

2022 Annual Appeal

## A Pathway to Healing, Hope, and Independence



It's hard to believe that **Positive Strides** was founded over **40 years ago** by Jessie Browne, Sandy King, Kathy Stoddard, and Vonnie Rust in order to combine their passions for horses and helping people. We were known as Talbot Special Riders for many years and served a small group of riders with special needs in the Talbot County area. As the need for equine-assisted activities and therapies grew, the organization grew to serve adults and children in Caroline, Dorchester, Queen Anne's, and Talbot counties.

*(Left to Right)  
Founders Sandy King  
and Jessie Browne  
are recognized for  
their extraordinary  
contributions to  
Positive Strides by  
Executive Director  
Kim Hopkins Thomas  
at the Fall Festival  
40th Anniversary  
Celebration on  
October 15, 2022.*



While much has changed in the last 40 years, **Positive Strides continues to work hard to create a pathway to healing, hope, and independence for some of the most vulnerable people in our community.** From autism and addiction recovery to PTSD and cerebral palsy, equine therapy can play a powerful role in giving a person the confidence and skills they need to live a fulfilling life. Positive Strides' CATCH Riders program helps youth at risk and adults recovering from family violence and sexual abuse. Just brushing and interacting with a horse can calm a person with dementia or help someone with depression.

Our Positive Strides family works very hard to raise the bar in our organization. We want to continue to improve and expand the services we offer to our current and future riders.

We are pleased to report that participation in our therapeutic riding programs increased in 2022. Our summer session participation increased by 50% from the prior year. Most recently, we enrolled 34 riders in our 10-week Fall Therapeutic Riding Session, compared to 32 during the same time period in 2021. We are ecstatic that 100% of the participants in our year-round sessions either met or exceeded their personal goals. One of our goals as an organization is to allow our participants the ability to control their own environment. Each of our riders benefits from this newfound and growing independence. We see it in their faces every day.



*In addition to our therapeutic horses, our volunteers are critical to our success.*

*They demonstrate their commitment to helping our riders every day.*

### **Scholarships are key to assisting those in need of our services.**

Most of our clients are on fixed incomes and some receive financial aid in order for them to participate in and benefit from our therapeutic riding programs. In addition to covering the cost of program fees, financial aid includes the cost of helmets and riding boots.

It costs \$550 to sponsor one rider for a 10-week session.

## Meet Annie / Our Special Olympian

*We have a lovely young woman who was born with a genetic disorder that causes a wide range of developmental delays. We'll call her Annie. She has been a long-time participant at Positive Strides and has benefitted in multiple ways from riding here. She has even competed in the Special Olympics and has medals to show for it! Most recently, we asked her to assist with training Lucky, our newest program horse. She rides independently for most of her lessons and loves the challenge of moving Lucky through obstacles we've set up in the arena.*

*Annie's caregiver reached out to us concerned about needing to discontinue her riding due to a reduction of her monthly funding. Fortunately, Positive Strides was able to offer her a partial scholarship and the staff at her group home covered the rest of her fee. Like many of our riders, Annie's only form of exercise, as well as her only social outing, is her weekly riding time at Positive Strides. Being greeted with her bright, beautiful smile when she arrives for her lesson warms our hearts and would be impossible for us to turn away.*



## You are an important partner in our work.

Donations are essential to the success of our programs. We are supporting other riders with scholarships and expect to see the number of riders needing assistance to grow. While there is a great cost involved to maintain our programs, Positive Strides will not turn any rider away due to their inability to pay. Your gift allows us to provide financial assistance to those in need.

A portion of the proceeds from this year's annual appeal will support the Positive Strides scholarship program which supports our mission to build confidence, self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment for children and adults with physical, cognitive and emotional needs.

### Please consider sponsoring a rider at one or more of the following levels:

- Blue Ribbon: \$550 sponsors a rider for a ten-week riding session (Spring/Fall)
- Red Ribbon: \$330 sponsors a rider for a six-week riding session (Summer/Winter)
- Yellow Ribbon: \$100 purchases a pair of adult riding boots
- White Ribbon: \$50 purchases a rider's helmet



Our riders inspire us each and every day. We are grateful for our donors who make it possible for us to continue to serve our community after 40 years.

**Thank you** for being a part of our extraordinary, winning Positive Strides Team. We could not do it without you.

We wish you a wonderful holiday season.

Jeff Wright, Board President  
choptankriver@gmail.com

Kim Hopkins Thomas, Executive Director  
positivestridesed@gmail.com

**IMPORTANT:** Are you receiving our quarterly e-newsletter? Send an email to [positivestridescenter@gmail.com](mailto:positivestridescenter@gmail.com) to receive our latest news and events.

Please make checks payable to Positive Strides and mail to the PO Box address below. You can donate via PayPal, Debit or Credit card by visiting our [website](#) and selecting Donate.



**Contact Us**

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[PositiveStridesCenter](#)

Positive Strides is a 501(c)3 nonprofit and your donations are tax-deductible, so save your receipt for your taxes.