**Back In The Saddle Equine Therapy Center (aka BITS ETC)** 

Tax ID # 02-0652400

Pauline Meridien, Executive Director

334 College Hill Rd., Hopkinton, NH 03229

Phone: 603-746-5681

Email: [bitsetc2003@aol.com](mailto:bitsetc2003@aol.com)

Website: www.bitsetc.org

**Hippo (Greek for horse) Therapy for 20 children on the Spectrum.**

Established in 2003, BITS ETC has provided therapeutic riding and equine assisted activities to people living with disabilities in central NH. Our very first client was a young man with autism, who led the way for others with various disabilities to enjoy the benefits of working with horses. We continue to provide services (approximately 40% of our clientele live on the spectrum) to children and adults ages 2 to 92. Our programs fall into six main areas, geared specifically to specific populations:

* Therapeutic Riding for those 2 to 92 with disabilities.
* SpiritHorse Autism Intervention based on Charles Fletcher’s internationally utilized program developed in conjunction with the University of Texas, Southwest Medical Center.
* Ride UP for Veterans and First Responders…Uniformed Professionals.
* Vocational Education for students at risk, and those transitioning out of post-secondary education.
* Work to Ride program for peer supported adults to volunteer work time for riding.
* SR or Seniors Ride for those over 55.

Of our clients with autism, 15 % were engaged in Therapeutic Riding, 60% in the SpiritHorse Autism Intervention, and 25% were pursuing the Vocational Education tract for improving work habits and job skills. With your help we will be able to offer a more structured intervention utilizing the services of a Licensed Occupational Therapist. This grant will support early childhood intervention, (age 18 months and up); a time when the most gains can be made. Occupational Therapists, with the support of a certified Horse Handler, and Volunteer Side-Walker will provide half hour to one hour sessions, once or twice a week, for eight weeks for up to 20 clients without charge. This medical model of service delivery differs from typical Therapeutic Riding, in that it is always one-on-one with the client, focused on measurable progress towards goals, and covered in part by insurance.

The fact that insurance covers about one half the actual cost of providing the service is why up to now, very little hippotherapy is available to the general public. BITS would like to subsidize the insurance company’s payments to allow the Occupational Therapist to provide the best therapy available in a medical model of service delivery.

A total of up to 320 hours of equine intervention over two months for up to 20 individuals will result in measurable gains in core strength, balance, attention, verbalization, more rhythmic walking sequencing, and better hand-eye coordination. Documented gains will be reported to the industry as a whole at P.A.T.H. International regional and annual meetings to spread the word of the benefits of this intense therapy for young children on the spectrum.

BITS ETC currently has 14 students enrolled in riding with a diagnosis on the Autism Spectrum. They are age 3 to adult. We have a waiting list of an additional 6 students, with insurance that will not cover hippotherapy at this time. We are working to gain prior-approval to begin their therapy.

With this grant, we would double the number of individuals served, and add 20 riders to the program…specifically those 18 months to 5 years of age. The hip movement of a rider closely mimics unaided walking…using the same muscles, and moving the body in a rhythmic manner. It has been shown useful in clients with brain injuries, to move the body in order to re-program the brain. Children with autism who are delayed in walking can be encouraged to do so with the help of horse riding activities.

The functioning level of our clients is variable, and the therapy would be adjusted to meet goals determined by the client’s family and pediatrician in conjunction with the Occupational Therapist. Working closely with “Ready Set Connect” a private school for children on the spectrum, located in Concord, NH, we would provide these services free of charge to the client. We have partnered with Ready Set Connect to bring therapeutic riding to their students; Hippotherapy could be an effective additional modality for more seriously affected students.

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**BUDGET**

**AUTISM INTERVENTION FREE OF CHARGE TO 20 CLIENTS IN 2016**

Hippotherapy staff $100.00 each for three months = 12 sessions for a total cost of ------$1,200.00 each child

(Salary for 2 therapists, wc insurance, liability insurance)

20 children offered ‘free’ lessons---------------------------------------------------------------------- X 20 children

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$24,000.00

Cost of horse ‘rental’ $20.00/hr for 240 hrs------------------------------------------------------------ $ 4,800.00

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$28,800.00

Advertising, video presentation to MD’s/schools, travel------------------------------------------- $1,200.00

$30,000.00

Occupational Therapy offered to 20 clients ages 18 months to 5 years, on the spectrum for 12 weeks each during the summer of 2016 free of charge.

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