



There are many benefits to this therapy, as it reflects many aspects of life. All of us have to develop the skills to cope with a variety of emotions in life, and Cody with his engaging and determined personality, is helping Isaac to do this!

Over the past 4 years, Isaac has made great progress in his ability to socially interact with both animals and people. Not only has he gained from his relationship with Cody, but he has also benefited from the support of the volunteers and instructors, and the camaraderie of the other riders.

Isaac has been riding with We Can Ride since Fall Session of 2002. His favorite horse is Cody, whom he rode at Waconia and he likes Cody because of his personality. Isaac says that, "Cody does what I ask him to do." Isaac has a type of autism and so this relationship and communication with Cody is very significant. The ridden have made it possible for him to make progress in his ability to relate to others.

### ISAAC'S STORY

*A Client's Perspective...*

## Isaac's Story



The benefits of this program are tremendous. Once mounted on her horse, Nicole is transformed from a low tone, round shouldered girl to a strong well postured champion. Her head is held high and she holds the reins with great pride as she takes control. As she has grown she has developed many sensory and movement issues, Jill (her instructor) continues to work gently and with respect to assist Nicole.

Nicole has been involved in We Can Ride since 1998. During each session we have seen tremendous progress in her ability to ride and follow directions. Her first year was difficult because waiting her turn to mount the horse was horrible. She wanted so badly to get right on and she'd sob while waiting. Once on her horse she smiled non-stop. By the second year she was able to wait her turn without tears, and the biggest challenge now was to follow directions. All she wanted to do was "trot on". All of the instructors, side-walkers, and leaders have worked patiently with Nicole and she is now following directions, participating in activities, and waiting her turn.

Nicole is 14 years old and she has moderate to severe mental retardation with many autistic features. She also has low muscle tone and a brain cyst which presses on her optic nerve. To add to the mix she is also obsessive compulsive. Her behavior is challenging and demanding, she needs constant supervision for her safety and care.

### NICOLE'S STORY

*A Client's Perspective...*

## Nicole's Story



Christopher Ruehle is a delightful young man with cognitive disability. He is 24 now and has been participating in We Can Ride for 18 years. He started at the Minnetonka site in 1988 when he was a shy, nonverbal six year old who had not yet completed kindergarten. Since then he has attended every spring and fall session, rarely missing a class.

Over the years he has enjoyed working with several instructors, Karti in particular, and many, many leaders and side-walkers. He would often balk at putting on his boots and helmet and getting started, but side-walkers like Barbara could always get him smiling and talking once he was in the ring. He always laughed when it was time to go fast. He has ridden many different horses – small ones, funny ones, stately ones, sleepy ones, grumpy ones, even a large Norwegian work horse – and liked them all. Last year he started driving a carriage instead of riding and has enjoyed that also.

Chris has never been able to play sports or ride a bike or enjoy many social activities. We Can Ride has been an important activity for him and has helped improve his self confidence, posture, balance, communication and social skills. We are grateful for the program and dedicated volunteers.

### CHRIS' STORY

*A Client's Perspective...*

## Chris' Story



Lori has a new love of her life and her name is "Blondie". Blondie and We Can Ride have brought so much joy and opportunity into Lori's life.

Lori began riding about a year and a half ago. Like all new riders, she knew little about riding but she has taken to the whole process with great enthusiasm. For her first ride, she needed much assistance to even get on her horse. Now she mounts in minutes and begins her exercises with much glee. It is evident that her balance and stability have improved which carries on through her daily life. Lori has even begun using the reins and giving verbal commands to guide Blondie through activities.

The best benefits for Lori have been that she has expanded her circle of friends. She now greets other riders and looks forward to seeing them each week. She also talks to volunteers, staff and the owners of the stable. At home she is talking more and frequently begins conversations. She also likes to share her riding experiences with family and friends. She gets very excited when it is a day for riding.

Yes, Lori has a new love in her life and what a positive and changing experience it continues to be for her.

### “The Smile Says it All” Lori's Story

*A Client's Perspective...*

## Lori's Story

