



MISSISSIPPI STATE  
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EXTENSION SERVICE

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## WHAT IS THE 4-H TRAC PROGRAM?

The Mississippi State University Extension Service's 4-H Therapeutic Riding and Activity Center (TRAC) promotes therapeutic riding through educational and research-based activities. The program has earned premier accreditation through the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA). 4-H TRAC's goal is to develop a model therapeutic riding program based on NARHA guidelines, which require high safety and professional standards. The TRAC program is located at the 4-H Elizabeth A. Howard arena, 806 West Churchill Road, West Point, Mississippi, on property donated by Jimmy Bryan. The arena was donated by Tommy and Brenda Howard.

## WHAT IS THERAPEUTIC RIDING?

Therapeutic riding is a specialized equine activity that provides physical, emotional, and psychological benefits to children and adults with disabilities. Through carefully planned activities developed by a certified riding instructor, the horse is used as a treatment tool to help the rider achieve his or her goals.

## HOW DOES THE HORSE'S MOVEMENT HELP RIDERS?

The movement of the horse at a walk provides sensory input that stimulates normal muscle responses in the human. The horse's three-dimensional, swinging gait simulates the movement of a human's pelvis, trunk, and shoulder girdle when walking.



## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS FOR RIDERS?

In addition to the physical benefits for the rider (such as improved posture, muscle strength, and trunk balance), a human-animal bond develops between the rider and the horse, providing psychological benefits to the rider. Sitting astride a horse also can increase the rider's sense of independence and self-esteem.

## WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM 4-H TRAC?

Individuals of all ages, disabilities, and conditions can benefit from therapeutic riding, including people with autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, learning disabilities, spina bifida, spinal cord injuries, visual and hearing impairments, cardiovascular accidents and strokes, brain injuries, amputations, mental retardation, multiple sclerosis, and muscular dystrophy.

Local communities, 4-H members, and volunteers also benefit from opportunities associated with therapeutic riding.

## HOW CAN RIDERS REGISTER FOR 4-H TRAC?

Call 662.325.3350 or 662.325.1695 for appropriate application forms. Forms, including a physician's release form, must be completed before anyone can participate in the 4-H TRAC program.

## HOW ARE GOALS SET FOR RIDERS?

Before a rider begins the 4-H TRAC program, his or her parents, teachers, counselors or therapists (when applicable), and the riding instructor establish goals. Periodic conferences are scheduled to assess each rider's progress toward the goals.

## HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT 4-H TRAC?

The Extension Service's 4-H TRAC can help individuals and civic groups learn how to develop a therapeutic riding program in their communities. For more information, contact your county 4-H agent or Mary Riley, 4-H Therapeutic Riding Coordinator. You can reach Mary by phone (662.325.3350), by fax (662.325.5207), by e-mail (mriley@ext.msstate.edu), or by mail (4-H TRAC, Box 9641, Mississippi State, MS 39762).



## HOW CAN YOU HELP THE 4-H TRAC PROGRAM?

- Share information about the program with others.
- Volunteer to assist with riding classes.
- Donate or sponsor a rider or horse.
- Make a financial donation.
- Sponsor educational programs.

## HOW DO 4-H AND THERAPEUTIC RIDING WORK TOGETHER?

Regardless of ability, all people desire and deserve challenging, fulfilling lives. Therapeutic horseback riding focuses on the individual's abilities rather than his or her disabilities.

4-H recognizes this philosophy and promotes it in its programming. The 4-H ideals are represented in the mission of the therapeutic riding program. The mission of 4-H is to assist youth with acquiring knowledge, developing life skills, and forming attitudes that will enable them to become self-directed, productive, contributing members of society.

