

Ridgewood T.R.A.I.L. Riders, Assoc. is a non-profit 501 (c) 3 dedicated to being of service to those in need disregarding race, religion, gender or disability.



For information or if you would like to make a financial donation, become involved with Ridgewood T.R.A.I.L. Riders as a volunteer or if you or someone you know could benefit from our services, please contact us at:

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Ridgewood T.R.A.I.L. **Riders, Assoc.**



Teaching
Riding as an
Access to
Independence and
Learning

T.R.A.I.L. is a therapeutic riding program providing horseback therapy to improve the lives of those who are challenged physically, developmentally, socially and emotionally.

Our program provides assistance to individuals who need help with physical, developmental and emotional healing, confidence, social skills and ways to make positive changes in their lives. When riding a horse, our children are given the opportunity to feel freedom and empowerment through movement. The movement of the horse provides a combination of sensory, motor and neurological stimulation. This translates into stronger muscles, better balance and coordination and, just as important, greater self-confidence and self-esteem.

Some of our riders are confined to wheelchairs or walkers and their minds and bodies tell them that they can't accomplish many things that their more "able-bodies" peers can. But when they are on the back of a horse, they often discover that they can achieve the very things they thought were impossible. With up to three volunteers assisting our riders, we are able to provide a safe and successful environment that will eventually lead, in most cases, to the challenge of independence. By focusing on each rider's abilities, rather than disabilities, we have enjoyed many successes. Horseback riding then becomes an adaptive form of physical and cognitive education.

The history of our program is unique. In 1993 the idea for this program actually came from a few children who were involved in the local 4-H program. These young people investigated other well- established therapeutic riding programs in Northern California and soon decided that this was an undertaking that they could accomplish. By utilizing the facilities at Ridgewood Ranch, where they lived, and the horses already available there, the program was able to start up in the fall of 1993. Children helping children. The generosity from local service groups allowed the program, then called Mendocino County 4-H T.R.A.I.L., to begin with the appropriate safety equipment, such as helmets.



Ridgewood T.R.A.I.L. Riders is located on the 5000 acre historic Ridgewood Ranch, home of the legendary race horse, Seabiscuit. Our existing facilities are a small 60' x 130' outdoor arena, a new 60' round pen, stalls and paddocks for 5 horses and a tack room and barn area. In addition to the buildings, the owners of Ridgewood Ranch graciously allow us to use the miles of trails on the ranch for our rides and fundraising events. Our program needs new fencing to replace existing temporary hotwire and metal post fencing, which will create a safer environment for riders and horses.

Our current program consists of teaching grooming and tacking the horse, mounting, control commands and dismounting. Rides start in the arena to re-accustom the rider to riding commands and to relax muscles and minds, then continue with a ride on the trail. Often games are played like *Simon Says* and *Red Light, Green Light*.

In the past few years our program has needed to expand and evolve. We have become a Non-Profit 501 (c) 3 and have investigated the needs of the local communities for a program such as ours. At this time we are only able to

help a limited number of children because our arena is not covered and we are not able to give therapeutic rides during the rainy months, and are only able to give rides in the summer during the cooler morning hours. We are currently working hard to fundraise for the cover to a new arena.



Our heroes are our gentle horses who love the job they do and seem to heal all of us involved with T.R.A.I.L. We have been blessed to have some true equine angels help us in our goal of bring healing to those who need their special presence and patience.

Our volunteers are the heart of our program. All ages are welcome and in fact our most valued volunteers are teens and retired seniors. More volunteers are needed. The joy that our program brings to everyone involved is definitely something we love to share.