



# Horse Sense



## About High Hopes

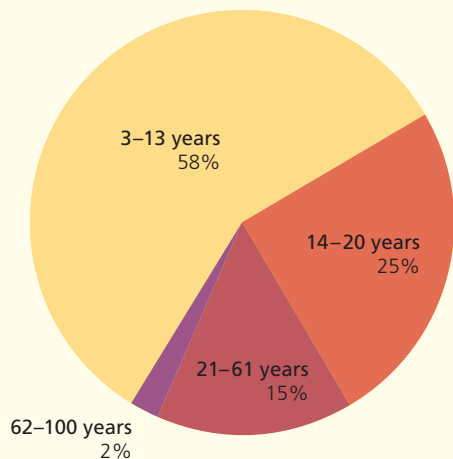
High Hopes Therapeutic Riding, Inc. is a premier therapeutic riding center and international instructor training site. We have served people with physical, emotional and developmental disabilities for 41 years.

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.

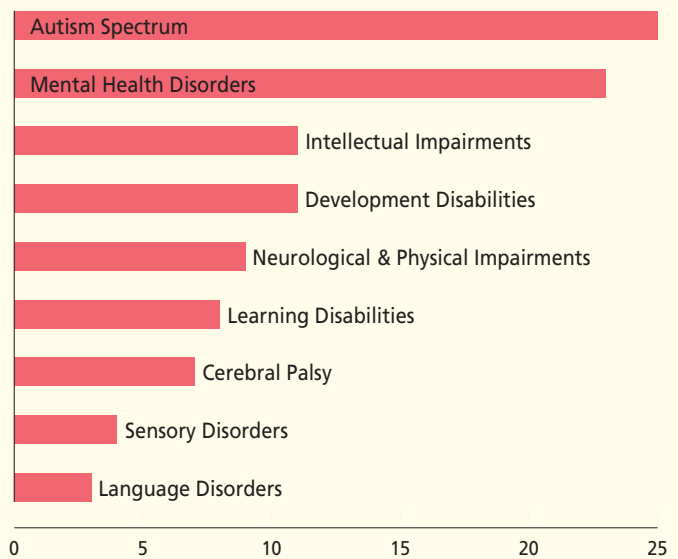
We offer PATH Intl. Approved Training Courses (ATC), attracting students from all over the world, as well as continuing professional education for anyone seeking lifelong learning. Our training is conducted by highly qualified professionals who are widely recognized in the field of therapeutic riding.

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





## It has been a busy, exciting and rewarding year at High Hopes!

We received one of our largest grants in our 41-year history, we embarked on a new therapeutic program that serves local veterans, we expanded our long-term partnership with Camp Harkness in Waterford, we collaborated on a new format to better track participant successes, and we survived one of the snowiest winters in Connecticut only to be rewarded with a most beautiful, sunny summer.

*Join us and our herd of 27 beautiful horses for a look at what's been happening at High Hopes this year:*

In 2015, the first year of our 2015-2019 Strategic Plan, we received a significant grant from the Bingham Trust, one of the largest grants in High Hopes' history. This grant provides an opportunity for us to closely examine our business model, develop ways of strengthening our long-term sustainability and enhance our program services within the framework of the goals identified in the plan.

One such initiative has utilized grant funding to support the professional development of the High Hopes' staff as they work with mental health professionals to provide direct therapeutic services, increase volunteer educational opportunities and work collaboratively with other agencies.

High Hopes' outreach to the veteran population continues to grow and in July, we held a one day event serving a group of veterans with post-traumatic stress and other injuries related to military service. The program offered a range of healing activities including acupuncture, meditation and equine assisted therapy. The consensus was that the program provided a valuable service to this population with a plan to hold additional events in the future.



A key element of High Hopes' strategic plan is to view services at alternative sites as a way to respond to our capacity issues, and to also allow us to reach a more geographically diverse population. This past year saw the Camp Harkness program move out of the pilot phase and become integrated into our annual program offerings, funded as part of our operating budget. As a result, the range of services offered at Camp Harkness continues to grow.

Another major development this past year was High Hopes' involvement in a collaborative project that is looking to standardize the methodology that allows us to more effectively track participant outcomes.

This annual report highlights the impact these initiatives, together with our established programs, have on the individuals we serve. It is a tribute to the High Hopes' community of donors and volunteers who make all of this possible because the bottom line is that we can't do it without your assistance. Thank you!

Michael V. Ganey  
Board Chairman

Kitty Stalsburg  
Executive Director

# Horse Sense

Working with agencies and area educators, High Hopes has created the Horse Sense Program (otherwise known as Equine Assisted Learning) an interactive and educationally-based endeavor that uses a variety of classroom and equine-focused activities designed to explore the concepts of teamwork, problem-solving, self-motivation and willingness to take responsibility. A dedicated staff and a herd of horses help these young people learn firsthand how good communication, positive reinforcement and bonding with people and animals can translate into success outside of High Hopes.

In recent years, an increasing focus of High Hopes' program development has been finding ways to meet the needs of young people in crisis. Many of these young people come to High Hopes from their schools while others are referred by social service agencies. They emerge from homes that have been split by domestic violence, drugs, divorce, poverty, homelessness and/or mental health issues. Their troubled home life often leads to truancy, poor choices, social isolation, and low academic performance. Many of the participating youth have limited financial resources and support systems, and don't realize how much they can learn, grow and accomplish with a little help from some two-legged and four-legged friends.

Most individuals enrolled in the Horse Sense Program arrive at High Hopes by school bus. Others arrive in a vehicle provided by High Hopes due to limited transportation resources. With our 2014/2015 Annual Report, High Hopes invites you to climb aboard a yellow school bus near your home and step off at our farm. Take a few moments to experience High Hopes through the eyes

of a child, participant, teacher and staff member. Finally, read about how all this is made possible through the generosity of High Hopes' donors.







# Overcoming obstacles

**I**t was an awesome first day. It was so scary the first time I saw a horse. I was able to touch a horse for the first time in my life. When we rode, it was so exciting. I felt happy and proud.

I have never been around horses and really wasn't sure what this was going to be like. I learned that horses are big, gentle and kind. It was fun to meet so many other kids coming to learn about horses. The farm smelled a bit like horses but we did so many fun things. There were lots of games. We had to clean the stalls and empty water buckets with another person with one of our legs tied together! That was hard, but we laughed a lot! We wore blindfolds and led one another through an obstacle course. Then we led the horses through the same course. Did you know that horses live in groups? There is one

leader who is always watching for danger. We kept a journal which we could share if we wanted. I don't like to write much but I wrote about everything that we did. We learned how to groom and tack. Riding was fun. I didn't think I could do it, but I did! I even steered through the obstacles! Maybe someday I can help teach other kids how to ride.

The above is a compilation of various Horse Sense participants' journal writings (the use of which they have permitted). Trying something new, interacting with others, discovering trust, leadership and so much more has helped to inspire and motivate these students. It is clear from their own words the impact our program is beginning to make in their lives. For some, it's gaining the confidence that allows them to tackle unfamiliar concepts or tasks in an academic setting and feel that they can succeed. For others, it's taking their newfound communication skills and using them in the classroom by asking questions to help them better understand what is being taught. Most importantly, the Horse Sense Program shows these participants that learning can be exciting and gives them a reason to not just stay in school, but to succeed academically and socially.









# Empowering benefits

Over the past five years, the Program Staff at High Hopes has developed the Equine Assisted Learning Program in response to the needs of regional schools and social service agencies. What began as a summer camp designed to bring middle school students from rural and urban communities together has blossomed into a multi-faceted program that meets the needs of individuals with a range of mental health, behavioral and social needs. Sarah Carlson is High Hopes' Special Programs Manager. Sarah, together with Liz Adams, High Hopes Program Director, has worked with educators and mental health professionals to design individualized curriculums that meet the rising demand for this type of equine service. By partnering with the horses, High Hopes seeks to instill the principles of respect, responsibility, kindness and compassion in these young participants and give them insight into how those same values have application in their lives outside of our facility, such as in their own schools, communities, and homes.

Sarah has seen first-hand the empowering benefits of Horse Sense and Equine Assisted Learning and has countless stories to tell that demonstrate the program's impact. Here are a few examples:

A participant in the summer Horse Sense camp moved 35 times in 13 years, and over the course of a Horse Sense summer camp week learned that actions, whether directed to his horse or fellow camper, based on understanding

and patience, not anger or violence, produced a positive result. The ensuing success gave the camper courage to take on new challenges previously shied away from as being "too hard."

A young participant often seemed indifferent to what was happening in her life. After her first day in Horse Sense, she went home and excitedly told her grandmother the new things she had learned such as the different types of horse behavior, horse grooming and care. Her grandmother was so thrilled to see this change, she came herself to observe and understand the impact on her grandchild. This opened up critical lines of communication between the two that had been shutting down over the past year.

Two students both rode Bella, a High Hopes chestnut quarter horse mare, and learned to share in the responsibility of her care after riding. One young girl turned to the other as they led Bella out of the barn and said "It's like she's our daughter and it is our responsibility to take care of her."

Lastly, Sarah learned about a student in a High Hopes school group who was struggling academically with her reading and writing in school. A fellow participant and student in her class recognized her struggles and found ways to help her overcome her challenges, a great example of teamwork producing positive results for both young people.

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**3,837** hours were spent in the barn working on horse care and facility management. →





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**668** hours were spent working in the office and on special mailings. →

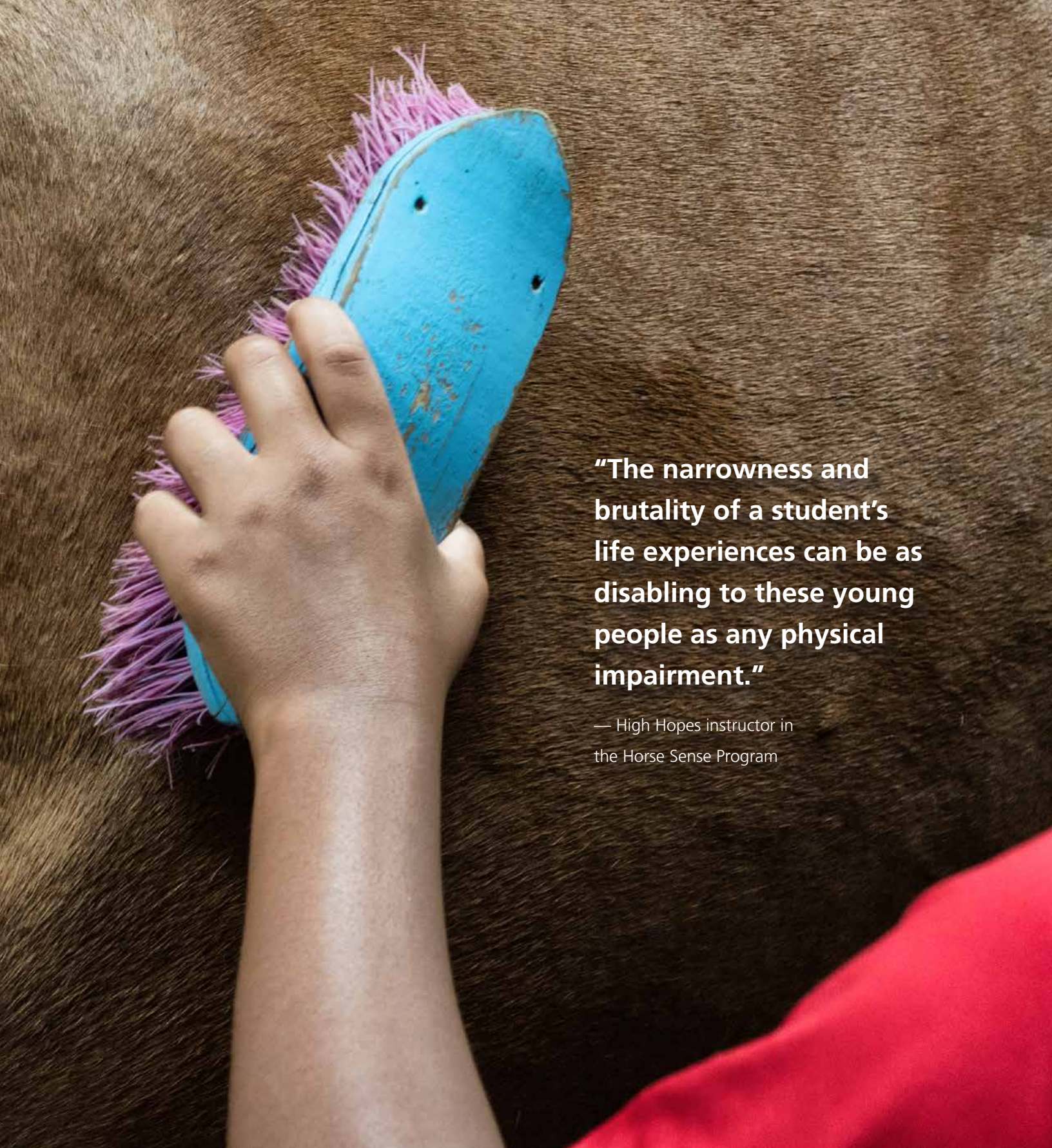
# Alternative methods

Over the 2014/2015 academic year, High Hopes forged a new relationship with the Montville School system. Recognizing that alternative educational methods were needed to combat increasing absences and student behavioral problems, Montville school administrators created the Pathways Academy and incorporated a weekly field trip to High Hopes into the students' curriculum. The Horse Sense program utilizes the unique environment of the barn, the unconditional acceptance of the horses, and the caring support of staff and volunteers to provide each participant with positive new experiences. Success found in discovering objects in a scavenger hunt, learning to have fun with peers without ridicule, and gaining new skills like riding improved the participants' self-image. A single exposure can have an impact, while repeated learning in this environment has a long term effect on everything from an individual's social affect (no smile to smiles) to thinking about future life goals ("I want to become a veterinarian"). The experience at High Hopes allows these young people to know that there are other options to life and gives them the opportunity to believe that there are dynamic possibilities ahead.

The following example was provided by one of the teachers and illustrates the Horse Sense program's impact after just one semester.

*Manuel has never been around horses and has had chronic truancy and behavioral problems at school over the previous academic year. At his first visit to High Hopes, Manuel was concerned that the horses wouldn't like him and was reluctant to get close or touch them. Learning to overcome obstacles without becoming frustrated and either withdrawing from the task or acting out was a key goal of Manuel's participation in the Horse Sense program. Simple tasks, such as learning to groom a horse helped Manuel meet his goals. The first time Manuel attempted to clean a horse's hooves he was scared and unsuccessful. But with patient instruction from his volunteer, Manuel learned to trust his horse. As he became more confident and less anxious he was able to successfully clean his horse's hooves. Understanding that he could complete a task positively when he employs patience, teamwork and clear communication has begun to carry over into his classroom environment. His attendance at school has improved dramatically (he doesn't want to miss a visit to High Hopes!) and he demonstrates improved social skills with his peers as well as his teachers.*





**“The narrowness and brutality of a student’s life experiences can be as disabling to these young people as any physical impairment.”**

— High Hopes instructor in the Horse Sense Program

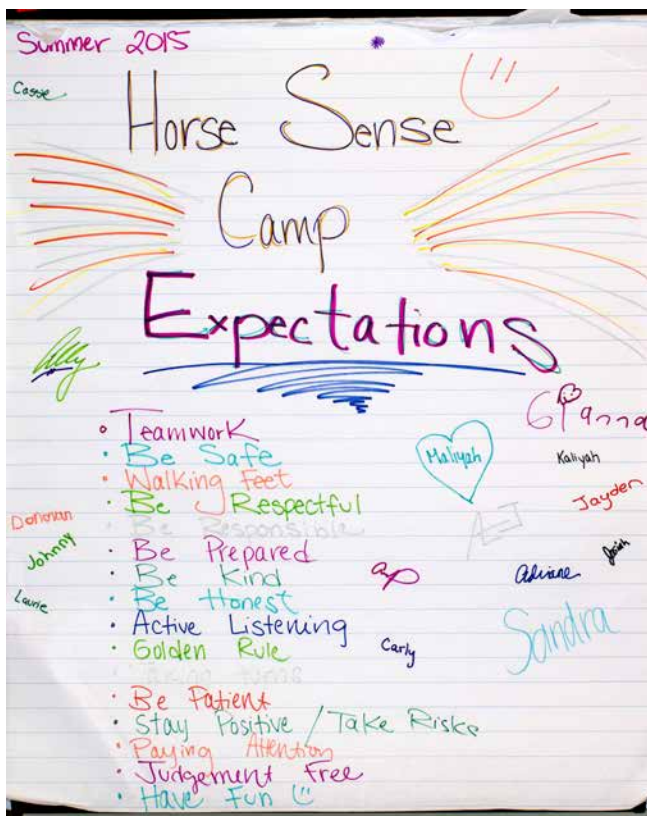


# Making an impact

In June of 2015, High Hopes received an extraordinary gift from The Bingham Trust to fund the development of new programs and support the enhancement of existing programs that meet the needs of participants with mental health challenges. This gift will have a direct and positive impact on those engaged in the Horse Sense program and the further development of new equine assisted learning and healing endeavors. The donor understands that connecting with horses provides enormous benefits to people in the process of healing from emotional, physical and social disabilities.

The Bingham Trust was founded in 1935 by the philanthropist William Bingham. The current trustees look to award grants to organizations based on a number of criteria including: the organization's track record to achieve results for the common good; the operating efficiency of the organization; the amount of the organization's grassroots support and its potential to carry on the program after the grant period ends. Finally, but by no means least important, the trustees look for leadership that is both visionary and capable of getting the job done.

High Hopes is honored to be entrusted with the stewardship of this gift, along with the generous gifts made by the individuals, business partners and foundations reflected in this annual report. Supporting High Hopes comes in many forms and all are critically needed in the sustainability of our programs. Whether you purchase a ticket to our June gala, make a donation to an appeal mailing, give through your company's employee giving program, become a corporate sponsor or make a grant through a foundation, please know that your gift has had a positive and tangible impact on someone's life.







# Statement of Financial Position

year ending June 30, 2015

## Assets

### CURRENT ASSETS

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$462,790
Accounts and Other Receivables	64,760
Prepaid Expenses	25,009
Unconditional Promises to Give	43,480

**TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS** \$596,039

Property and Equipment – Net \$1,590,115

### LONG-TERM ASSETS

Cash and Cash Equivalents	
Temporarily Restricted	\$2,348
Unconditional Promises to Give	0
Investments	3,130,246

**TOTAL LONG-TERM ASSETS** \$3,312,594

**TOTAL ASSETS** \$5,318,748

## Liabilities and Net Assets

### CURRENT LIABILITIES

Accounts Payable	\$51,258
Accrued Expenses and Deposits	43,117
Advance Fees for Services	61,392

**TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES** \$155,767

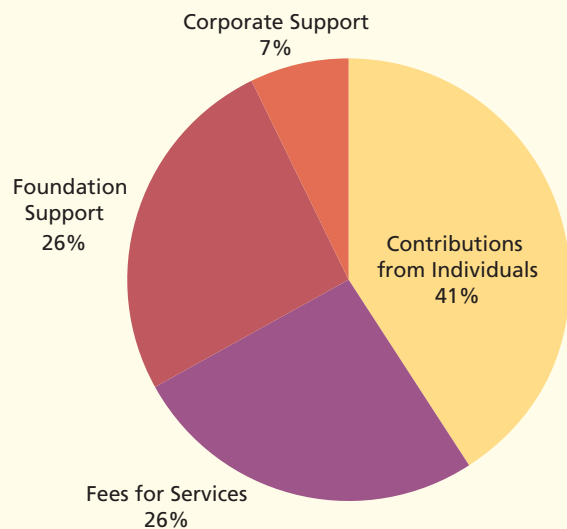
### NET ASSETS

Unrestricted	\$1,905,167
Temporarily Restricted	1,687,346
Permanently Restricted	1,570,468

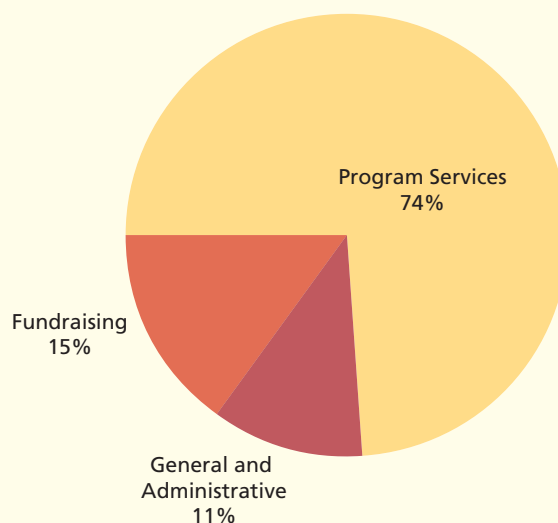
**TOTAL NET ASSETS** \$5,162,981

**TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS** \$5,318,748

## Support and Revenue



## Functional Expenses





## Our Staff

Kitty Stalsburg, Executive Director  
Fay Abrahamsson, Development Coordinator  
Barbara Abrams, Instructor and Expressive Arts Therapist  
Liz Adams, Program Director  
Leah Booth, Speech Language Pathologist  
Trudy Burgess, Development Coordinator  
Sarah Carlson, Special Programs Manager  
Becca Corcoran, Instructor  
Patti Coyle, Training and Education Director  
Carrina Echeandia, Special Programs Coordinator  
Imanol Echeverria, Instructor  
Jonnie Edwards, Instructor  
Megan Ellis, Volunteer Manager  
Lauren Fitzgerald, Lesson Manager  
Patty Ganey, Instructor  
Penny Garvin, Caretaker  
Liesl Grigerek, Barn Assistant  
Carolyn Jagielski, Physical Therapist  
Donna Latella, Occupational Therapist  
Allie Leonard, Instructor  
Paula McHale, Finance Director  
Rachel Moser, Office Manager  
Laura Moya, Instructor  
Dawn Nelligan, Instructor  
Juanita Paris, Barn Assistant  
Sara Qua, Development Director  
Holly Ridgway, Instructor  
Ashley Sands, Volunteer Coordinator  
Susan Shulman, Communications Manager  
Holly Sundmacker, Equine Operations Director  
Carrie Wind, Instructor

### Staff changes

Courtney Bernard  
Laura Heyer  
Tracey Martineau  
Liz Quinn

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Grace Hamilton †  
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Anthony C. Thurston †

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Pete Pierson †  
A. Rives Potts  
Jeffrey Ridgway  
Roger M. Smith  
Anthony C. Thurston †  
Kelvin N. Tyler

† Deceased

Audit for fiscal year ending June 30, 2015 was performed by MahoneySabol. Copies are available on request.

Report design and photographs: Michael Fanelli

## This Year at High Hopes

**1,538** People served

**8,579** Equine Assisted Activities and Therapy Sessions

**30,500** Volunteer hours donated

**50%** of Riders received scholarships