

2023

Restoring Excellence Mid-Year Impact Report

"Love recognizes no barriers.
It jumps hurdles, leaps fences,
penetrates walls to arrive at its
destination full of hope."

~ *Maya Angelou*



Restoring Excellence

Following years of collaboration with The Bridge Center, in August of 2022, its Board of Directors transferred operations of the 20-acre campus to Easterseals Massachusetts (ESMA).

Reopening The Bridge Center after its closure in 2020, required an energetic workforce, significant financial investment, and community support. The grounds and all the buildings on the property needed major repairs to safely welcome participants, staff, animals, and community members back on campus.

While we arrived at this destination *full of hope*, the outpouring of support and love from Bridgewater residents and surrounding communities, as well as long-time ESMA supporters and mission partners, provided the critical funds and volunteers to *jump hurdles*. These *barriers* came in the shape of taking down old paddocks, trimming overgrown shrubbery, removing debris from the pond, cutting fallen trees, painting worn fences, hauling heavy stones, replacing roofs, scrubbing floors and windows, installing playground chips, and so much more.

In January, ESMA launched **The Bridge Center Restoring Excellence 2023** campaign and set an ambitious community goal of raising \$300,000 to fund critical renovation projects, grounds restoration, and new programs. To date, our community has generously contributed \$92,000 in monetary and in-kind gifts and services directly in support of The Bridge Center.

Thanks to your financial support and volunteer effort, The Bridge Center is once again a bustling destination *full of hope*. Today, our fences corral grazing horses and our walls echo with the sound of children laughing and participating in a wide variety of recreational activities.

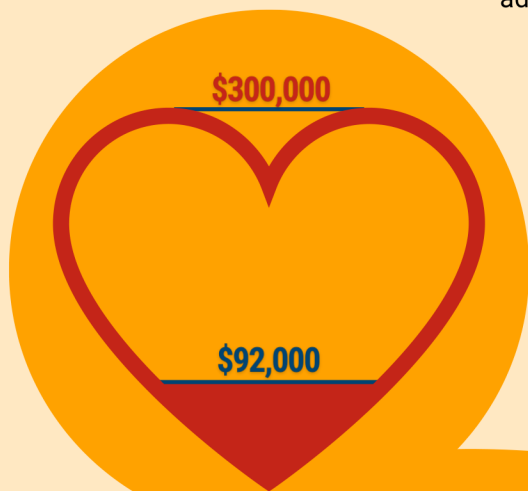
Our campus now offers adaptive riding and horsemanship sessions, as well as recreation programs for kids aged 7 through 16 that include arts and crafts, motor activities, cooking and baking classes, and physical games. In less than six months, The Bridge Center has enrolled more than 100 participants.

In a short span of time, The Bridge Center has brought together a community of passionate people with the common purpose of empowering people with disabilities. This beautiful property provides ESMA with a designated location to continually update and innovate programs in response to the evolving needs of our participants. Soon, The Bridge Center will offer programs for all ages; as young as six months old, all the way through the lifespan.

Although The Bridge Center has made significant progress since reopening, several capital renovation projects and new program offerings need your support. This fall, The Bridge Center will expand programming for participants of all ages with the introduction of classes in art, dance, music, and adaptive exercise. The

Equestrian Center will also host horsemanship opportunities for Veterans, adaptive carriage driving, and hippotherapy (a form of physical therapy using equine movement). As we plan ahead for 2024 and achieving our camp licensure, repair work on the swimming pool and pool house will be major renovation projects.

Through your support, we boldly demonstrate *love recognizes no barriers*. Your generosity also enlarges our community impact. For more information on **The Bridge Center Restoring Excellence 2023** campaign and on how you can help fill our heart, scan the QR code. Heartfelt thank you.



Former Participant Creates & Donates Art Tribute

During his live remarks at the presentation of this beautiful rendering of The Bridge Center through the years, Artist Alex Wilson said, "As a former horse rider and a volunteer, I have so many great memories of time spent at The Bridge Center when I was young. When the world shut down because of the pandemic and the campus closed, I was worried The Bridge Center would be forever forgotten. I am so grateful for Easterseals Massachusetts and to be back here today at a place full of friendship, riding, and fun!"

Editor's Note: Alex's original piece is now displayed on campus in The Equestrian Center. Come for a visit to view this priceless work of art and to meet members of our herd. Contact Vice President of Development Cyndi Forcier at 508.751.6329 or cforcier@eastersealsma.org to schedule a tour.



Heartful Donors

These individuals and business partners have generously filled our heart with contributions to The Bridge Center Restoring Excellence 2023 campaign and expanded disability services for children, adults and Veterans in Massachusetts. Gifts were made during the January through June 2023 campaign period.

Anonymous Parent*
Charlie Alexander
Antonio Batista
Kathleen Burdick-Lachance
Alexis Campbell
Heather DePalma
Elizabeth Durant
Christopher Giron
James Griffin
Kathleen Hall
Tristen Harvey
Patricia Heelan
HyGain Feed
Ed Ivaldi*
Nicole Kniffen
Caroline Larson
Catherine Lee
Rachel Macphail
Paula McDonald
Susan Molloy-Devins

Robert & Dawn Seiple*
Laurie Souza
Conor Sweeney
Joseph Vickers
Simon Young
Apex Tile*
The Belknap White Group*
The Zagrobski Family*
Comcast NBCUniversal*
Griffin Maintenance Services*
H. W. Foote Paint & Decorating Center*
MB Bark Mulch*
Point32Health*
Bridgewater VFW Post 2125*
Verizon Foundation
Willow Brook Farms

*Bridge Center Benefactors donated monetary and in-kind gifts and services valued at \$1,000 or more.

Special thanks to all the individuals who have generously participated in The Bridge Center Amazon "Wish List" campaigns and purchased items totaling \$2,500 in support of our herd and programs.

We make every effort to verify the accuracy of names and data. Please bring errors or omissions to our attention by contacting Executive Assistant Debbie Stevens at 508.751.6302 or dstevens@eastersealsma.org.

Heartfelt Volunteers

Special thanks to residents of Bridgewater and surrounding communities, as well as ESMA staff and board members who showed up in work gear, eager and ready to volunteer on numerous Community Clean Up Days. Also, appreciation to employees from CVS Health, Quality Beverage, Starbucks, CJ Media, Wellington Management, ForHealth Consulting at UMass Chan Medical School, State Street, and ThreatX, who took part in TeamWork Days, all volunteering their time and energy in care of The Bridge Center.

Words of Support

"My son, Jamie, has never met a horse he did not instantly love. It could be a Clydesdale or a pony. Jamie, who has a rigid form of Cerebral Palsy, grins nonstop when he is around horses. He has spent so much time in a wheelchair looking up at people, that when he has a chance to be on a horse looking down at us, that is a big joke to Jamie. He always loves a good laugh.

"One time, while riding a horse, Jamie saw his reflection in a mirror that was mounted on the wall in the arena and he screamed with delight. It was a beautiful sound. When Jamie is riding, the movement and warmth from the horse loosens his muscles. We are so grateful to Easterseals Massachusetts for the much-needed Adaptive Riding Program."

~ Parent

"The work involved in restoring The Bridge Center is going to take many strong hands and generous hearts. When our daughter Heather was young, the accessible swim program coordinated by Easterseals Massachusetts provided vital aquatic therapy which eventually enabled her to walk. It also gave Heather a place where she could have fun and enjoy being a kid and meeting new friends. That experience is something for which our family will always be grateful, and that is why we gave to The Bridge Center."

~ Walter Zagrobski & Family

