

## Gregory's Story



“When Gregory was born it was obvious from the get-go that he had a beautiful, fighting personality. After a 5 week NICU stay, we brought him home and he cheerfully blossomed, even when it became apparent at 8 months old that he was facing chronic medical concerns. We were devastated and unprepared for the diagnosis when it came: a serious immune disorder with an unknown prognosis that would require weekly infusions of antibodies.

The next several years would bring hospital stay after hospital stay, frequent appointments, isolation, and a battery of tests and labs for Gregory. With his happy disposition, Gregory coped okay at first but eventually, he started struggling. He got to a place where he showed virtually no response to pain, he played make-believe to distance himself from doctors, and it became impossible to console him when the smallest change or transition occurred.

We realized that our challenge wasn't strictly medical anymore; we were going to need to fight to keep his bright spirit from somehow disappearing in this scary new world of his. An occupational therapist diagnosed him with a sensory processing disorder and we started a program to help his body regulate itself again. It was then that he was referred to the rider program at Freedom Farm. With his first riding session, Gregory (at four years old), was apprehensive and weary of any and all appointments but he agreed to try it. The entire week after his trial ride, all he wanted to talk about was 'Echo', the horse he rode that very first time - he still talks about him!



**Freedom Farm became the first destination to help his health that Gregory didn't dread.** One of the first major things we noticed with riding was his vocabulary increase. He chattered and shared more, often about “his” horse, 'Rocky', and his new friends at Freedom Farm. His tolerance, strength, and lagging fine motor skills also improved and by the second session, his little body finally started to decompress from the trauma of his medical past; he felt so much calmer. By the end of the summer session he was looking forward to preschool - something we were unsure about a year ago - and he's now thriving amongst his classmates! It seems almost surreal.



**We're grateful for everyone in Gregory's life who has worked to help him and we'll forever hold a special place in our hearts for Susie, the horses, and the rest of the Freedom Farm team for the healing they do with the horses.** They're amazing. This part of his journey has been a blessing to our family and we appreciate each individual and organization who dedicates their time or resources to help make this extraordinary farm possible.

We humbly thank you for giving us the best gift - our son back. **His spirit was found and he experienced pure and simple joy: on the back of a horse at Freedom Farm.”**

by Gregory's Mom, Julie