

Katie's Story

'What Freedom Farm Means to Me'

Freedom Farm can be described as many things. Freedom Farm is caring, loving and generous to others. The first word in the name of the barn is freedom. That word means a lot to me in terms of what Freedom Farm does: it gives kids with disabilities their own freedom. A lot of people today probably think that children with disabilities can't do much, let alone anything. My experience with Freedom Farm proves to me and anybody who has watched the kids ride proves that kids with disabilities can do stuff. I always kept thinking I can't do anything with CP, (that stands for Cerebral Palsy) but Freedom Farm has shown me that yes, I can do it. Yes, I can do anything I want to do. Yes, I can be anyone that I want to be.



I am 13 years old and I have been riding at Freedom Farm since I was 6. I can now ride independently. I would've never thought I would be able to ride by myself. Freedom Farm is a miracle to me. I would like to thank Susie, my instructor, who taught me everything I know about horses. I would also like to thank all the wonderful volunteers who come out on their spare time to help us ride. Without the volunteers, I would never have been able to ride at all. Thank you to everyone at Freedom Farm for giving me hope.

I am Katie's Mom. I love the high standards of safety that are upheld at Freedom Farm and the gentle manner in which they are applied. Even though her cerebral palsy is mild, and therefore not as noticeable, Katie has poor balance, coordination, and core strength. As a twin, I would sign her up for the same things as her sister. When she was 5, I had to change that. One (swim) class became unsafe for her. Her special needs were not understood or acted on, and twice I had to have instructors pull her head out of the water. The low tone in her torso made it difficult for her to sit up in the water for any length of time. The reaction from the instructors was not positive or encouraging to my daughter.

At Freedom Farm she is loved and accepted with all of her abilities and disabilities. In fact, one of the things I love most about Freedom Farm is that they don't see kids with disabilities as much as they see kids with abilities. They train them just like anyone else, always reaching for higher goals. The volunteers are emotionally invested in their riders and do more than protect them physically; they encourage them to work hard, praise them for small accomplishments, and get to know them personally.

Katie now rides independently, and has a wonderful sense of accomplishment. Thank you for giving her hope, and the sense that she is a person with abilities.

