

The first time someone tells you that your child has Autism or is Autistic, a million “what ifs” start spinning in your head. The words hit like a sudden jolt, and you’re overwhelmed by emotions. The future suddenly seems uncertain, and you’re struck with fear, confusion, and an overwhelming sense of responsibility. What if they struggle with communication? What if they’re never able to make friends? What if they’ll never feel truly understood? All these questions begin to circle in your mind. The weight of it all is paralyzing at first. Suddenly, you're thrust into medical terminology, therapy options, educational plans, and special considerations. There are doctors to see, assessments to complete, and mountains of research to navigate. It feels like every choice you make carries the weight of ensuring your child’s future and every misstep could have lasting consequences.

Then there was something that began to shift. Slowly, we started to realize that understanding autism didn’t mean we had to understand everything all at once. By stepping back from the pressure, Liam was able to simply be himself. We focused on recognizing his strengths and supporting his needs as they arose.

While the world struggled during COVID-19, we saw a different reality for Liam during our time remote schooling. Liam thrived! His stress decreased, his tantrums diminished, and he was more engaged and genuinely more happy. After years of struggling with school, pull-out supports, and IEP meetings we realized that homeschooling was our next journey.

Cue the uncertainty and fear again! We knew that an excellent curriculum was only a small piece of what our son truly needed. So, we set out to explore every possible therapeutic option to support his growth. When we discovered Equine Therapy, we instinctively felt it could be a great fit for Liam, but we never imagined just how deeply it would resonate with him. Without hesitation, we applied to Horse and Buddy, hoping we could get him in as soon as possible.

Equine therapy offers so much more than we expected: it's a multi-sensory experience that engages both verbal and nonverbal communication, strengthens core muscles, builds self-confidence, and fosters emotional growth. But what we found at Horse and Buddy turned out to be even more than we could have hoped for. The barn is a vibrant, almost magical place, filled with dedicated staff and volunteers who radiate warmth, care, and genuine



understanding. From the moment Liam arrived, he felt not just welcomed, but truly seen. The team at Horse and Buddy recognized his unique strengths and knew exactly how to bring them out in each session.

This summer, through the Barn Buddies program, Liam not only learned how to care for the horses, but he gained invaluable life skills through hands-on experience and real responsibility. The growth we've witnessed in him, his increased confidence, his improved communication, and his emotional development, has been nothing short of extraordinary.

To say that Horse and Buddy has been life-changing may sound like a cliché, but in Liam's case, it's undeniably true. The skills he's gained have rippled out, impacting every area of his life.

By donating to Horse and Buddy, your generosity empowers the incredible staff and volunteers who are tirelessly dedicated to creating life-changing experiences. With your support, we can extend the reach of this powerful program, allowing more individuals to discover the profound benefits and lasting impact that equine therapy can bring to their lives. Your donation is not just a contribution; it's a commitment to changing lives, one ride at a time.

