Providing 100 life-changing equine assisted activities and therapies each week for children and adults with special needs.
Miracles happen every day at Dream Catchers.

From the word “whoa,” the first word spoken by a non-verbal child, to a hug from a child who previously avoided contact, to the freedom felt by riding on a horse instead of using a wheelchair or walker, miracles happen.

Among the more than 725 riders who have come to Dream Catchers, there are 150 distinct diagnoses – physical, emotional and cognitive. But we don’t focus on the challenges. Rather, we focus on the achievements – the smiles, laughter and improvements our students experience in and out of the saddle.

About us

Founded in 1993, Dream Catchers at the Cori Sikich Therapeutic Riding Center is a Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Int’l) Premier Accredited Riding Center.

Our horses, certified instructors and generous volunteers provide therapeutic riding and other equine assisted activities to individuals with special needs – adapted and individualized for them.

A horse’s motion closely replicates the human walk, which no machine has yet to do. Riding a horse helps improve flexibility, balance, muscle strength and concentration. It also can increase confidence, patience and self-esteem.

As a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization, we greatly depend upon the support of the community and countless volunteer hours to fulfill our mission.

Our programs

- Weekly equine assisted activities, including therapeutic riding, speech therapy and psychotherapy, designed to each participant’s capabilities to help achieve greater independence and pursue their dreams.
- With the cooperation of local schools, children in special education classes may receive therapeutic riding lessons for a 6- to 8-week period as part of their curriculum.
- Camps for junior volunteers offer a fun environment where students learn about horses and horse care, complete projects around the barn, and receive a daily riding lesson.

Creating a special place

Cori’s story

A young woman with a passion for horses lost her life to an eating disorder. The Sikich family knew what an incredible impact horses had on Cori’s life and found a way to honor her when they discovered Dream Catchers. In 2004, John and Susan Sikich gave Dream Catchers a permanent home on 22 beautiful acres, held in trust by the Cori Sikich Foundation.

The Johnsons

Dream Catchers and the amazing impact of therapeutic riding found its way into the hearts of Angie and Wade Johnson. As a trustee for the Roy R. Charles Trust, Angie with her husband Wade decided Dream Catchers was worthy of significant support. In 2006, they directed the capital improvements resulting in the state-of-the-art facility as it stands today.

Our family

Dream Catchers is fortunate to have a Board and Advisory Board of talented individuals who are dedicated to our mission and our program’s sustainability.

Our staff is a team of individuals with diverse backgrounds, which include: special and general education teachers, coaches, speech pathologist, clinical social worker, policy and program analysts, financial professional, parents of children with and without special needs and equine professionals. Their varied experiences, combined with continuing professional education and their passion for our mission, promote our commitment to excellence.

Our riders pay only a portion of the real cost of lessons – paying $55 per lesson, when the actual cost is $170. Our annual budget is more than $700,000 and approximately 75% of our annual revenue is gained through fundraising.

We rely on the generosity of our many donors to provide for scholarships and to support our operations and programs. We also depend upon, and are extremely thankful for, our extraordinary volunteers who share their time and talents with us.

Why it matters...

“When my daughter Sarah was 3 years old, she was diagnosed with Stage 4 High Risk Neuroblastoma. Her first riding lesson was when she had just turned 4 and weighed 27 pounds. She had osteoporosis from chemotherapy and being bed ridden. She began riding in October 2005 and has not stopped.

It is, in my opinion, what kept her spirit intact and gave her a fun place to go that was not about hospitals, needles and terrible pain. It gave her the freedom to move without being exhausted afterward.

Dream Catchers has been a huge part of Sarah’s overall recovery. Now at the age of 12, she rides every week, has learned many skills and is attached to many of the wonderful volunteers. We have seen other miracles.

Children who did not speak or communicate respond to horses in ways that they didn’t before. Children who are wheelchair-bound or limited with walkers and other devices are given the freedom to walk…albeit on the back of a horse…but it is a freedom like no other.

It is a place of many miracles every day. And the people who work there make dreams come true for children every day.”

~ Traci Shepard

The numbers

100 students served each week
15 horses
9 certified instructors
26 staff – 5 full-time
12 months a year of operations
4,000 lessons provided annually
200 volunteers who share their time
$700,000+ annual budget
A special thanks to

Anonymous in Loving Memory of Angie Newman Johnson
Arthur W. Perdue Foundation
Oscar F. Smith/ Marjorie Smith Charles/
Angie Newman Johnson Fund
Bruton Parish Church
Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation
Colonial Capital Williamsburg-Kiwanis Foundation
Community Foundation of Richmond & Central Virginia
Community Foundation of Texas
Cori Sikich Memorial Foundation
Cumberland Children's Hospital
Diageo Foundation
Dominion Virginia Power Foundation
The Eckels Foundation
Elaine Feld Stern Charitable Trust
Elis Olsson Memorial Foundation
Emily Balz Smith Foundation
Frieda C. Fox Family Foundation
Fun Foundation
Gilkison Family Foundation
Gladys and Franklin Clark Foundation
Gloucester Community Foundation
Greater Williamsburg Community Trust
Green Springs Garden Club
HanesBrands, Inc.
Historic Triangle Rotary Foundation
Inclusion 13
Joe and Velma DeWitt Foundation
Kammer Family Charitable Foundation
Malvin, Riggins & Company P.C.
Mary Morton Parsons Foundation
Merrill Lynch Wealth Management
Monarch Bank
Multiple Sclerosis Foundation, Inc.
Noland Foundation
Noland Memorial Foundation
The Park Foundation
The Philanthropic Collaborative
Prudential Foundation
Riverside Health System Foundation
Road Fabrics Inc.
The Rotary Club of the Historic Triangle
The Rotary Club of Williamsburg
The Roy R. Charles Charitable Trust
Sentara Healthcare Foundation
The Stone Family Charitable Foundation
Towne Bank
United Way of Greater Williamsburg
Virginia Horse Industry Board
VTABS, LLC
Williamsburg Community Foundation
Williamsburg Community Health Foundation
Williamsburg Kiwanis Foundation
Susan & John Sikich
Angie & Wade Johnson, M.D.
Joan L. Gilkison
Mrs. Betty Eckels
Laila & Rick Eckels
Sally & Mike Derrick
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Linda & John Diggles
Nan & Leighton Strader
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Patty & John Holt
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Nancy & Ed Hawfield
Kathleen & Stephen Kiefer
Fran & Bill Person
Debbie Hill
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Sue & Jack Warman
Mary Neale
Cheryl Warren & Brad Cole
Dorothy & Bob Margolin
Angela Matthews
Annette Sherman & Angela Park
Karen & Buzz Williamson
Nancy Paschall
Lisa Remington Smith
Nancy & Matt Webb
Donna & Jim Mercer
Marie Thell & Tom Miller, M.D.
Mary & Brian Clare, M.D.
Judy & Harry Wason
Nancy & James Reed
Susie & Tim Newens
Jim Loukota

Horses lend us the wings we lack.

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