

December 2023

Dear friend of STAR,

Serving the people of East Tennessee is **what** we do. Partnering with horses is **how** we do it. But it's the awe-inspiring results that are our **why**.

Allow me to share a just a few examples of lives touched by STAR:



At age two, William contracted E. coli, resulting in a brain injury that posed challenges in growth and fine motor skills. Initially unable to eat, speak, sit up, or hold his head independently, William has made remarkable progress and now thrives in a second-grade class. He relies on his "robot" (gait trainer) and still struggles with strength, coordination, mobility, and dexterity persist. William's mother attributes his progress to the expertise of STAR instructors and their focus on activities such as crossing mid-line, enhancing balance and core strength, and fostering confidence. Reflecting on William's journey, his mother recalls the moment when he first sat on a horse, initially struggling to maintain an upright position. However, thanks to the support of the STAR instructors, William can now sit confidently in the saddle, hold the reins, and even provide verbal directions to the horse. Witnessing this transformation has been immensely gratifying for both William and his family.

In 2022, Noah faced challenges that led to court-mandated community service hours. It was during this time that he discovered solace and transformation in STAR's Changing STRIDES program. Initially struggling with confidence and social interactions, a turning point occurred when Noah formed a deep bond with Apache, a horse within the program. This connection became a catalyst for change, helping him overcome fears and fostering growth in interpersonal skills. The positive impact was so significant that Noah embraced another round of STRIDES. This time, his equine companion was Paint — a horse that has challenged Noah, teaching him the importance of goal setting and leadership. Noah's affection for the barn goes beyond obligation, becoming an authentic passion as he also serves as a Junior Volunteer. His mother laughs, "If it were up to him, he'd spend every waking moment at the barn." This narrative not only reflects Noah's remarkable journey but also highlights the emotional depth and positive impact STAR's program has had on his life.

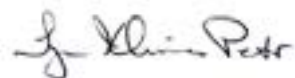


Ken, a participant in our Heroes & Horses Program, has a wealth of service experience with 12 1/2 years on active duty and retirement as a Reservist, culminating in an impressive 24 years. After being in a really bad place last year, expressing, "I didn't see much value in living;" Ken found solace at STAR. Though initially disappointed by riding limitations, he discovered awe-inspiring fulfillment in groundwork, forming a special bond with Kate. In his own words, Kate is like a unicorn — a source of enchantment and security where in her company, a transformative connection takes place. "I am not known as a guy who smiles much, if at all, and I never show my teeth. I can feel a smile on my face whenever we are together. Kate makes negative thoughts and emotions go away." Ken's journey at STAR reflects not only the healing power of the Heroes & Horses Program but also the overwhelming impact that a connection with a gentle companion like Kate can have on the human spirit.

After 36 years and countless lives touched, we continue to see these profound moments – true testaments to our mission of healing through horses. But we cannot engage with these incredible people without support from our extended STAR family members like **you**. Whether it is a one-time gift or recurring gift, you can make a difference for children like William, teenagers like Noah, and Veterans such as Ken.

Thank you for your continued support of STAR's mission.

Gratefully,



Lynn Klimas Petr  
Founder & Executive Director

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