



Dear Friend of LoveWay,

LoveWay, Inc. is a volunteer-driven horseback riding facility that provides equine-assisted services to individuals with disabilities in Elkhart County, Indiana. Our mission is "To empower individuals with disabilities through compassionate equine assisted services." LoveWay has been serving the needs of individuals with disabilities for 50 years and is the second oldest therapeutic equestrian center in the United States. LoveWay was founded in 1973 by Gary and Sandy Weatherwax in memory of their daughter who was interested in equine assisted services. They began giving lessons in their driveway with the help of specially selected horses and volunteers. By 1974, LoveWay was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, and, since its inception, thousands of individuals with disabilities have been served through LoveWay's programming.

In 2001, LoveWay became a Premier Accredited Center from the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH, Intl). This means LoveWay follows the highest safety standards in order to ensure our participants have a safe, effective and professional environment to learn and grow. We operate with an active Board of Directors and a small staff. Members of the board each bring important contacts from the local public, private, and equestrian communities.

The participants at LoveWay all have a diagnosed physical, cognitive, or emotional disability. Many of the participants at LoveWay are diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Other common diagnoses are Down Syndrome and other chromosomal differences, Cerebral Palsy, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Epilepsy, Developmental Delays, and learning differences. The goal of LoveWay's programming are to increase attention span and memory, improve balance and coordination, enhance social interaction skills, strengthen muscle tone, advance speech and communication skills, develop fine and gross motor skills and develop employability skills. The objectives are met through various learning activities, such as counting the number of brush strokes, memory recall of the various steps to an arena pattern, and the sequence of the grooming procedure. While mounted, riders play learning games that develop skills that can be carried over into daily living. LoveWay instructors' partner with the area schools' teachers to integrate class material into LoveWay's programming to be an extension of the classroom in a fun and unique way.

LoveWay relies on support from local businesses and the general community to fund our programs. 100% of our participants are on scholarship. Therefore, there is a constant and immediate need for scholarship funds to be able to continue to serve children with disabilities in our community. LoveWay is well-known and respected in the Northern Indiana region and is funded primarily through donations, grants and three annual fundraising events. LoveWay strives yearly to raise the over \$800,000 required to fill the scholarship needs of our participants.

Participation in the programs at LoveWay improves quality of life, teaches transferable life skills, and imparts confidence for student riders. Relationships are formed with the horses, staff, and volunteers which improves social skills. Equine-assisted activities use horses as a learning tool to stimulate parts of the brain and body that are not reached by other methods. The adaptive riding classe and Advanced Horsemanship program are the primary focus of LoveWay's service delivery.

There are limited extracurricular activities for children with disabilities but adaptive riding and advanced horsemanship are activities that allow participants to achieve a personal sense of accomplishment and independence. Programs that serve individuals with disabilities that are accessible, beneficial and empowering, are needed. LoveWay is the only equine assisted learning center in Elkhart County for individuals with disabilities and fulfills an unmet need for this underserved population. The interaction with horses adds another therapeutic dimension for special populations. Current research in the field of animal assisted therapies and adaptive riding in particular, validates the positive impact of these techniques for those we serve. Each day at LoveWay we witness the beneficial results of participation in our programs. Special education teachers and parents relay that that numerous positive changes carry over into their daily lives.

LoveWay operates in three 8-week-long sessions during the school year. During the 2021/2022 school year alone, LoveWay provided programming to over 150 students from 15 area schools across Elkhart and Cass county. The cost to LoveWay for just one student to attend programming for one session is \$2,500. Again, these incredible children are only able to experience the life changing cognitive, social, emotional, and physical benefits of equine assisted services with community partnership. Thank you for considering walking alongside LoveWay as we continue to serve those with disabilities in our community.

We hope that you will choose to support this important work. Thank you for your consideration.

With Gratefulness,

Shelley Becker
Executive Director