

EQUICENTER POST

2007

[www.equicenterny.org](http://www.equicenterny.org)

THIRD  
ANNIVERSARY  
ISSUE

THERAPEUTIC RIDING:  
FINDING JUSTIN

HILLSIDE HORSEPOWER

GOING FOR THE GOLD



# EQUICENTER

POST



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

John D'Amanda  
Partner, Chamberlain, D'Amanda,  
Oppenheimer & Greenfield

John Bartholomew  
Bartholomew Health Care Group

Jonathan Friedlander  
President and CEO,  
EquiCenter, Inc.

Stacy Brown Friedlander  
Director of Programming,  
EquiCenter, Inc.

Howard R. Jacobson  
Managing Partner,  
Dixon Schwabl Advertising

Maura (Peg) Jacobson  
Community Volunteer  
and Parent Advocate

Stuart MacKenzie  
Parent Advocate

Elizabeth R. McAnarney, MD  
Professor and Past Chair,  
Department of Pediatrics  
Pediatrician-in-Chief  
Golisano Children's Hospital at Strong

Daniel M. Meyers  
President, Al Sigl Center

Michael Nichting  
Vice President,  
M & T Bank



P.O. Box 542  
Fishers, NY 14453

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

## ADVISORY BOARD

Joseph Best  
Therapeutic Riding Participant  
Continuing Developmental Services

Barry Brown, VMD  
Founder/owner, Canfield Vet

Philip W. Davidson, PhD  
Professor of Pediatrics,  
Director, Strong Center for  
Developmental Disabilities  
Golisano Children's Hospital at Strong

Ann Dwyer, DVM  
Founder/owner  
Genesee Valley Equine Clinic, LLC

Richard Kreipe, MD  
Chief, Division of Adolescent Medicine  
Golisano Children's Hospital at Strong

John A. Love, MS PT NCS  
Assistant Professor,  
Health Science and Physical Therapy  
Nazareth College

Douglas W. Phillips  
Senior Vice President  
Institutional Resources  
University of Rochester

Robert Rice, MS, ABSS  
Director of Clinical Services  
Easter Seals of New York

Dennis M. Richardson  
President and CEO  
Hillside Family of Agencies

James C. Tedford  
Past President,  
Humane Society at Lollypop Farm

Susan Traniello  
Former Therapeutic Riding Participant  
MS Society

Robert Wayland-Smith  
Retired, JP Morgan Chase

Alexander D. Williams  
Executive Director,  
Morgan Stanley Private Wealth Management



We are proud to be a Premier Accredited  
Center of the North American Riding for  
the Handicapped Association (NARHA).

NONPROFIT  
AUTOCR  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
ROCHESTER, NY  
PERMIT NO# 1174



## FOUNDERS' COLUMN

We have entered our fourth year of programming, and are very excited about the EquiCenter's future. After an extremely successful three years, we are eager to continue increasing the number of individuals we serve in both our riding and Horsemanship programs. We have expanded our Therapeutic Riding program and our Hippotherapy program, which is conducted by a pediatric physical therapist who is certified by the American Hippotherapy Association. Hillside Family of Agencies has quadrupled the number of groups of at-risk youth participating in the Horsemanship program, while the Norman Howard School is sending more students with learning disabilities to the EquiCenter during the school day. Hillside Children's Center and Wilson Commencement Park are also exploring the development of such curriculum based, relationship and character building activities for their own students.

Since purchasing our facility and property last year with help from the Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation, we continue to make physical improvements to the property including fence repairs, shed construction and the addition of a large parking lot and courtyard. These enhancements were made possible through donated funds from the Davenport-Hatch Foundation, as well as materials and services from many businesses in the community.

2 This summer our programs, horse care and facility excellence received national recognition by the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association as the EquiCenter became a *NARHA Premier Accredited Center*. We are also one of only two therapeutic equestrian centers in New York State, and the only one in this area, to become certified by the New York State Horse Health Assurance Program.

Of course, none of these accomplishments would be possible without our wonderful team of horses, staff, Board of Directors, Advisory Board and nearly 200 volunteers. We are both further moved and inspired by the outpouring of financial support and in-kind donations from individuals, foundations and corporations throughout the community. It has been the sum of these parts and a shared vision that has made the EquiCenter as successful as it is in such a relatively short amount of time.

While we continue to increase the number of participants we are able to serve, unfortunately we still have waiting lists for our riding and mental health programs. It is our hope that in 2008 and beyond we will continue to find ways to work with the entire community to increase our capacity, assuring that anyone who would benefit from EquiCenter programs will have access to service.

We thank you in advance for your continued involvement and support, and wish you a very happy and healthy holiday season.

Stacy & Jonathan Friedlander

## WHAT WE'RE ALL ABOUT

The EquiCenter is a non-profit center that uses a wide range of equine therapeutic activities to foster the personal growth and individual achievement of people with disabilities and at-risk youth. Our current programs include Therapeutic Riding, Vaulting, Hippotherapy and Horsemanship (Equine-Facilitated Mental Health). Future plans include the addition of Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy, Carriage Driving, and Canine-Assisted Therapy.

Our expanding Hippotherapy Program utilizes the multidimensional movement of the horse to provide a unique and motivating physical therapy. These sessions are taught by licensed therapists who are also certified by the American Hippotherapy Association. Riders in our Therapeutic Riding and Vaulting Programs participate in structured classes to acquire horsemanship skills while developing flexibility, motor skills, balance, muscle coordination, strength, and increased self-esteem and confidence. Participants in our Horsemanship Program learn experientially by working directly with horses. In this mostly non-riding program, participants develop personal responsibility, relationship and communication skills, an appreciation for teamwork, self-discipline, and trust. Through their activities, participants develop a sense of purpose as they help care for horses who are in turn caring for individuals with disabilities.

For more information about EquiCenter programming and ways to get involved, write to [info@equicenterny.org](mailto:info@equicenterny.org) or call 585.624.2836.

# FINDING JUSTIN



*Charlie came up with the first clue. And it turned out the real Justin was there all the time.*

*It was seriously hot on the fourth of August, a sweltering Saturday. Still, a good-sized crowd had gathered at the Regional Special Olympics. In the middle of the commotion, on a big brown horse, sat Justin Presciutti.*

*As required by the rules, Justin, 15, was dressed to the nines, geared up head-to-toe. Which is worth noting because not so long ago, Justin would not have enjoyed any part of a day like this. The heat, the crowd, the getup plus the challenge ahead would have bugged him. Big-time.*

*Justin was born with tri-paresis cerebral palsy. He uses a wheelchair to get around. His right arm has limited strength. His vision is impaired and he's had to deal with some emotional and behavioral issues. For most of his life, when Justin ran into new things, or situations he wasn't comfortable with, his confidence faltered. Then he would retreat. Or fight back with a vengeance.*

*So Julie and Ralph Presciutti were kind of shocked, really, to see their son looking so calm and collected, sitting tall in the saddle, wearing a shirt, tie and jacket, with the helmet, the boots and the rest of the gear weighing him down, with all those people milling around and family and friends focusing on him as he faced a challenging course in an unfamiliar setting. But there he was, up on Rayne, his favorite horse, about to take part in his first equestrian competition in the Special Olympics. If Justin was nervous or scared, it didn't show. He was smiling from ear to ear, despite the sweat rolling down his face.*

*"It's okay," Justin told his parents. "It's good sweat."*

It's been a tough 15 years for Justin and his parents. "As parents of a handicapped child, we've frequently experienced moments of sadness and, in a sense, loss," says Julie. "We see our nieces and nephews growing up, socializing with other children, and doing all the things that kids are supposed to do. At school, Justin would often play alongside other kids. But not with them."

At home, Ralph says that Justin's behavioral issues brought with them a "nightmarish quality." Life with Justin could be "extremely challenging whenever he was unsure or anxious."

Then in the fall of 2004, the Presciuttis picked up an EquiCenter pamphlet at the Rochester Easter Seals Diagnostic and Treatment Center. Justin wasn't a big fan of traditional therapy – in fact, he pretty much hated the mats and the bending and the pushing – so Julie thought that horseback riding would be worth a try.

"My expectation was that it would improve Justin's physical range of motion," she says. "He'd be getting a form of therapy that he needed, but hidden inside a fun time."

On his first visit to EquiCenter, the fun didn't jump right out at Justin. Yes, he met a horse named Charlie and it was, says Julie, "love at first sight." But Charlie was a little scary for a kid who wasn't much into animals, not even his family's two dogs. And Charlie was way more imposing than any dog. Justin decided he didn't want to ride Charlie. So Justin's parents and the EquiCenter staff backed off.

"The folks at EquiCenter know how to handle situations like that," says Julie. They brought out brushes and combs and showed Justin how to groom Charlie. They helped him feed Charlie treats. Slowly, Justin's fear melted away.

*(cont. on page 4)*

By the end of his first EquiCenter visit, Justin was clearly enjoying himself. "Next time, I'll ride," he said. And that Monday, back in class at the Creekside School in Fairport, one of the first things he did was write a letter to Charlie.

Justin has been attending EquiCenter regularly for three years now. He rode Charlie for months. Then Hope, a huge Belgian draft horse. Now he and Rayne, a Percheron Quarter Horse, have been a team for almost a year. And it seems that Rayne has special abilities.

One day Ralph Presciutti was standing nearby, watching Justin's therapy session, when Rayne walked quietly but surely toward Ralph. Rayne stopped and took a stance, spreading his legs to stabilize himself. It turned out that Justin was having a mild seizure.

Ralph believes that Rayne can tell when Justin needs help, that occasionally Rayne "can see a seizure coming before anyone else, even Justin." Julie agrees, saying that Rayne tends to become a bit restless just before Justin has an episode, which is "very unlike Rayne. I think somehow he tunes into it."

4 Rayne and all of the EquiCenter's horses seem to have a sense of the things they accomplish. In Justin's case, it's easy to say that Charlie, Hope and Rayne, and the EquiCenter's staff and its therapeutic programs

have made Justin's world a brighter place.

The simple fact is that they have made a remarkable difference. Physically, Justin is much stronger. His endurance is greater and his range of motion has increased. His physical therapist believes that his riding has had a profound impact on his physical improvement.

Justin has now developed strong friendships at school. And while he never seemed to care much for animals before he met Charlie, now he's bonding and interacting more with the Presciutti's dogs, Jack and Missy.

Julie says that for years Justin's language had "a negative tone" but that now he's referring to a major part of life in a positive way, and that is huge for us. Justin has thrived at the EquiCenter – physically, emotionally, spiritually.

"The negativity, it could wear you down," says Ralph. "Used to be we couldn't get him out of bed without grumbling. Now early Saturday morning he'll jump out of bed to get to horseback riding. It's something he's good at and he loves and it's very rewarding... We have a video from when Justin first started, and now when you see the difference, the way he commands the horse, the way he rides, it's just unbelievable...and he loves the horses. He saves his apples from lunch for them."

On that sticky Saturday in August, the

sun beating down on the Special Olympics equestrian competition, they went for it. Justin in command, sitting tall and attacking the course. Rayne giving it his all. The sweat rolling off both of them.

And they won. Justin took home a gold medal in the Trail class. And Rayne became a legend, at least in the eyes of one young man.

Julie says that all she wanted that day was for Justin to show up and take part. "I was so blown away by his maturity and the growth he'd achieved. He was so completely into it, holding the reins with his right hand. I never expected him to win a gold medal. I was high for weeks."

Every now and then, Justin wears his gold medal around the house. "He's not a humble winner," says Ralph, a touch of pride in his voice.

"It's almost a miracle," says Julie. "No, that's not right. If you knew how far Justin's come, it IS a miracle."

From one of Justin's letters to his friends at the EquiCenter...

*Dear Hope,  
I like riding on your back, I love when we go over the poles and I steer you through the cones or blocks. When we do the trotting thing, when we go faster and faster. I love when I feed you, pet you, and brush you...*

*We bring carrots for you for the end of your work, for working so hard for me, and working so well for me and being such a good horse and you are awesome.*

*Love, Justin*

## IN LOVING MEMORY RUPERT BEAR 1974-2007

We are greatly saddened by the loss of Rupert Bear, one of EquiCenter's first therapy horses. We are privileged to have been graced by his presence, and to have known an individual with such heart, dignity, and passion for his life's work.

An Irish Sport Pony, Rupert was imported to the United States from England in 1982. His owner then settled him into the Brown family barn. His international career was expansive, competing on the English Junior National Jumping Team, pony club through the "B" level, and countless

events including the Stuart Horse Trials. Rupert was an extraordinary pony, very athletic and able to jump higher than most big horses. He was a legend in the competitive arena, and a trusted mentor to so many young riders.

But what set Rupert aside was his ability to understand his purpose as a therapeutic riding mount. He touched the lives of so many and will be always remembered as *Rupert Bear, the Most Wonderful Pony in the World* – a title he fully earned.



# VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR

*As we enter our fourth year of programming, we are very excited to report we have nearly 200 volunteers working tirelessly assisting with lessons, horse care, facility maintenance, governance, media & communications, and fundraising. With so many committed volunteers, it is becoming increasingly difficult to single out a Volunteer of the Year so this year we find ourselves spotlighting two.*



**Jeannie Henderson** has been a part of the EquiCenter from the beginning. She regularly volunteers three or four times per week between her regularly scheduled lessons and as a substitute for others. She has also volunteered at Special Olympics competitions and has helped out with numerous other activities at barn. Jeannie's passion for the horses and "her" riders goes without question. She has also introduced donors to the EquiCenter, and has given very generously of herself. It is her commitment on so many levels that has made her one of the two outstanding volunteers recognized this year.

*Jeannie and Pat represent the many, many dedicated volunteers who have made the EquiCenter the success it is today. To all who give of themselves to help participants and horses, we offer a heartfelt thanks for making the EquiCenter what it is day in and day out.*



**Pat Brown** is the other exceptional volunteer with the spotlight on her this year. Pat has been involved with the EquiCenter since before lessons began while it was still in its conceptual stage. She helped plan the Pilot Program and train the first horses. She continues to volunteer in lessons, organize fundraising events and volunteer gatherings, train horses, fix fencing, or whatever else is needed. Like Jeannie, Pat has also served as a wonderful EquiCenter ambassador recruiting numerous volunteers and donors, while also generously supporting the EquiCenter herself.

## UNITED FOR SUCCESS!

This was EquiCenter's first year participating as a donor-designated agency in the United Way of Greater Rochester's spring campaign. We are very excited to report that of the 435 donor-designation-eligible agencies who receive only designations and no grants from United Way that the EquiCenter, in its first year on the card, received more designated dollars than over 50 percent of all the agencies listed. In fact, only one newly participating organization received more designations. We are thrilled to see this outpouring of community support in our first year as a donor-designated agency, and look forward to even more success in years to come.

**The EquiCenter's United Way donor-designation is 2420.** Additionally, the EquiCenter is participating in this year's State Employees Federated Appeal (SEFA) as a donor-designated agency, and we can only hope for equal success in this campaign. **Our SEFA donor-designation is 85-723.**

Thank you to all who have designated your giving this year to the EquiCenter! We look for your continued support during these campaigns in years to come.

## NARHA & NYSHHAP

The EquiCenter is proud to announce it has become one of only two therapeutic equestrian centers in New York State to receive both accreditation from the North American Riding for Handicapped Association (NARHA) as a Premier Accredited Center, and the New York State Horse Health Assurance Program (NYSHHAP).

The other therapeutic equestrian center with this recognition is located in Verona, New York.

NARHA is the governing body for therapeutic equestrian centers in the United States and Canada, fostering safe, professional, ethical and therapeutic equine activities through education, communication, standards, and research for people with and without disabilities. It sets the standards for

the "industry" in terms of program safety, instructor preparedness, facility maintenance, and horse care. NYSHHAP is a New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets certification program designed to promote and teach a pro-active approach to equine health, care, and welfare through the use of certain "best management practices" and to recognize exceptionally managed equine operations.

# HOW MUCH HORSEPOWER DOES IT TAKE TO TURN A LIFE AROUND?



6

*"Marie" caring for Rupert.*

"Kate" came to us with more horse experience than any of the other Hillside kids. She also came to us with a lot of emotional issues that many of the young residents from Hillside face. Kate has been diagnosed with Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD). RAD is a disorder characterized by a lack of attachment to any specific caregiver at an early age, and it results in difficulty for the child to form normal, loving relationships with others. Kate's disorders had become so intense she became self-harming, often using everyday objects such as pens, pins or paperclips to cut herself.

From the moment she entered our 10-week Horsemanship Program, her confidence in herself began to build and Kate began to shine. The skills that she learned at the EquiCenter and her renewed connection with the horses allowed her to examine her own personal relationships and provided her with new and critical tools to utilize in her future relationships. Due to these positive experiences, Kate shared with one of our staff that "the EquiCenter is my refuge and the only positive thing in my life."

Kate continued to come to the EquiCenter every week. During her time in the program, she dramatically decreased the dosage of her medications. She excelled so much in the Horsemanship Program that we asked her to come back: not as a recipient of our services, but as a provider. Kate returned and became a reliable and effective volunteer in our therapeutic riding program working with individuals with disabilities.

This is the power of equine-assisted therapy. And we're seeing it every week in our Horsemanship Program for at-risk youth from Hillside Children's Center and the Norman Howard School. The program is now entering its fourth year of operation.

During our pilot program in May 2004, eight adolescents were coming from Hillside each week. Today, the Horsemanship Program has grown to include 40 participants per week, with many more on a waiting list. Since the beginning of the program we've served kids from Hillside's residential programs, emergency placement program, foster care program, and this past summer, its Work Scholarship Connection.

Plans are also underway to add a fifth program. This will be a curriculum-based program that will allow Hillside children to participate in EquiCenter programs during the school day. EquiCenter also runs a similar curriculum-based program for kids from the Norman Howard School, and is exploring similar programming for kids from Wilson Commencement Park.

The steady growth and popularity of our Horsemanship Program isn't hard to understand when you think about

the singular power and grace of a 1,200 pound animal.

“Being entrusted to care for a horse is a big risk, especially for our kids,” says Hillside Executive Director Karen Zandi. Many of the children come from New York and other large cities and have never visited a farm or seen horses up close and in person. On top of that, children coming to Hillside are often withdrawn and riddled with self-doubt. “It’s just such a huge confidence booster for them to get to work with a horse.”

Tending to and bonding with an animal over a 10-week period doesn’t just strengthen ties between kids and horses. It also helps the teens relate better to each other—and their families. “Kids learn things about people from watching the horses’ body language and other non-verbal cues,” Karen says. “Their

parents love it, too: it’s a nice way for them to connect with their kids over something the kids genuinely enjoy.” Genuine enjoyment is another reason the program has been so successful. It’s evidenced by the fact that the class fills up almost as soon as it’s posted at Hillside. It’s also evidenced by the bright yellow t-shirts each participant is supposed to wear when they come to the EquiCenter.

“All of a sudden, we started noticing some of the kids weren’t wearing their t-shirts,” says EquiCenter President and CEO Jonathan Friedlander. When instructors asked the teens why, they were told the shirts were in the wash. “The kids wanted everyone at Hillside to know they were in the program, so they were wearing their EquiCenter shirts on “The Hill” as a badge of honor rather than at the stables,” Jonathan says.

According to Jonathan, the success of the Horsemanship Program is a double-edged sword, especially if the EquiCenter is going to develop programs with much needed continuity for each participant going beyond a 10-week session. More kids means more volunteers and horses are needed. More space is needed. And, of course, more financial support.

“The potential of the program is unlimited,” says Jonathan. “Especially with so much proof of how effective equine-assisted therapy can be.”

But the best proof is in the words of the kids themselves. “It feels good to help someone else.” “This is my favorite part of the week.” “I thought I’d be afraid, but the horse was real nice.”

If our horses could talk, they would probably say the same thing.

## FUNDRAISING EVENTS



### EQUITRAILS

What kind of trail trial includes grazing goats and garbage recycling?! The **EquiTrails fundraising event**, presented by Five Star Bank, held again this past June at Davidson Knoll Farm in Canandaigua, raising a record-breaking \$17,500 for the EquiCenter.

Sixty riders (including the top fundraiser atop a stick horse) participated in this second annual event, where they were judged on their skills and abilities to guide their horses through natural and man-made obstacles, with an emphasis on calmness and safety.

“Our goal was to raise \$15,000,” said EquiCenter co-founder Jonathan Friedlander. “We were ecstatic to be able to surpass our goal through the kindness of the community and riders.”

## EQUICENTER GETS UGLY

The EquiCenter is very proud to have been chosen this year as a charitable recipient of proceeds from the 18th Annual 10 Ugly Men Festival. The event was a huge success with thousands of people participating in this festival of fun, food, and music held at Genesee Valley Park. While EquiCenter volunteers helped serve food and drinks at the event, Hope, our Belgian draft horse, worked the crowd at our information table and was a huge success.

A special thanks to the 10 Ugly Men who selected the EquiCenter as a special cause. We look forward to being part of next year’s festival on July 26, 2008!

## WALNUT HILL

EquiCenter was the beneficiary of Ascot Family Picnic Night held August 17 at the Walnut Hill Carriage Driving Competition. Just as everyone arrived for the event, so did thunder, lightning, and a heavy downpour. Spectators stayed dry in the barns and EquiCenter riders and volunteers ran for cover in the horse trailer until the storm passed. EquiCenter families and friends provided a bountiful pot-luck picnic organized by Jan Kellner while watching EquiCenter participants Hollyn Halstead and Mitchell Vahue demonstrate their equestrian talents in the Walnut Hill Oval. This was followed by a full

evening of competitions and entertainment. EquiCenter volunteers led by Kathy Eckler staged a decorate-your-own Ascot Night hat event that drew a large crowd of crafters and earned \$500 for the EquiCenter above the evening’s proceeds of \$2,000.

## COTTAGE BBQ

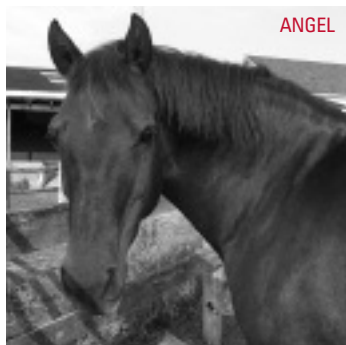
Peter Haidt of Auto Solutions and Mike Miller put on a luscious BBQ at the Cottage Hotel of Mendon on September 9 for the benefit of the EquiCenter. Deanna Miller and her crew were kept busy taking BBQ and drink orders while Hillary Stott, Cottage Hotel owner, organized a silent auction and musical entertainment to perform on the Cottage Hotel stage. Despite the cool and soggy weather, the event raised almost \$1,000 for the EquiCenter.

## SERVING A CAUSE

The worldwide motto for Lions Club is “We Serve.” Led by Stephan and Paula Hoh, the Lions Club of Rush, New York “served” up a feast this summer at the Rush Creekside Inn to benefit the EquiCenter. Stephen, Paula and other club members advertised, prepared and sold their famous dinners to the public, raising almost \$400 for the EquiCenter. By serving dinners and donating the proceeds to benefit individuals with disabilities at the EquiCenter, the members of the Lions Club of Rush truly lived up to their motto.



# OUR EQUINE STAFF



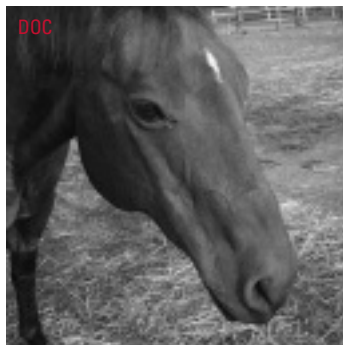
ANGEL



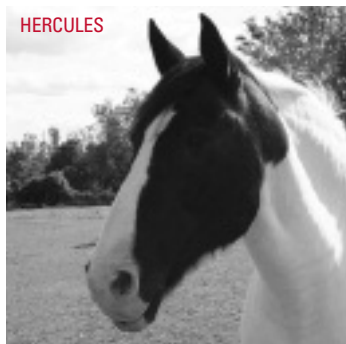
BILLY



CHARLIE



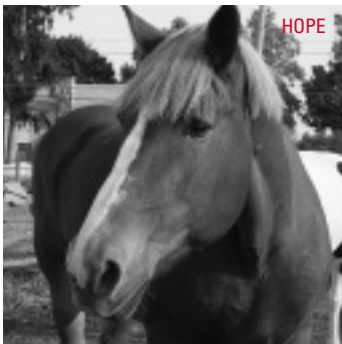
DOC



HERCULES



HICKORY



HOPE



JITTERBUG



KIVA



MACHO



RAYNE



ZEUS

## ANGEL

16 yrs. liver chestnut Morgan mare  
Former show horse and 4-H mount

## BILLY

20 yrs. chestnut Quarter Horse gelding  
Former trail horse

## CHARLIE

24 yrs. bay Grade gelding  
Former therapeutic riding horse in  
Naples, NY. Also a former Fox Hunter.  
Purchased by Joe Best, a program  
participant, on behalf of the EquiCenter

## DOC

22 yrs. bay Quarter Horse gelding  
Former trail horse

## HERCULES

17 yrs. paint Draft gelding  
Former trail and pleasure horse

## HICKORY

12 yrs. chestnut Haflinger gelding  
Former 4-H mount  
Purchased by the Kiwanis Club  
of Brighton on behalf of the EquiCenter

## HOPE

17 yrs. chestnut Belgian mare  
Former plowhorse for the Amish  
now on her way to retirement

## JITTERBUG

23 yrs. chestnut Missouri Fox Trotter mare  
Former Ladies Amateur World Champion

## KIVA

14 yrs. chestnut Appendix Quarter Horse  
Former show hunter

## MACHO

24 yrs. chestnut Quarter Horse gelding  
Former trail horse

## RAYNE

14 yrs. brown Percheron Quarter  
Horse gelding  
Former fox hunter

## ZEUS

11 yrs. grey Percheron gelding  
Retired Monroe County Mounted  
Patrol horse

# EQUICENTER DOMINATES SPECIAL OLYMPICS EQUESTRIAN



*Joe, Hollyn, Carli and Lindsey during the medal ceremony.*

During this Summer's Regional Special Olympics equestrian event, the EquiCenter fielded a team of ten riders and four horses. All EquiCenter riders did an outstanding job during the competition, earning at least one medal each. The Regional Games were followed by the New York State Special Olympics this October, and the EquiCenter riders excelled again. The EquiCenter's riding team at the State Games consisted of five riders competing on Zeus, Rayne, Angel and Charlie. At the end of the day, EquiCenter's five riders took home nine medals, including five gold. More importantly was the team spirit and personal achievement of each rider. Let's hear a round of applause for the entire EquiCenter team, as well as a very special thanks to all the dedicated EquiCenter volunteers who helped our riders realize their Special Olympics dreams!

## FOUNDATION AND CORPORATE SPONSORS

AirTran  
Ames-Amzalak Foundation  
Admar Supply Company  
Auction Direct USA  
B. Thomas Golisano Foundation  
Bartholomew Health Care Group  
Best Times Financial Planning, Inc.  
Bit of Britain  
Canandaigua National Bank and Trust  
Canfield Vet  
Chamberlain D'Amanda  
Chili's Grill & Bar  
Cole & Parks  
Country Max  
Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation  
Davenport-Hatch Foundation  
David & Sybil Yurman Humanitarian & Arts Foundation  
Deprez Travel

Diva Trucking  
Dixon Schwabl Advertising  
Donald B. Shaw, Jr. Charitable Trust  
Finger Lakes Thoroughbred Adoption Program  
Five Star Bank  
Five Star Equipment  
Genesee Valley Equine Clinic, LLC  
George Baker Architects  
Halcyon Hill Foundation  
Heineman Foundation  
Heron Hill Winery  
HSBC Bank, USA  
KB Graphics, Inc.  
Kenlou Foundation  
Kiwans Club of Brighton  
Ralph G. & Wilma J. Maibaum Foundation  
Mann's Jewelers

Marketplace Chrysler-Suzuki  
M&T Bank  
The Mix Advertising  
Nutramax Laboratories, Inc.  
Nutrena  
Max Adler Foundation  
Penfield Rotary Club  
POV – Rose Films, Inc.  
The Polisseni Foundation  
Rochester Area Community Foundation  
Rochester Auto Dealers Assoc.  
Rochester Press-Radio Club  
Rush Lions Club  
Saints & Sinners  
Solius Web Solutions  
Spezio Property Services  
Townline Truck & Trailer  
Valley Cadillac-Hummer  
Victor Excavating & Landscape  
Wegmans Food Markets  
John F. Wegman Fund  
Elaine P. & Richard U. Wilson Foundation  
Marie C. & Joseph C. Wilson Foundation  
Zaretsky & Associates

# GOING FOR THE GOLD



My name is Joe Best. I would like to tell you about me and the EquiCenter. I am 33 years old and I have worked at Unistel on Blossom Road for 12 years. I am a member of Penfield Rotary and I live in Penfield with my parents.

I first came to EquiCenter four years ago. At first I was frightened about riding because I had broken my arm riding at a different riding stable. Before I started riding again, my mom and I bought the therapy horse, “Charlie Chocolateman” for EquiCenter. That Spring I had my first ride on Charlie. I have been riding at EquiCenter ever since.

I have been taught by Megan and Stacy and Sara. They taught me everything about riding horses and they believed in me. They taught me to breathe right, to relax, to sit up tall and to use my balance to tell the horse where to go. All the volunteers believe in me. It made me think I could believe in me, too.

Jonathan Friedlander asked me to be a member of the EquiCenter Advisory Board. He believed that I could help EquiCenter. Being a member of the Advisory Board makes me feel very important and helpful to EquiCenter.

Since I came to EquiCenter, I have learned to ride very well and have helped my balance, strength, and flexibility. I also learned to believe in myself and to be confident in myself. This summer I was asked to be a Special Olympics Global Messenger. Global Messengers are Special Olympics athletes who go to clubs and companies and groups and give speeches about Special Olympics. To be a good Messenger, I only have to remember what I learned at EquiCenter. I must breathe right, relax and believe in myself. At the New York State Special Olympics Fall games this year, I spoke in front of 2,000 people! I wasn’t even scared. I believed in me!

When I first started riding I told my mom that my dream would be to win a gold medal in the equestrian competition at Special Olympics. In September, I rode Zeus at the Regional Special Olympics equestrian competition. In the first round, we got a fourth place, but, when I got back up on Zeus, I had to be brave and focus. When it was over, Zeus and I won the gold medal! I had believed in myself and so did Zeus and my volunteers. Zeus and I won another gold medal at the State Fall Games in October.

EquiCenter has helped me reach many of my special goals. I know, with help from volunteers and the staff at the EquiCenter, many other people can reach their most special goals. When I wait for my lesson to begin, I watch other EquiCenter riders at their lessons. They seem very happy to be riding and learning. I hear their parents talk about their children growing. They are very proud and happy that EquiCenter is helping their children be happy and grow.

But the EquiCenter needs help, too. They need more volunteers and more good horses and money to feed and care for the horses and the farm. EquiCenter needs your help to help more children and adults get healthy and strong and confident. Without the help I have received from EquiCenter, I would not be a gold medal athlete! Please support the EquiCenter in whatever way you can. Zeus and Charlie may not be able to say thank you, but they can make people believe in themselves. Please help them to help all of us reach for the stars.

Joe Best

# PARTICIPATING AGENCIES AND AFFILIATIONS

The Advocacy Center  
 Al Sigi Center  
 The ARC of Monroe County  
 Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired – Goodwill  
 BOCES  
 CP Rochester  
 Cazenovia College  
 Continuing Developmental Services  
 Easter Seals of New York  
 Epilepsy Foundation  
 Golisano Children’s Hospital at Strong  
 Hillside Family of Agencies  
 Humane Society at Lollypop Farm  
 MS Society  
 Nazareth College Department of Health Science & Physical Therapy  
 St. Joseph’s Villa  
 The Norman Howard School  
 Rochester Rehabilitation Center, Inc.  
 William E. Simon Graduate School of Business – University of Rochester  
 Wilson Commencement Park (Spring 2008)



**EQUICENTER GOES GLOBAL**  
 A team of therapists and municipal administrators from Norway, Sweden, Finland and Estonia visited the EquiCenter to learn about the operations of a therapeutic equestrian center. The trip was funded in part by the European Union. Discussions are under way for the EquiCenter to assist in the development of a similar center in Norway, as well as a possible exchange between EquiCenter and European program staff and participants.