

On the Right Way on Horseback Foundation

My name is Irén Piti, I am the leader of the Foundation. I have been dealing with horse therapy for 3 years. I have been attending courses supported by the International Save of Children since 1998. In practice, I basically work with children. Together with the parents, we established this foundation to develop more and more children's abilities and improve our conditions. The basic conditions for the therapy are provided by a private individual from August, 2002. He has put his stable, his trained horses and a pony for our disposal. The environment are on European standards but there has not been a covered, indoor track yet. The Foundation, which was registered in October, 2002, has to provide the needed background for development and for a long-term operation. Now, I am dealing with 3 mentally disabled and 1 mentally retarded children, 8 students with learning difficulties and 2 healthy youngsters with concentration problems. Dealing with mentally disabled the therapy is dominated, while with children with learning difficulties the remedial volige is stressed.

Ideal environment for horses and riders



Cultivated, large field for the stud



Bright stable with large size stalls



Sheltered storing of hay and walking machine



Good quality tools for riders and horses



Well-kept, open-air ground

Preparation for the school



The seven-year-old, retarded girl has participated in the courses for eight months. The kindergarten recommended her not to start the school at the age of six. She is usually afraid of new things and cannot work in team. She has balance problems and her body scheme is underdeveloped. She could not keep the balance on the horse back. At the beginning, she was willing to mount on horse just with me. At the moment she can correct her sitting position and her posture becomes more and more upright. She is better at concentrating, too.



Paired exercises



The most favourite exercises of the children are the paired practices.



They pay attention both to the horse and each other. They are creative and realise their own ideas, too.



My experience is that these paired practices have also very positive effect on the socialization of children in care.

This cooperative situation improves their tolerance and teaches them to respect the weaker one. It is manifested in their behaviour at home, as well. It makes easier their social integration in the future.



The first steps



Our youngest rider, who is 3 years old, has Down-disease. He attends an ordinary nursery school and participates in lessons of speech therapy and physiotherapy, too. At the initial stage he refused to approach horses. In the next term he showed interest in the stable and tools. He was used to touching horses step by step. Nowadays, he enjoys their closeness and wants to mount on. We are going to work the pony with girls on bareback, although he prefers the bigger horses.



Summary:

I am dealing with 3-14 year-old children. The development of their movement and a more harmonious overall behaviour can be observed in case of the mentally disabled children. They can successfully perform several kind of exercise, which was impossible to carry out at the beginning, like crossing-hand-grips. The pupils with learning difficulties are alone able to harness a horse under sufficient control. They take part in works around the stable. Based on my experiences, I conclude that at least two courses a week are needed to obtain these results. In the opposite case, only the emotive effects are present. Most of the children have become more open. This cooperative activity will help their integration into a social environment. Our results are always appreciated at the national rider-festivals organized for disabled children.

Future plans:

One of our most wanted plans is to build a covered track with financial help of applications. Till now, we could work with artificial horse when the weather did not allow to use the open-air track. We also want to train other horses. In this summer (23-27 June) we organize a horse camp both for healthy and disabled children.

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