

Lisa James

PATH Certified Instructor

PATH Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning

Lisa is a life-long horse lover, and the older sibling to a sister, Lori, who was born with a disability, both of which inspired her to become involved in the field of therapeutic riding and horsemanship.

Lisa got her start in the world of therapeutic riding as a volunteer in 2005, with a new program in Mendon, NY, called Equicenter. It was through the encouragement of her best friend, Janis Clifton (who had become involved in Therapeutic riding and started a program in Bristol, Connecticut), and a new friend Peg Jacobsen (who was involved in the development of Equicenter), that Lisa found out about this wonderful way for horses to help people.

After volunteering for a couple of years, and having become an employee of Equicenter as a caretaker of the lesson horses, Lisa decided to pursue becoming an instructor in 2007. "The bond between horse and rider, the obvious joy that riding brought the participants, and the noticeable improvement in the riders' physical and cognitive abilities, was just too wonderful to me, and I had to become more involved," she says.

Through her mentors at Equicenter, and interning at Heritage Christian Services Therapeutic Riding Program in Webster with Lorrie Renker, Lisa achieved her Therapeutic Riding Instructor Certification in July 2009. In 2012, she added a 2nd certification in Equine Facilitated Mental Health and Learning, in which interactions between horses and participants are mostly on the ground, instead of in the saddle. Participants focus on relationship building through observing horse behavior and learning to develop a relationship with horses using body language, building trust, learning emotional self-control, and working on leadership skills.

Lisa has also taught at Purple Pony Therapeutic Horsemanship in Bergen, NY, and Quest Horsemanship in Canandaigua, NY. Lisa was delighted to be part of a program that served Ontario County, as no program had previously existed there, where Lisa lived for over 30 years. Changes to the Quest program in 2017 resulted in the non-profit program moving to its current location in Canandaigua, and Rise Up Therapeutic Horsemanship was born. The program primarily seeks to serve the residents of Ontario and Yates counties, where the need is great.

Lisa has been married to Jerry James for 39 years, and together they have 4 grown children. Jerry has also been involved in therapeutic riding as a volunteer for 10 years. They reside in Middlesex, NY, with their dog Cobe, and their 2 Arabian horses, Tsoux Zanna and Khazz. Lisa also works at Thompson Hospital in the laboratory, where she is the Lead Tech in the phlebotomy department.