

Jan. 25, 2010 Vol. 21 No. 3

The Nation's Physical Therapy Newsmagazine

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LOOK INSIDE!**



Chris Landers, left, and Marilyn Jones, PT, DPT, right, help Kaitlyn Rose Pitot use a lift to adjust herself on a horse at Winslow Therapeutic Center in Warwick, NY.

"I have used the Sure Hands Body Support since it was installed over a year ago, and it has been a real blessing to our program...and our backs!" said Marilyn H. Jones, PT, DPT, AHA-registered therapist who has worked as a PT at Winslow Therapeutic Center since 2004. With the help of SureHands, Winslow is looking forward to a bright future helping those in need. Other innovative products include:

- **SureHands slings:** A wide range of slings for people who are unable to control their head and cannot use the body support. Uses include transport to the toilet or pool, support for gait training, amputee support and support for people who cannot stand.

- **Mobile lifters:** Allows for lifting from hard to reach places and spacious enough for a caregiver to maneuver in and around.

- **HM2500 Series Track System:** The track allows mobility from room to room. Users can move from a bed to wheelchair, toilet or bath using a wireless infrared remote.

- **Wall-to-Wall Lift system:** This portable system allows for movement in smaller areas where a mobile lifter would be impossible.

- **Wheelchair-to-Water Pool Lift:** Transport from a wheelchair to water couldn't be smoother or easier. A lifting motor raises the user while an arm rotates them gently into the water.

- **Frictionless slides:** The slides allow caregivers to easily transfer patients by reducing the friction to a minimum.

SureHands Lift & Care Systems develops and distributes lift and transfer systems that increase the well-being of the user. "The safety and the user's quality of life are our top priority," stated Moraczewski.

To learn more about SureHands Lift & Care Systems, call 800-724-5305 or visit their Website at www.surehands.com/index.html.

Lauren Himiak is a freelance writer for ADVANCE.

Lifting More Than Spirits

One company headquartered in Pine Island, NY, is doing all they can to make sure therapists have the tools they need to help their patients succeed.

SureHands Lift & Care Systems is the exclusive U.S. distributor for a variety of lift systems and accessories used in hippotherapy. A division of Handi-Move International, located in Belgium, SureHands distributes items such as overhead track systems, wall lifts, pool lifts, mobile lifts and slings across the country.

"We have been fortunate to help so many," stated Joyce Moraczewski, marketing coordinator for SureHands. "In fact, there are approximately 100 lifts installed in therapeutic horseback riding centers across the country."

One of the most popular and recognized lifts, the SureHands Body Support, is revolutionizing not just hippotherapy, but also swim therapy and assisted living. The lift supports the upper body with padded cups, while the lower body is held by strong supports that go under each thigh. As a person is lifted, the cups

automatically self-adjust to their exact size and weight, allowing total comfort. And the waistband and buttocks are totally unobstructed, which makes toileting and changing clothes possible while the user is suspended.

For equine-assisted therapy, SureHands Body Support is a horse's dream. The unique posture makes loading onto and off of horses easy, quiet and less painful.

As the rider is lowered onto the horse, the SureHands Body Support creates a natural separation of the legs to easily straddle the horse's back. This allows the rider to be gently lowered onto the saddle.

And even when the thigh supports are removed, the body support cups maintain the lateral stability of the individual.

"Because the body support is so easy to use, there is a great synergy there," noted Carol Colegrove, New York regional representative. "We provide a safe and easy way for hippotherapy to help people of all ages and sizes. It can be quite scary for people to come in contact with a horse for the first time but SureHands is ideally suited to meet the needs of the riding facilities who work with the disabled."

A Helping Hand

How therapeutic horseback riding centers across the country are getting a lift

By Lauren Himiak

In the 1960s, a controversial form of therapy started in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Rather than using the methods of traditional physical therapy, physiotherapists worked with a specially trained horse and horse handler for a radical new approach.

Horses were instructed with specific gait, tempo and direction with the idea that movement of the horse would influence neuromuscular changes in the patient. The results were even more shocking than the unconventional therapy.

Equine-assisted therapy began helping patients with gross motor skills, articulation, respiration, posture, fine-motor skills and even speech and language abilities. It was called hippotherapy—derived from the Greek word for horse, “hippos”—and literally means treatment or therapy aided by a horse. By 1992, the therapy was recognized in the United States with the formation of the American Hippotherapy Association (AHA). All across the country and world, hippotherapy is being used to treat forms of paralysis, epilepsy, mul-

tipile sclerosis (MS), autism and Down syndrome.

Exercise for the Soul

Hippotherapy is helping children and adults dealing with such serious conditions as post-traumatic brain injury and post-stroke, adults with MS, and post-hip injury/surgery patients. While there are no age limits in hippotherapy, it is strongly recommended that children under age 2 should not ride due to the fact that their body systems are too immature. Those age 2 to 5 should only ride under a therapist's supervision, while children older than 5 can go on to therapeutic riding if they are cognitively and physically able to do so.

It is important for all therapists and riders to remember that the horse is a very powerful animal. It is an animal of strength and power, yet somehow filled with sensitivity.



'Hippotherapy is the only truly whole-person rehab phenomenon available. The horse exercises mind, body and spirit.'

— Marilyn H. Jones, PT, DPT, AHA registered therapist



Marilyn Jones, PT, DPT, AHA registered therapist, assists Kaitlyn Rose Pitot on horseback at Winslow Therapeutic Center in Warwick, NY. Winslow is accredited by the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association to offer a unique horseback riding experience to children and adults.

Perhaps it's that blend of traits that makes the horse so perfect in therapy.

"They are big, beautiful and powerful creatures that must be understood," noted Marilyn H. Jones, PT, DPT, AHA registered therapist who has worked as a PT at Winslow Therapeutic Center since 2004. "Hippotherapy is the only truly whole-person rehab phenomenon available. The horse exercises mind, body and spirit." This is

especially helpful as working with patients with debilitating conditions can be stressful and emotional, she said.

Winslow Therapeutic Center is a non-profit organization accredited by the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association located in Warwick, NY. Since 1974, Winslow has been working to offer a unique and often life-changing horseback riding experience to children and adults in

the community.

Winslow treats adults and children with a variety of conditions. Dr. Jones has worked with children suffering from cerebral palsy, autism, developmental delay, spina bifida and genetic disorders. Dr. Jones, who also worked as a farrier (horseshoer) for 12 years before becoming a PT, has witnessed the positive effects of hippotherapy first-hand.

"I remember watching a 4-year-old girl

KYLE KIELINSKI

with quadriplegic cerebral palsy finally learn to sit upright without supports after three months of treatment," recalled Dr. Jones. "It was truly a thrill for her mom, the volunteers and myself. The girl had received various therapies since the age of 5 months, and hippotherapy was the only thing that changed that ability for her."

Winslow prides itself on designing specific programs to meet the needs of children and adults with physical, mental or social disabilities. The company carefully selects and trains staff and volunteers to accommodate the needs of each patient/rider. As the goals of therapeutic riding vary as much as the individuals, Winslow therapists work to understand not only the patient's need, but also the horse's abilities.

"You have to know horses in order to work safely and effectively with them as part of your team," Dr. Jones said. "As therapists using hippotherapy in our treatment strategy, we must learn their natural behaviors and instincts, their body language and the

quirks of the individual horse."

It is this dedication to understanding that is helping to improve physical strength, balance, mobility and coordination of so many patients/riders.

Such positive results may also include increased attention, better concentration and increased learning and verbal skills, as well as improvements in self-esteem, socialization and respecting authority.

The Ride of a Lifetime

Companies are at the forefront of hippotherapy, ready to bring a creative form of therapy into a successful future, noted Carol Colegrove, representative for SureHands Lift & Care Systems, which designs lifting systems for users of hippotherapy.

"Many facilities are excited to install a lifting system because it will allow them to open their doors to so many more riders. They will no longer be limited due to the strain and complications of getting a rider on or off a horse," noted Colegrove.

What started with discovering that a horse's pelvis has the same three-dimensional movement of the human's pelvis when walking has led to a completely new form of therapy that is used across the globe. Those involved in the field are excited for what the future holds.

"I hope that all medical professions think more about the benefits of animals in therapy," Dr. Jones stated. "Once medically able, we need to get out of the sterility of the white-washed clinic and back in touch with the nature from where we originated as a species. Contact with animals distracts us from our ills and helps us heal. They have an amazing effect on the human body and soul." ■

Individuals interested in Therapeutic Riding at Winslow should go to www.winslow.org or call 845-986-6686 to schedule an evaluation and get more information.

Lauren Himiak is a freelance writer for ADVANCE.