

Christmas Letter

Nature's Edge Therapy Center, Inc. • 2523 14 3/4 Ave. • Rice Lake, WI 54868



Walk together—
Head, hands and
heart in harmony . . .



Work together—
Thriving and flourishing!



**Alongside each
other—**
Valuing each person

Walk with me . . .

Accompanying is at the heart of therapy at Nature's Edge

It is not unusual to hear a parent or caregiver remark that before coming to Nature's Edge for therapy, they felt alone, surrounded by many obstacles without solutions. They often comment in their own words that the experience of receiving therapy for their loved one with disabilities at Nature's Edge comes with a sense of hope, of being accompanied. For us, skilled medical therapy must be built on the solid foundation of accompanying. Read on to hear our patients and their families speak . . .

p. 4

WHY NATURE & ANIMALS

The ubiquitous therapy
tools at Nature's Edge

p. 5

SOCIAL SKILLS IN THE HERD

Necessary life skills
taught in the arena

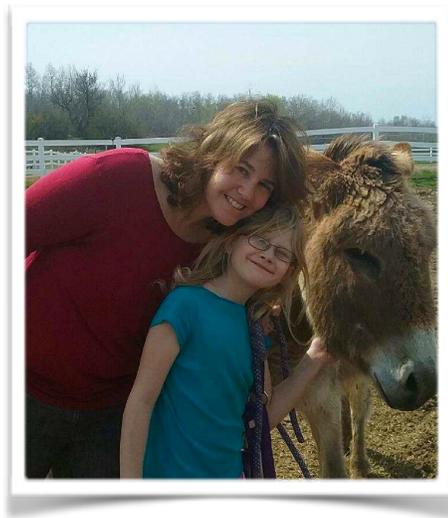
p. 6

WELCOME CHLOE!

The community
celebrates Chloe's
homecoming

Accompanying — the foundation for successful therapy

Much more than applying techniques, therapy at Nature's Edge joins skills to everyday living while walking alongside.



“Just wanted you to know what an amazing few days we've had . . .” was how the note began. Those kind of words are exactly what therapists and staff at Nature's

Edge delight to hear, because the goal of treatment at Nature's Edge is that skills learned in therapy will transfer into life and result in “amazing days.” At Nature's Edge licensed and certified speech and occupational therapists use conventional therapy methods reinforced by a

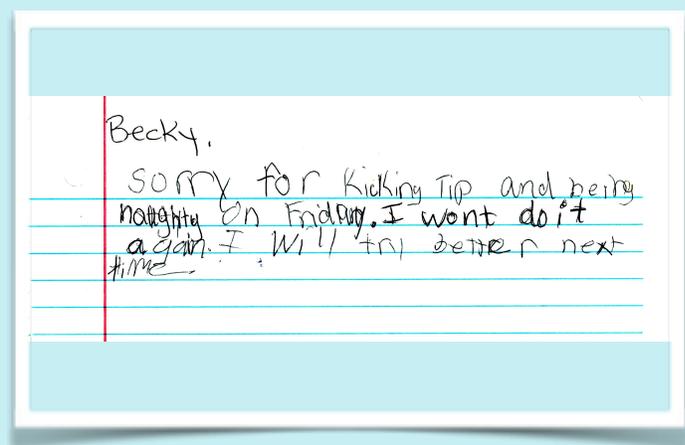
motivating team of furry, feathery and four-legged companions and the improvisations of nature to energize a deliberate process of



drawing out and developing skills that promote greater independence for our patients. It's deeply practical therapy, joining necessary skills to everyday living through treatment on the Nature's Edge ranch, with the help of animals and nature. We know it works. It's confirmed when we read a note from a family that says something like this one: “We cannot thank you enough for the transformation we have seen in our sweet girl!” Or like this one: “You've helped shape and give him the help he needed to become the person he will be and wants to be!” Or this one: “#forevergrateful . . . This would not be possible without the help of Nature's Edge.” We call it accompanying.

LESS THAN IDEAL CHOICES TRANSFORM INTO TEACHABLE MOMENTS

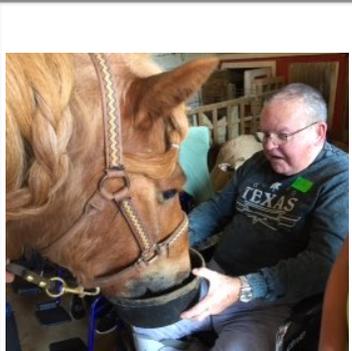
Bringing therapy into life means accompanying in less than ideal moments, when a full meltdown is happening or a hurtful response is chosen. At Nature's Edge we create a space where patients can work with their experience and come to understand themselves better and the direction needed to achieve a life skill. More than techniques, it's a seamless movement from drawing out to moving on.



Accompanying seniors

Reminiscing on the Farm – a little touch of “healing and peace”

With support from Bader Philanthropies, Nature’s Edge again offered the “Reminiscing on the Farm”



program for seniors from June to September. The program emphasizes quality companionship and a healthy dose of reminiscing for a “refresh” experience. Volunteers who accompany seniors during the Reminiscing visit note that seniors may arrive “aloof and shy,” but they leave “chatty and smiling.” Encounters recorded by volunteers during this summer’s visits include these: “Two of our guests had a dog like Tippy 50 years ago also named Tippy. They both were very excited!” “One lady said she had never hugged a horse before and she loved hugging and kissing Pride (our minihorse). It made

her day!” “Olo (the pig) came to visit and LOVED getting brushed. Everyone LOVED brushing him.” “It was a rainy day, and everyone seemed tired. We all laughed because even the horses were yawning!” Memories and laughter in the barn make for a special day.

Dear Friends,

From the perspective of November looking back along the path that we have walked, the year appears to have slipped past so quickly, and yet with significant gains. Nature’s Edge, now a 17-year-old organization, has experienced healthy growth in this year. There are many memorable milestones from along the way, but I will mention only the following:

2017 “Evening in Elegance” Gala

2017 began with a record-breaking attendance at our “Evening in Elegance” Gala fundraiser. This festive evening in the midst of January cold provides an excellent start to our year and our annual fundraising efforts. Please mark your calendar to attend the 2018 Gala, to be held on January 19. You make our Gala a success!

Winning a Gypsy Vanner horse

Spring came to Nature’s Edge with a rare opportunity – to win a Gypsy Vanner horse free from LexLin Gypsy Ranch in Rockville, Tenn., through daily Facebook voting. We took the challenge. Initially it was a huge task to engage people everywhere, asking them to vote daily for our Gypsy horse. Throughout the weeks of voting, our Facebook presence grew into a team that assembled 11,700 votes to bring our horse home. We also saw a huge jump in awareness of the services we offer at Nature’s Edge. Thank you for your votes that won our horse – Chloe, a gentle, seven-year-old mare!

Nature’s Edge depends heavily on your support for continued growth. We have accomplished much this year because of your involvement in the Nature’s Edge community, and I am so grateful for each one of you. May you have a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous 2018 in all that you do! See you at the Gala!

– Becky Payne, Director, Founder, SLP

Nature, the perfect arena; Animals, the perfect companions

Therapy animals and the nurture of nature are important facets of speech and occupational therapy services provided at Nature's Edge.



Because therapy sessions are often accompanied by animals or take place in the out-of-doors — *exceptional sensory stimulators since all learning processes through the senses* — the progress that patients achieve coheres and transfers much more easily from our setting to their everyday settings. Skills acquired in the quiet of a wooded path, on a horse or observing the interactions of animals are grasped without unneeded clutter. The humble

roots of nature and animal companions provide the optimum arena for achieving growth.

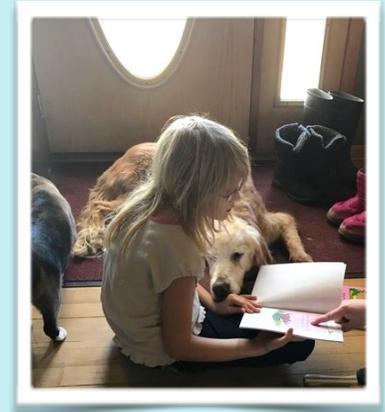


RIP – Buddy

Big Pawprints to fill . . .

We can't say enough about Buddy, our Golden

Retriever who passed in May at 16 years old. He was a dog with an obvious disability – only three legs and one seeing eye. His example encouraged and motivated



countless patients at Nature's Edge. What did he contribute? Certainly love and affection, warmth and acceptance. But what he exemplified was even more powerful—a lot of courage and self-leadership. His happy bark, smiling face and wagging tail, his love of being read to and of accompanying patients during sessions formed the "Buddy factor," a message without words that strengthened our therapy center for 16 years. One young patient's prayer at Buddy's grave was this: *"Thank you for allowing Buddy to rub against my shoulder, cuddle with me and listen to my stories. Thank you, God. Amen."*

“Co-collaborators — animals and nature accompanying the therapist to deepen the experience and respond to it together.”

Social skills — life lessons in the arena



Teaching social skills is all about identifying the competencies needed for healthy interaction and communication with others through verbal and nonverbal means. At Nature's Edge, social skills are taught to youth through summer

group programs on horseback. Involving the horse in the social learning process has many benefits. The horse is important for increasing motivation and for encouraging youth to try new things. Being on horseback enlarges the experience to make it fresh, more vivid and inspiring. Young riders must take control of their horse, providing leadership for a live animal. They must talk to the horse and use their body to control the horse — hands to reins, seat to stop the horse, legs and knees for pressure to assist in moving the horse. They must recognize wordless messages coming from their horses' ears, eyes, and posturing of the horse toward them and/or toward other horses in the group and communicate calmness, patience and quietness to the horse. Life-situation metaphors abound and are



easily applied to the relationships developing in the arena. While riding in the arena, youth initiate greetings, provide directions to one another for executing obstacles, and relay messages for performing group patterns. A favorite

activity is an egg-passing game. Each youth draws a face on an egg that conveys a feeling and then passes the egg on horseback to someone else, trying not to drop the egg and crack it, metaphorical of expressing and respecting each other's feelings. Learning and practicing social skills in the arena is more stimulating than sitting around a table trying to learn to interact with one another!



Teaching social skills in the arena requires a large group of volunteers.

Community wins Chloe and welcomes her home

The Nature's Edge community wins a great therapy horse through faithful Facebook voting



Chloe, the Gypsy Vanner horse donated to Nature's Edge by LexLin Gypsy Ranch, was won for Nature's Edge with 11,790 Facebook votes. Supporters of Nature's Edge cast votes daily via Facebook or by email during the 60-day voting period and accomplished a surprising climb

from the 28th position of 60 competing therapy centers to the #12 spot. The top 20 centers received horses. The Gypsy Vanner horse because of its engaging temperament, strength, intelligence and movement is ideal for therapy. Becky Payne, director of Nature's Edge, and Barb Flouro, member of the Board of Directors of Nature's Edge, received Chloe at the Passing of the Lead Ceremony at LexLin Ranch in Rockwood, Tenn., on July 21. Chloe arrived at Nature's Edge at the end of July and was presented to the community in an open house celebration in September with stablemate, Simba, also a Gypsy Vanner who was purchased from LexLin. Approximately 200 people attended the open house and enjoyed a complimentary noon meal, the opportunity to meet Chloe and Simba, as well as the other horses in the Nature's Edge therapy herd. Presentations by Molly Lee of Thrivent Financial, a sponsor of the event, Veterinarian Rebecca Blotz and Trainer Josy Wood were scheduled throughout the afternoon.



Trainer Josy Wood demonstrated the movement and disposition of the Gypsy Vanner horse on Simba at Chloe's open house event.

Working together with you — we can make a difference . . .

Accompanied by you for a year of impact

Outcomes that last a lifetime for children and adults with disabilities is the goal of treatment at Nature's Edge. Many of the families who seek therapy at Nature's Edge for a loved one with disabilities face economic difficulty. Insurance coverage and reimbursement may be poor; the ongoing cost of treatment accumulates. That's why over 25% of our therapy sessions were provided through scholarships during 2017. As a non-profit organization providing skilled medical services, we depend on donations to help us offset the expense of our service. We are grateful for the dollars raised through fundraising efforts and granting; however, our future and our ability to help others who need our services depend on you. Your interest in Nature's Edge, your time, your talents, your suggestions, your sponsorship of our therapy animals and your financial contributions for scholarships and toward general operating expenses make all the difference month to month at Nature's Edge. Please donate!



PROGRAM FUNDING & VETERINARY CARE

Many thanks to Bader Philanthropies and the Petco Foundation for their grant assistance.

SCHOLARSHIPS

The Rice Lake Community Health Foundation and the Wis. Horse Council provided over 175 patient scholarships.

ANIMAL SPONSORSHIP

In-kind donations and personal support for therapy animals help to keep our animal costs to a minimum.

A GENEROUS COMMUNITY

Your generosity – in so many ways – allows us to make a difference in the lives of our patients – in so many ways!

YOUR CHARITABLE GIVING PROVIDES NEEDED THERAPY

Yes, I would like to give a donation of \$_____ to Nature's Edge. Please use my donation as indicated:

- Scholarships for Therapy Sessions** **Animal Care** **Where Most Needed**

Name _____ Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____ Email _____

Mail to: Nature's Edge Therapy Center, 2523 14 ¾ Ave., Rice Lake, WI 54868

Nature's Edge is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

CHECK US OUT ON THE WEB OR FACEBOOK! www.naturesedgetherapycenter.org



FOLLOW US ON TWITTER!



LIKE US ON FACEBOOK!



COMING TOGETHER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE — THE NATURE'S EDGE COMMUNITY . . .

- People coming together to help improve the lives of others through targeted therapy.
- People who dedicate time, talents and resources to open new levels of communication, increase contentment and provide everyday life skills for patients with disabilities.
- People who know that their lives are enriched as they enrich the lives of others.
- People who believe that each patient, young or old, has much to offer to their families and to society.



Nature's Edge Therapy Center – A place for involvement and growth!