

# The Equest Center for Therapeutic Riding Continues Decades-Long Partnership with Meijer

At Meijer, we believe in supporting the communities we serve. Our partnership with the Equest Center for Therapeutic Riding is a testament to this commitment – a relationship that has continued to grow for decades. As the Equest Center celebrates its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2025, we're reflecting on the journey we've shared and looking forward to the future.

The Equest Center opened its facility in Rockford, Mich. in June 1990, providing unique therapeutic horseback riding programs as the prime means of restoring hope, health, and happiness to individuals with disabilities. Beginning with just 16 riders each week, a handful of horses, and seven acres of land, the organization has grown tremendously, now serving more than 210 individuals each week, with a waiting list of more than 60 individuals and a herd of 35 therapy horses on more than 34 acres of land.

Our relationship with Equest Center began with a shared vision: To make a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities. Over the years, we've sponsored signature events, special programs and initiatives. The Equest Center was also a recipient of our [Meijer Team Gives program](#) in 2021.

"We are incredibly grateful for our partnership with Meijer over the years," said Kathy Ryan, Executive Director of the Equest Center. "From supporting our annual Horsin Around the Derby event to participating in our many volunteering opportunities, to their Walker Distribution Center choosing us for their Meijer Team Gives donation, we feel the love from Meijer every day, which helps us immensely to serve more families in need."

At Equest Center, the programs are designed to meet the unique needs of each rider. Their therapeutic riding program uses horseback riding to promote physical, emotional, and social well-being. We're inspired by their innovative approach to therapy – whether it's music therapy on horseback, its new equine-assisted reading program, or their program for the deaf and hard of hearing, which was introduced to address a critical gap in the community.

"The Equest Center is so much more than a place to ride horses – it is a place of freedom, connection and growth for all families who visit. Our son has been both riding and volunteering at the Equest Center for a few years and continues to make incredible strides in his confidence, persistence, physical strength, social relationships and so many other facets that contribute his everyday life skills," said Kristin Lake, an IT project manager at Meijer. "As a parent who is deeply impacted by this organization, I'm proud to work for a company that recognizes the unique and important work that the Equest Center does. It's a special place that is changing lives and my family is forever grateful."

Our support extends beyond funding. We believe in rolling up our sleeves and working alongside the Equest Center team. When a group from Meijer joined the Equest Center to engage with kids through sign language, our team members jumped in wholeheartedly. Seeing the smiles on the children's faces was a reminder of the profound impact this partnership has on everyone involved.

As part of our ongoing relationship, Meijer team members recently visited the organization and were delighted to learn more about "Fred the turtle," a play structure that was once a beloved feature of the legendary Meijer "Oasis" play area at our Plainfield store. Over the years, Fred had become a cherished fixture at the Equest Center, but had seen better days. To help preserve this piece of shared history, Meijer sponsored Fred's much-needed "glow-up," ensuring he continues to bring joy and smiles to everyone who visits.

