

Story below by Melissa Hayflinger, A rider in the Dream Riders program

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"Dream Riders Offers Fun for Unlikely Rider"

Dream Riders, a therapeutic riding program in Lexington, continues to serve more people with special needs. Melissa Hayflinger, a special education teacher from Richland School District 2 and also a person with special needs herself, having cerebral palsy, recently gave her experience at dream riders from a teacher's perspective.

"I am apprehensive as I race down I-20 West towards Lexington. It has been 20 years since I have been on a horse. Will I be able to ride without falling off? I don't know.

"I see many friendly faces waiting to greet me as I bound down the hilly driveway on my way to the riding area. I meet Corky Dyer and Jennifer Stoudemire along with a handful of volunteers. Everyone is kind and doesn't laugh as I gingerly mount the horse that is waiting patiently for me."

"During the lessons that follow, I learn about the care of the horse as well as how to ride him. There are many riders younger and more physically involved than I am, but we all seem to gain something from Jennifer's teaching."

"She makes me stretch and use muscles that I never knew I had. She also works on following directions, socialization, and basic reading skills throughout the lesson. Riders are encouraged to talk to each other and interact with the volunteers."

"I have found Dream Riders to be a fun form of speech, physical, and occupational therapy all rolled up into one. I would encourage disabled individuals to check out this fun and educational form of entertainment. It certainly beats the gym."

Dream Riders has been developed with safety as a priority. This requires that registration, medical forms, and individual appraisals by the Dream Riders' certified instructors be completed before any applicant can be accepted into the program.