



Equestrian  
Connection

*Best days happen here!®*

ANNUAL  
REPORT



2020 UNMASKED

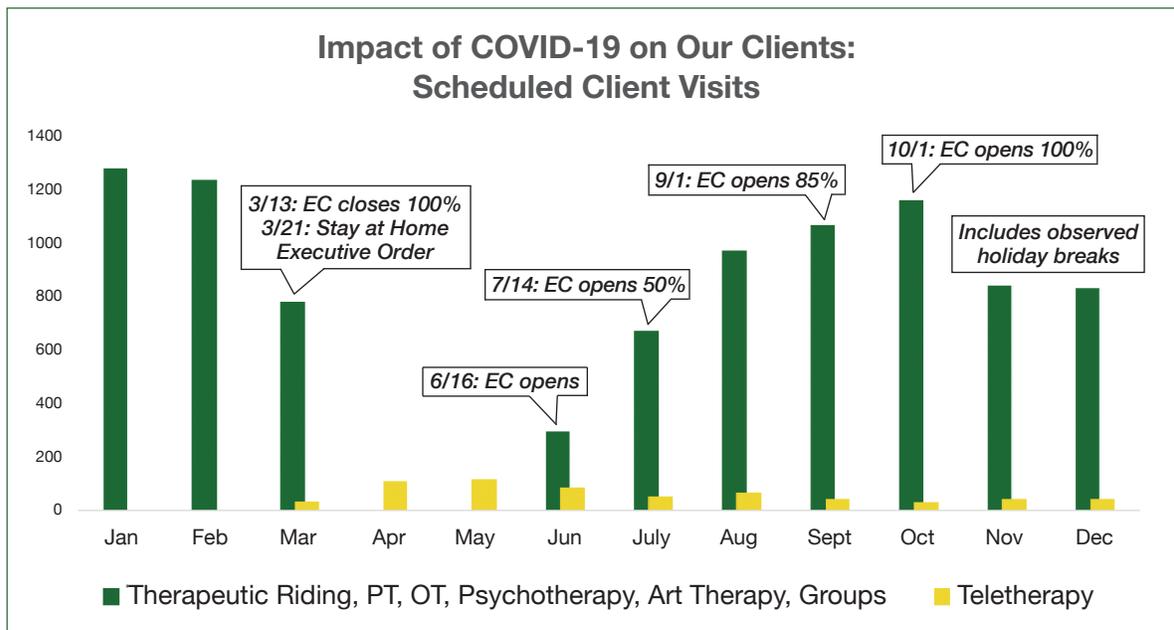
# NAVIGATING COVID-19

On March 13th, Equestrian Connection temporarily closed our doors due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We used that time to improve our facility for our clients. Dedicated staff and volunteers spent hours painting fencing, planting flowers, and improving the indoor arena. Our team worked together to create a safe re-opening COVID protocol.

With the help of a major donation, we launched a teletherapy program to enable clients to receive much-needed mental health support services. We also worked in partnership with NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) to create Frontline Connection, a support group for healthcare workers. We stayed connected to our clients, staff and volunteers through Facebook Live and Zoom Sessions through our reopening.

Equestrian Connection reopened in mid-June while 50% of the country remained hesitant to return to pre-COVID activities. By October, 95% of EC clients returned for services. In October, we launched a Race is On campaign in lieu of Marty's Barn Party and raised \$363,000 for much-needed funds for therapy scholarships and horse care.

# BACK IN THE SADDLE



# THE BUCK STOPS HERE

**TOTAL REVENUE - \$2,993,880**

*Includes a \$1.6 million gift for expansion*

85% donations  
15% fees

*In-Kind Revenue - \$66,215  
(Donated Goods and Services)*

**TOTAL EXPENSES - \$1,957,888**

94% program expenses  
4% administrative  
1% fundraising

*In-Kind Expenses - \$53,297*

**SCHOLARSHIPS - \$152,149**

*(A category of Expenses)*

Over 1/3 of our individual clients received therapy scholarships

## OUR MISSION

Equestrian Connection's mission is to improve the physical, mental and emotional well-being of children and adults with special needs by providing equine-assisted therapy with the use of highly-trained horses, licensed and experienced therapists and therapeutic instructors, and an understanding pool of trained volunteers. We also provide other therapeutic services to fill the service voids that address unmet needs. We provide services to all those who need it despite their ability to pay.

## OUR VOLUNTEERS MADE IT POSSIBLE

Despite COVID-19, 342 volunteers donated 6,180 hours to program services and events.



**Abigia, EC Volunteer:** I am 13 years old and I started riding at Equestrian Connection when I was 7. I began volunteering about two years ago. The reason why I felt super comfortable returning to EC during COVID was because I know how much everyone making decisions cares about the riders and volunteers. I knew that they put a lot of thought into coming up with a safe environment for all of us and I trusted them completely. COVID was a very stressful time for us all. It was hard not being able to be with all of my family and friends. Being able to return to Equestrian Connection and return to riding was such a relief. Spending time with the horses makes me so happy and always reduces my stress. And of course I really love all the staff there, they make the barn feel very much like my second home!



## 2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mike Duffey, *President*  
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Lynn Simet, *Treasurer*  
Maggie Stewart, *Secretary and Fundraising*

Margot Peters, *Fundraising*  
Karen (KD) Domitrovich, *Fundraising*  
Patti Shuma, *Fundraising*  
Kara Kline, *Strategic Planning*  
Mike Randell, *Strategic Planning*

*A note of appreciation to Mike Anderson and Lisa Zenni who resigned as board members due to moving out-of-state. We appreciate your years of support.*

## TRUST IN THE PROTOCOL

During the COVID shutdown, our staff met daily to review protocol drafts to make certain we adhered to the CDC, OSHA, PATH, AHA, AOTA, APTA and State of Illinois guidelines. We also took into account the needs of our clients, volunteers and staff. Our strict adherence to the final protocol gave confidence to clients, volunteers and staff for their return to Equestrian Connection.



**Hannah, EC Client:** Since she was a toddler, Hannah's favorite activity has been horseback riding. She LOVES horses, reading about them, watching them on TV, and most importantly getting to see, touch and ride them in person. When the pandemic hit, we were devastated that EC had closed. There are no other activities that Hannah participates in that allow her to experience movement the way that she does when she is on the horse. Once EC



opened up we knew we had to get back to riding right away. We always trusted the team at EC to provide a safe environment for Hannah in typical times and we were encouraged by the safety guidelines that were put in place to allow a safe return to an activity that Hannah loves. EC is so important to our family. The joy that Hannah has while she's with the horses isn't present during her other typical therapies. That's why we knew we had to return as soon as it was allowed!

**Alysa, Occupational Therapist:** COVID had a tremendous impact on our clients. Therapy clinics, including EC, and schools were closed for in-person visits. Our clients were much less physically active, less social, and spent a lot more time on screens. Parents were overwhelmed, and our clients felt that anxiety. Their routines were disrupted and their worlds turned upside down. When we reopened in June of 2020, a large percentage of our therapy clients chose to return to EC. For many, EC was the one appointment that felt safe and important enough to resume.

Returning to EC was essential for many of our clients to rebuild the strength and skills that they had lost and it meant so much that they trusted us to keep them safe.

## THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS! YOU MADE "BEST DAYS" HAPPEN IN 2020!

To respect confidentiality, we do not list donors.  
Donors who do wish to be published are recognized personally on our donor wall.