



# Ride On St. Louis



## HOME AT LAST

*A Landmark Success in Relocation*



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*Make the Most of 70% Tax Credits*







## HOME AT LAST

### *A Landmark Success in Relocation*

We are thrilled to report a major milestone in our Forever Home campaign—**Ride On St. Louis has successfully secured a new property!** After five years of dedication, determination, and community support, we're excited to cultivate a home of our very own where both humans and horses can thrive.

As Ride On St. Louis approaches 27 years of providing quality and excellence in equine-assisted services, we are grateful to continue offering unparalleled programs to those in need. With our Forever Home on the horizon, we'll be better equipped than ever to continue fostering healing, hope, and horse-powered health progress.

When the Mississippi River repeatedly flooded our former site, submerging the center and halting services, we knew we had to seek higher ground. "The first flood was devastating, but we pulled through, rebuilt, and resumed what we love—enriching lives and well-being," recalls Marita Wassman, CEO and co-founder of Ride On St. Louis. "At its worst, the water and sludge reached several feet high in our office space, barn, and arena. Everything had to be redone: plumbing, electric, drywall, fixtures—everything. And that was after evacuating our horses, farm equipment, office furnishings, tack, and even the arena footing. After five rounds of flooding, we packed up in search for higher ground."

We were so touched by the **abundant generosity of others**. "People stored our belongings in their basements and sheds. Jeanne Johnson, our full-time volunteer office manager, set up a makeshift office in her home where staff could continue meeting and handling day-to-day administration, and our equine care team drove the extra miles twice a day to continue caring for our herd [who found refuge first in Millstadt, IL and then Cedar Hill, MO.]"

Despite the changes, we continued to deliver services and fine-tuned our relocation plans. Through determination and the support of the community, we navigated displacement, launched a campaign, and persevered through a pandemic—all while continuing service and working toward a Forever Home.

In February 2024, the perfect property was secured! This beautiful site, spanning nearly 30 acres of rolling hills, offers the idyllic landscape. "There's a constant breeze across the hills—it's effortlessly peaceful," says Marita. **"We couldn't have found a better home."**

The property includes residence for caretakers, fields for turnout and hay farming, and a 60'x40' outbuilding, which is being transformed into a stable and work-space for programs. Necessary renovations include trenching for plumbing and electrical lines, pouring concrete floors, and building a tack room, feed room, and six spacious stalls. The addition of windows, fans, and cutting in large barn doors create a bright, airy environment. Other modifications involve extending the outbuilding, grading land, removing a rundown barn, and installing over a mile and a half of fencing for pastures, arena, and program continuity.

"It's been a busy year, but we're making great progress," Marita notes. "We're hopeful to bring our horses home by the end of this year, as we are fundraising for the fencing that must be installed first."

Typical barns, designed without equine-assisted services in mind, can present challenges and lack the specialized infrastructure needed for programming. In our very own Forever Home, these **barriers will no longer exist**. The new property design is **tailor-made** to support our mission and provide a high level of accessibility, safety and efficiency.



*President of the Board of Directors Dominic Lampasi and CEO Marita Wassman cut the ribbon this past March 2024 and begin a new chapter for Ride On St. Louis.*

**Once the horses move in**, Ride On St. Louis will no longer be bridled. "Here, we can create a true sanctuary, where safety, accessibility, and enrichment opportunities are seamlessly integrated," Marita explains.

### *Galloping Toward the Finish Line*

**"Owning this property will secure our future** and allow expansion of service, ensuring we can uplift people with disabilities and hardships for years to come."

Our Forever Home is a place where love resides, memories are created, and everyone is welcome. While we've secured the property, we still have big work ahead!

**Our goals** include raising funds to purchase fencing, complete site purchase, resume suspended programs, expand staff

hours, and continue improvements like covering the future arena, installing bathrooms, enhancing storage, and adding equipment for program and maintenance.

Thanks to you, we've reached this milestone—but **the journey isn't over**.

**Your continued support is key** to ensuring that every child, adult, and horse at Ride On St. Louis has a safe, nurturing place to grow, heal and thrive.



*Overlooking 27 acres of Ride On St. Louis's Forever Home.*



*Ride On St. Louis*





February 2024. The outbuilding being prepared for transformation into our new barn! Visit our Forever Home gallery at [rideonstl.org/forever-home](https://rideonstl.org/forever-home)



September 2024. Hundreds of hours of labor later after plumbing, electric, rock, concrete, wood working, insulation, windows, and more were added!



5-year-old Jessie in her first year with Ride On St. Louis. While waiting, she grins towards the camera.

## FROM TRIUMPH TO TOMORROW

### *Jessie's Journey and a Future of Hope*

As we stand on the threshold of a new era at Ride On St. Louis, our commitment to transforming lives has never been stronger. While this year has brought both excitement and the undertaking of preparing our new Forever Home, our hearts remain firmly connected to the incredible individuals whose journeys inspire us every day.

Take **Jessie**, for example. When Jessie first came to us at the tender age of four, her world had grown quiet. Diagnosed with autism after a **sudden regression**, Jessie lost her once inquisitive nature. The vibrant little girl who had loved to learn and explore had stopped making eye contact, struggled to focus, and, most painfully for dedicated parents and family, became nonverbal.

Jessie's journey began with one overarching goal: **to help Jessie find her voice**. Her sessions were designed to build crucial communication skills—learning how to associate words, plan, and verbalize basic but vital information. Atop her horse and around the arena, she was guided to different stations, each marked with mailboxes. One mailbox held a special prize behind numbers that matched her home address. Jessie loved this activity, and through it, mastered saying her address. After a short time with us, Jessie was able to answer “Where do you live?” and “What is your phone number?” Though it may seem simple for some her age, it was a monumental achievement for Jessie and her family. Imagine the relief her mother felt, knowing that her daughter could **now communicate** these essential details in case of an emergency.

As the years passed, Jessie continued to grow in ways that doctors deemed implausible. Jessie's progress was aided by a powerful partner: **Style**, our beloved service pony. With the presence and engaging movement of Style motivating her, Jessie learned to read and write as she continued working with us. Through her time spent with Style, Jessie found more than just her voice—she found confidence, freedom, joy and a good night's sleep! From a nonverbal child to one who could communicate, read, and express herself, Jessie's transformation was nothing short of extraordinary.



Jessie's handwriting improvement before and after sessions is an astounding measurement!

Style, now enjoying retirement in our Always Home program, was more than just a furry friend; he was a catalyst for change in Jessie's life and in the lives of many others.

As we **continue our mission** through unmounted service during this transition, stories like Jessie's echo in our hearts, spurring us forward. Our Forever Home isn't just building with brick and mortar—it's building the foundation for countless new stories of hope and healing that are waiting to unfold.

Our dedicated staff, volunteers, and supporters have poured their hearts into creating a place where more lives can be changed. “Seeing the new space take shape reminds me why we do what we do,” says **Tina**, one of our long-time volunteers. “**I can't wait to see the smiles of our clients when they first arrive.**” We're eagerly preparing for the day we'll open our new barn doors, ushering in a new chapter filled with hope, healing, and countless success stories waiting to be written.

As we prepare to transition and acclimate our horses to the new facility, we invite you to accompany us on this incredible journey. Your support makes transformations like Jessie's possible, turning challenges into stepping stones for a brighter future.



Jessie, seven years old, shares a cupcake with a very polite Style, peeking over her shoulder.





# WHAT IT TAKES

Gracious Assistance and Inspirations

We give thanks to God for His constant guidance and provision throughout the journey of Ride On St. Louis. His gracious assistance has led us through challenges, connected us with generous hearts, and allowed us to keep offering compassion, love, and support to those in need. May His blessings remind us all of His great love. From our Ride On St. Louis family to yours, may your Christmas be filled with Christ's peace, joy, and the promise of His grace.



## Transitioning to a New Home

Relocating a herd of horses to a new environment is no small task. Horses are prey animals, which means their survival instincts are highly tuned to new sights, sounds, and smells. Their natural reaction to unfamiliar settings is to stay alert, ready to flee if necessary. It's vital to give them time to acclimate—weeks, in fact—to ensure their safety and well-being as they adjust to their new surroundings.

Much like people moving into a new home, horses need time to learn their environment. They will explore their new pastures, water sources, and stalls becoming familiar with the footing and layout and finding places to seek shelter from wind, heat or light rain. Over time, they'll develop a new routine and feel secure and confident in their new surroundings.

The transition also involves reassessing each horse's health and updating their individualized plans for exercise and conditioning. It's crucial to tailor training to current physical condition. Our qualified staff carefully monitors their physical and mental health and progress, determining if or when they are strong and ready to resume their roles in *mounted* equine-assisted programs, as well as their participation in our various unmounted programs.

While this adjustment takes time, we know that with patience and care, our horses will settle into their new landscape and thrive, just as they have done throughout their time of service. By prioritizing their welfare, we make certain that our Forever Home is a place where both humans and horses can progress, be well, and make lasting impacts on each and everyone around them.

April leads the way as Style (background) and Zen, full of curiosity, explore a new pasture in 2019.



# SERVICE SNAPSHOT

Annual Impact Metrics 2023

- 72 unique individuals served
- 64% male and 36% female
- Ages 14-74
- Average age of 34
- 30 first-time participants and 42 returning participants
- 1,850 hours of equine-assisted services delivered
- Beneficiaries live primarily in Jefferson County and St. Louis County

- Co-occurring 51%
- Caregivers 22%
- Youth 14%
- Genetic Disorder 4%
- Developmental Delay 3%
- Autism 1%
- Neurocognitive 1%
- Neurological 1%
- Psychiatric Disorder 1%

Revenue				Expense			
	61.86%	\$189,312	Contributions	Program	\$258,373	91.10%	
	35.62%	\$109,000	Grants	General	\$16,222	5.72%	
	1.71%	\$5,251	Other	Fundraising	\$9,019	3.18%	
	.72%	\$2,203	Fundraising				
	.08%	\$261	Program Fees				
		\$306,027	TOTAL	TOTAL	\$283,614		
Ending Net Assets \$230,371							

2023 Board of Directors | Dominic Lampasi, Marita Wassman, Keith O'Connell, Diane Eagen  
Mission Statement | To promote health and enrich lives through love, joy and holistic healing.



# WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?

Make the Most of 70% Tax Credits

That's right! **Get 70% back in income tax credits on each dollar donated.** Apply credits to taxes owed for the year of the donation **plus five additional tax periods.** Sanctioned by the MO Department of Economic Development.

Your year-end contribution could now cost less, while helping create life-changing experiences for people in need. This short-term, **time restricted offer** awards a limited amount of credits to qualifying tax payers and donations.

Direct your income tax to our mission and a \$5,000 donation could be just \$845.

For any questions about potential tax benefits, eligibility, and to claim your credits call Marita @ 636.464.3408 or visit [rideonstl.org/NAP](https://rideonstl.org/NAP)



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