



STIRRUP COURAGE

Equestrian Learning Center

Partnering with horses to support children who have experienced difficult life situations.

What does Stirrup Courage offer and who qualifies?

We offer 1-hour small group lessons in 4-6 week sessions (\$25 per lesson), in which children are invited to develop meaningful connections with our horses alongside caring volunteers, as they learn about horse care, safety, grooming, leading, and riding. All applicants have the opportunity when they apply to request scholarships to cover part or all of the cost of sessions as needed, making lessons accessible to all without cost as a barrier! Once a child begins in the program, they can continue with opportunities to progress in their riding level for as long as they wish!

Qualifying participants include children and youth ages 5-21 who:

- May have experienced foster care and/or adoption
- May be grieving a significant loss in the family (due to death, divorce, serious illness, addiction)
- May be struggling with anxiety or depression
- May be facing bullying or rejection at school
- May be living in a low-income environment
- May carry trauma from any other adverse childhood experiences that place them at risk.

What can I expect from the sessions?

All children start out in the Horse Care Intro Session, which is all on the ground. Children participate in a one-hour group lesson, with four total lessons in the session. During those four lessons they learn about safety around horses, proper grooming and the tools used, understanding horse behavior and communication, and how to safely lead their horse. The lessons are reinforced through learning journal pages, games, and art projects that the children get to take home with them at the end of the session, along with pictures of themselves with the horses.

Children who graduate from the Intro session can choose to continue into progressive riding lessons, which range from 4-6 week session lengths at a time depending on the level. Riding lessons begin with a focus on developing safe and confident balance in the saddle, starting out with volunteers leading the horse for the child so that the child's arms are completely free to complete movement exercises, stretches, and games while on the horse. Children who choose to continue in the program will gradually progress to riding independently. My approach is to progress slowly through new skill levels because I first want to ensure that our riders develop a confident, secure seat and an understanding of how to communicate with their horse through their body and legs, without being overly dependent on the reins. This approach also protects our horses from excessive pulling on their mouths, which often happens with beginner riders.

How do we get started?

While our sessions are paused for now while we wait for our barn and indoor arena to be built (hopefully spring of 2022!), referrals and applications can be made so that interested families can be the first on our list to contact when we are ready to schedule new classes in 2022. Parents should contact Director Tara Steiner at stirrupcourage@gmail.com to initiate the process of applying for a spot in the program, or with any questions.

More information and program updates can be found at www.stirrupcourage.org