

30 Years in the Saddle



2021 Saddle Up!<sup>TM</sup>

ANNUAL SUMMARY

## Saddle Up!'s Mission

is to impact the lives of children and young adults with disabilities by providing opportunities to grow and develop through therapeutic, educational and recreational experiences with horses.

Once again in 2021, Saddle Up! was accredited as a Premier Center by PATH International, the organization that sets the standards for safety and quality in equine assisted programs.



# OUR VOLUNTEERS

"Growing up, Saddle Up! was one of the few places I could look forward to going. My mom and I began volunteering at Saddle Up! when I was 15 and it was our way of spending quality time together. It was something we had in common, neutral territory during some rocky teenage years.

When I turned 18, I graduated from high school and became a Marine. When my service was over, I moved back to Franklin and I couldn't wait to volunteer at Saddle Up! again. Each week, I get to help kids learn to express themselves and learn new fun skills that impact many areas of their everyday lives. The things that I have seen over the years have been astounding! Kids who could barely walk gain the muscle memory and balance needed to take those first few steps. Kids learn to communicate the simple words "walk on" and then they have the power to move a horse many times their size, giving them confidence to communicate more.

Getting to volunteer at Saddle Up! is the most rewarding experience. The love and care that these horses and children give each other is phenomenal and I count my blessings that I get to be there every week as a witness. Thank you for supporting Saddle Up! as it supports me!" *-Trent Wilson, Saddle Up! Volunteer*

 *Saddle Up! has two of my favorite things; strong kids and horses.*

## Volunteer Impact 2021

Average Volunteer Hours Required Per Week for Lesson Support - 187

Total Volunteer Hours Devoted to Lesson Support in 2021 - 7,309

Active Volunteers - 305

Zip Codes Represented by Active Volunteers - 20

New Volunteers in Training - 218

New Lesson Leaders in Training - 45

 **Value of 2021 Volunteer Support - \$208,600**



# OUR EQUESTRIANS

"My son, Micah, has just finished his lesson at Saddle Up! for this week. As we walk to the front doors, he reads aloud the mantra so elegantly painted above the welcome desk: "Where All Children Are Equal in The Saddle".

Micah lost his language at 18 months old, just after he began saying "Momma". He was then diagnosed with autism at 2 years of age. Micah has a photographic memory, eidetic hearing and a profound spatial sense. He has an affinity for languages, fonts, and the capacity and capability for multi-language fluency. His love of letters has helped him retrieve his voice. Saddle Up! has creatively used both Micah's love of letters and his handwriting talent to motivate and encourage him and build his confidence in his riding. Every semester is different. And every semester is more challenging as the instructors continue to raise the bar.

This past year, Micah's riding at the Super Show was the best it has ever been. I knew he had done great, but I was blown away that he received the ribbon for dressage. It has always been the most difficult category for him. When they gave him the ribbon, I saw on his face a look of confidence and achievement I had never seen before.

Saddle Up! has given Micah so much. When I first brought him to Saddle Up! for his evaluation he was only five years old and while the pony was small, Micah looked so tiny in comparison. But once mounted, he immediately sat up straight in the saddle, a natural cowboy. Ten years have passed since his first lesson. He can do something most of his classmates have never done. And, as he reads the mantra every week, I know he gets it. He feels affirmed. He feels confident. He feels equal." *–Thank you to Micah's mom, Kecia, for sharing his story.*

*I saw on his face a look of confidence and achievement I had never seen before.*



*Top: Micah during his very first evaluation ride.*

*Bottom: Micah today, tall and confident in the saddle!*

# OUR EQUESTRIANS

"There are no words that can fully express the impact that Saddle Up! has had on our family. From a purely practical standpoint, our daughter, Julia, has gained impressive strength in her hand and leg. As her primary physical outlet, this growth is almost entirely attributable to the work she does with Saddle Up!. While improving Julia's physical strength and mobility was the reason that we first came to the program, we had no idea that this achievement would be only a very small piece of our Saddle Up! story.

In addition to the very tangible physical benefits, Julia has also gained confidence, lifelong friends, and a safe space from the challenges she faces daily. She is part of a community in which she is loved, valued and supported by the staff and volunteers who pour their hearts into this mission. We will forever be grateful for Saddle Up!." *–Thank you to the Laginess Family for sharing Julia's story*



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## Program Participants



### By Gender

Male 48%  
Female 52%

### By Age

2 - 7 13%  
8 - 13 52%  
14 - 19 31%  
20 - 26 4%



## Our Riders Come from 13 Counties in Middle Tennessee

Williamson 52%    Davidson 40%    All Others 9%

# OUR PROGRAMS

"As we all know, this world can be a challenging place, but even more so for the children who participate in programs at Saddle Up!. There are limited opportunities for extracurricular activities and fewer places where they always feel welcomed. Our riders can have fun and be successful every time they walk through our doors. They are surrounded by people who want to lift them up and horses who bring peace and calm to all involved. I have seen riders arrive at Saddle Up! angry and upset after having a difficult day at school. Spending time with their horse has brought feelings of wellness, empowerment and confidence to them; they leave a different child.

Our riders inspire us to be better humans and to work harder to help as many as possible. As an instructor at Saddle Up! I am blessed to be able to make a difference in the lives of these children and their families." *—Lisa Mitchell, Instructor, PATH Int'l Certified Professional*

*Our riders can be successful every time they walk through our doors...they leave a different child!*

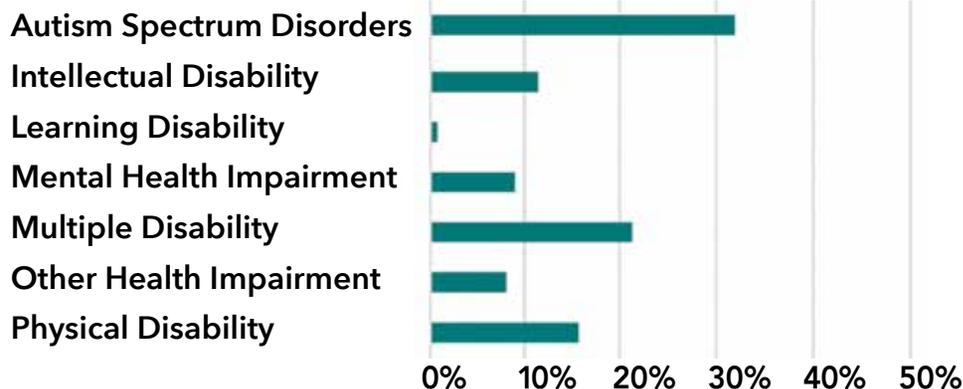


## Total number of hours in 2021 by program

Adaptive Riding - 2698	69%
Therapy Services - 298	7.6%
Equine Assisted Learning - 285	7.3%
Alumni Transitions - 251	6.4%
Vaulting - 220	5.6%
SU! Equestrian Club - 155.5	4%

*3,908 hours of therapy provided in 2021*

## Disability Categories Served



# OUR SUPPORTERS

"In 2007, I was in Nashville with family and met Tina Carpenter. She invited us to tour Saddle Up! and, as they say, the rest is history! While attending my first SUPER Show the following year I watched a young boy be helped out of his wheelchair, mount a horse, and win a blue ribbon. That is something one can never forget (I know I'll never forget the beaming smile on his face when I presented him with that ribbon)! I have committed to ongoing support because Saddle Up! helps give children with special needs a life they might not ever have dreamed." *—Janet Wilkins, long-time friend and supporter of Saddle Up!*



*Tina and Janet tour Saddle Up! in 2007.*

Saddle Up! helps give children with special needs a life they might not ever have dreamed.

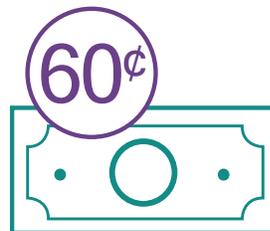


Our supporters are a broad community of caring individuals who help Saddle Up! deliver a profound lifetime impact to our special equestrians.



## 2021 Sources of Funding

Individual Contributions	45%
Fundraising Events	26%
Grants	13%
Program Revenue	10%
In-Kind Donations	4%
Corporate Support	2%



## Operating Expenses

Almost \$.60 of every dollar goes directly toward providing programming for the children and young adults we serve.

Programming	59%
Fundraising	23%
Operations/Administration	18%

## FUND FACTS



**Saddle Up!** gratefully acknowledges the 291 individuals and families who were NEW supporters in 2021.



44% of our support came from 771 individuals and families who contributed to our Annual Fund.



89% of Annual Fund contributions come from Hoofing Society members, those donors who give \$1,000 or more each year. Please visit [saddleupnashville.org](https://saddleupnashville.org) for a complete list of our patrons and sponsors.



Over \$62,000 in Horse Sponsorships helped keep the hay on the table in 2021. Thank you!

No **Saddle Up!** family pays more than \$35.00 for an hour of lessons through our Adaptive Riding program.



All 6 **Saddle Up!** programs are now eligible for financial aid for those families who qualify.

In 2021, 28% of **Saddle Up!** riders received financial aid, a number we project will grow again in 2022.



*Our therapy and lesson fees are among the lowest in the industry. The actual cost of an hour of programming is \$171.00 per rider. Our generous supporters help fill the gap between program fees and costs.*



# OUR TEAM

“When I think about our commitment to Saddle Up! I think of the Latin phrase “Sine qua non,” which translates to “Without which it could not be.” Without the essential actions of our volunteers, instructors, staff, and patrons, Saddle Up! could not be.

Each time I am asked to help a child mount for a lesson—from the moment I begin to help a child with a mount and see the look in his eyes asking me not to drop him to the glimmer of excitement when he is finally on the horse’s back—I am reminded of all the details that have to come together in order for that ride to happen. I watch as the instructor guides him or her into the arena with a sidewalker and leader to complete the team. As they begin to glide through the day’s course of cones, poles and the occasional mailbox, I realize how important each one of us are in the success of Saddle Up!. Without leaders, sidewalkers and instructors, there are no lessons. Without me changing out a simple light bulb, there are no lessons...”without which it could not be.”

As part of the Saddle Up! staff, I watch children grow physically and mentally each week. I have witnessed riders go from slumping or slouching because they lacked the core strength needed to ride to sitting up completely straight in the saddle. I have heard children who are non-verbal say their first word on the back of a horse. With each stride of the horse, our kids are gaining strength that they might not have found elsewhere. The growth in confidence and strength that I have personally witnessed through these lessons amazes me every day.” —Russell Harkai, Property Director

*Without the essential actions of our volunteers, instructors, staff, and patrons, Saddle Up! could not be. Every role is vital to our mission.*



# HORSE OF THE YEAR



Baron is a 23 year-old gelding, who was donated to Saddle Up! by Warner & Madge Bass, and has been proudly carrying our riders since February of 2015. His breed is a mystery, so we consider him a draft/Quarter Horse cross with maybe a little Tennessee Walking Horse thrown in there. Befitting a horse of his age and royal bearing, Baron's favorite thing to do during his down time is stretch out and sun bathe in the pasture.

Baron is easy for our participants and volunteers to work with due to his sweet and calm demeanor and, due to his size, he has been responsible for carrying many of our participants who need a larger horse or are more unbalanced in the saddle. He will occasionally play "tricks" on his new leaders during lessons, but once they learn his silly ways, Baron's new leaders find he gets right down to work and has a wonderful, rhythmic movement for his participants.

Having given hundreds of children their turn to be equal in the saddle, we are thrilled to name Baron the Saddle Up! Horse of the Year!



 *Baron has shown us that his heart is as big as his size. He carries each rider's disabilities and gives them his best each lesson.*

# OUR 2021 GRADUATES

"Saddle Up! has been the longest activity Cole has participated in, and we are so grateful the Bookers introduced us to the program."

– Cole's parents

## Accomplishments

His confidence has significantly improved since starting lessons.

He has a love and connection to horses.

This is Cole's 9th year at SUI.

## Fun Facts

He is nonverbal and "flaps" his hands when excited. He always starts flapping his hands when his car pulls into the long drive at Saddle Up!. Even though he is typically shy, Cole comes out of his shell when he is riding.



"Since she has been riding, I believe Kasey is living her dream."

– Kasey's mother

## Accomplishments

Kasey has grown in all her riding skills. The biggest thing she has grown in is her confidence and her sense of self. She's doing what she loves. She's doing what she sees "typical" kids doing.

## Fun Facts

Riding is her favorite activity. She loves Baron and enjoys trotting and brushing her horse.



## Kasey T. 2021 GRADUATE HIGHLIGHT

## Cole W. 2021 GRADUATE HIGHLIGHT

"Saddle Up! has shown Ryan he is very capable of learning anything he wants to learn."

– Ryan's parents

## Accomplishments

His balance and hand-eye coordination has improved since starting lessons.

He is also better at hearing and following spoken instructions.

This is Ryan's 12th year at SUI.

## Fun Facts

He loves seeing instructors Mrs. Marilyn, Mrs. Ann, Mrs. Tina and Mrs. Lynn and trotting with Arrow.

He was 8 years old when he started riding at Saddle Up!



## Ryan W. 2021 GRADUATE HIGHLIGHT



Where All Children  
Are Equal In The Saddle

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