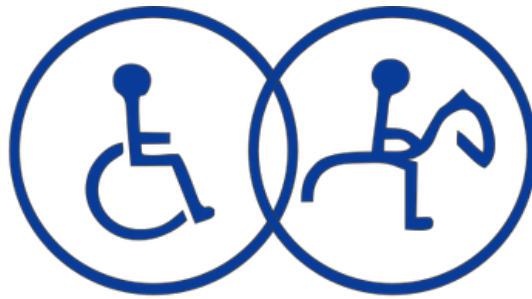


We are SPIRIT

Annual Report 2025



SPIRIT

OPEN EQUESTRIAN PROGRAM INC.



Adaptive • Therapeutic • Relationship-Centered

Strength in Stability

In 2025, SPIRIT focused on strengthening that foundation — investing in the people, horses, and infrastructure that make our programs possible. From improvements to our facility to the addition of dedicated workspace and specialized stalls, each step was taken to better support our participants and the team that serves them.

At a time when many programs are scaling back, the need in our community continues to grow. SPIRIT is meeting that need by building a more sustainable, professional model — one that allows us to serve more individuals with consistency, quality, and care.

As we look ahead, our focus is on strengthening what we've built: continuing to develop our horses, investing in volunteer and instructor training, and expanding partnerships that extend our reach.

We are creating a place where individuals of all abilities can build confidence, independence, and connection — one partnership at a time.

Cynda Zurfluh

Board President & Acting Executive Director



The retrospective

Over the past year, SPIRIT made intentional investments in our facility and operations to better support our programs and the people we serve.

These improvements were not just about space - they were about creating an environment where participants, volunteers, and horses can thrive. A more functional, organized facility allows our team to focus on what matters most: delivering high-quality, consistent programming.

From upgraded arenas and turnout spaces to improved volunteer coordination and program flow, these changes are already creating a more consistent and supportive experience for participants.

A Changing Landscape

As public and local resources shift, many traditional support services have become more limited. At the same time, demand for our programs continues to grow.

SPIRIT is helping to fill that gap.

The work we began in 2024 and expanded in 2025 has positioned us to meet this moment with a stronger foundation, a clearer structure, and the ability to serve our community more effectively.



Sarah's Journey



Sarah began riding at SPIRIT more than ten years ago through our therapeutic riding program.

Over time, she developed the confidence, strength, and horsemanship skills that led her into Equine-Assisted Learning, where she has served as an EAL for the past four years.

Today, she is a capable rider, trusted helper, and mentor to volunteers and riders of all ages - a powerful example of how participants grow into leaders within the SPIRIT community.

“For many EAL participants, the barn becomes a place where they are known, needed, and capable - often for the first time.”

Our Programs

We offer a range of equine-assisted services designed to support individuals of all ages and abilities. Each program uses the partnership between horse and human to foster growth, confidence, and connection.

Therapeutic Riding

Instructor-led riding sessions that support physical, cognitive, and emotional development while building confidence and independence.

Therapeutic Horsemanship

Ground-based programs focused on communication, responsibility, and life skills through hands-on work with horses.

Hippotherapy

Licensed occupational, physical, and speech therapists use the horse's natural movement as part of skilled therapy intervention to support balance, coordination, strength, sensory processing, and functional skills. The horse becomes an active partner in therapy.



Veterans Program

A specialized program supporting veterans in building strength, connection, and resilience through partnership with horses.

Beginner Riding

A structured introduction to riding fundamentals, building balance, coordination, and confidence through progressive skill development with our school horses.

Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy

Licensed mental health professionals guide participants through therapeutic interactions with horses to address emotional, behavioral, and relational challenges.

School & Youth Workshops

Engaging, hands-on programs that introduce students to horsemanship while building teamwork, confidence, and communication skills.

Across all programs, participants are not passive recipients — they are active partners in the work, building skills through meaningful interaction with the horses and the environment around them.



A Veteran's Story

Faith began participating in SPIRIT's Veterans Program through Walter Reed.

Week after week, she has embraced the opportunity to work with the horses on the ground, learn horsemanship skills, and ride - often sharing the experience alongside her wife.

As she prepares for the transition from military service into civilian life, Faith plans to continue her journey at SPIRIT as a volunteer and will continue riding lessons.

Horses have become an important part of how she maintains balance, connection, and wellbeing while building the next chapter of her life.



“For many veterans, time with the horses offers a space to reconnect — with themselves, with others, and with what comes next.”

Our Impact

At a glance...

375+

participants served each year

8,000

volunteer hours annually

\$250,000

2026 annual program operating goal

Community & Educational Partners

Eastern Ridge: Eastern Ridge Preschool has been a valued community partner for many years, bringing students and staff to SPIRIT for engaging, nature-based learning experiences centered around horses, teamwork, and exploration.

Bishop O'Connell High School: Committed student groups dedicated to stable management and community outreach.

Teaching Horse Corporate Training: Delivering leadership and EQ development to corporate teams through Equine Assisted Learning.



Southlakes STEP Story

For more than a decade, SPIRIT has partnered with the South Lakes High School STEP (Secondary Transition to Employment Program), welcoming students to the barn for hands-on work experiences that build confidence, responsibility, and workplace skills.

Many STEP participants have gone on to pursue employment or volunteer opportunities, and Nick is one of those success stories. After joining SPIRIT as a STEP participant, he has continued to contribute to barn operations while working alongside the supervising teacher to support current STEP students during their weekly visits.

Whether they're helping with barn chores, facility projects, or horse care, STEP students gain practical experience in a welcoming environment where they can build skills and confidence. Our long-standing partnership with STEP reflects SPIRIT's commitment to creating meaningful opportunities for young adults to learn, grow, and contribute to their community.



“Meaningful work, supportive mentors, and a welcoming community help students see what’s possible.”

2025 Donor Honor Roll

We are grateful for the individuals, families, and partners whose support makes this work possible. Their commitment provides the stability that allows SPIRIT to serve our community with consistency and care. Their support fuels not only daily operations, but the continued growth and professionalism of our programs.

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 Daniel & Susan, Sarah Blalock
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 Ed Brimberg
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