on nonprofits or on the special needs community or on horses. We are so fortunate that High Hopes’ mentorship has offered our organization expertise in all three areas. The support given to us has been everything we need it to be.”

The next step of the process involved members of the Horseability staff traveling to Old Lyme to work directly with High Hopes staff in similar positions. This process provided multiple opportunities for sharing knowledge and experiences, which ultimately benefitted both organizations. This exciting phase of building upon our strengths allows High Hopes to share our valuable expertise both on-site and off-site as opportunities present themselves rather than on a fixed schedule. Looking ahead we expect that technology will provide us with even more pathways to deliver quality education.

As we approach our 40th anniversary, High Hopes maintains a position of leadership by not only increasing its breadth beyond the traditional boundaries of training and education but by also imparting its values of quality, innovation, teamwork and sense of pride in its own community. High Hopes strives to serve as a source of knowledge and inspiration to people and centers globally who share our commitment of serving those with disabilities through the transformative experience of therapeutic equine instruction.

High Hopes has trained over 200 instructors from throughout the United States and internationally.
Statement of Financial Position  
year ending June 30, 2013

**Assets**

**CURRENT ASSETS**

- Cash and Cash Equivalents  $316,143
- Accounts and Other Receivables  31,832
- Prepaid Expenses  12,651
- Unconditional Promises to Give  29,330

**TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS**  $389,956

- Property and Equipment – Net  $1,660,342

**LONG-TERM ASSETS**

- Cash and Cash Equivalents  $324,718
- Donor Restricted  1,363,589
- Investments  2,598,788

**TOTAL LONG-TERM ASSETS**  $2,938,506

**TOTAL ASSETS**  $4,988,804

**Liabilities and Net Assets**

**CURRENT LIABILITIES**

- Accounts Payable  $37,445
- Accrued Expenses and Deposits  36,792
- Advance Fees for Services  41,576

**TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES**  $115,813

**NET ASSETS**

- Unrestricted  $1,946,284
- Temporarily Restricted  1,363,589
- Permanently Restricted  1,563,118

**TOTAL NET ASSETS**  $4,872,991

**TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS**  $4,988,804

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**Support and Revenue**

- Contributing from Individuals  48%
- Fees for Services  24%
- Foundation Support  16%
- Corporate Support  12%

**Functional Expenses**

- Program Services  75%
- General and Administrative  12%
- Fundraising  13%
Our Staff

Kitty Stalsburg, Executive Director
Barbara Abrams, Instructor/Expressive Arts Therapist
Liz Adams, Program Director
Alicia Barrows, Development Coordinator
Courtney Bernard, Volunteer Coordinator
Leah Booth, Speech Language Pathologist
Sarah Carlson, Special Programs Coordinator
Courtney Collins, Instructor
Patti Coyle, Training and Education Director
Imanol Echeverria, Instructor
Jonnie Edwards, Instructor
Megan Ellis, Volunteer Manager
Lauren Fitzgerald, Lesson Manager
Patty Ganey, Instructor
Liesl Grigerek, Barn Assistant
Sarah Hallwood, Instructor
Carolyn Jagielski, Physical Therapist/Instructor
Donna Latella, Occupational Therapist/Instructor
Tracey Martineau, Finance Director
Rachel Moser, Office Coordinator
Laura Moya, Instructor
Dawn Nelligan, Instructor
Jeanne Nerkowski, Office Coordinator
Juanita Paris, Barn Assistant
Sara Qua, Development Director
Elizabeth Quinn, Caretaker
Holly Ridgway, Instructor
Susan Shulman, Communications Coordinator
Holly Sundmacker, Equine Operations Director
Mary Washburn, Instructor

Staff Changes

Debbie Hansen
Caretaker through
February 14, 2013

Sierra Hulstein
Instructor through
May 4, 2013

Audit for fiscal year ending June 30, 2013 was performed by CohnReznica, LLP. Copies are available on request.

Report design & principal photography Michael Fanelli
This Year at High Hopes

1,725 People served

8,343 Equine Assisted Activities and Therapy Sessions

31,600 Volunteer hours donated

59% of Riders received scholarships