

Mackenzie's Story



Mackenzie was four months old when her path in life took a dramatic turn. She suffered a brain injury after an interrupted SIDS episode. After seventeen days in the hospital giving her brain a chance to heal and trying to get her seizures under control; we were presented with the fact that Mackenzie's brain injury had caused permanent damage. The damage has affected her across all areas of development. She did not walk until she was three years old, at five she first started to use utensils and now at six her vocabulary is still very, very limited.

We were looking for something that would reach Mackenzie and help her in her communication. It was recommended to us to try therapeutic horse back riding. So that is how we hooked up with Freedomfarm.



Mackenzie started riding at Freedomfarm in July 2008 and we were able to keep it up until the weather turned too cold in the fall.

When you talk to Mackenzie about her horse, 'Snickers', she absolutely lights up. She loves to see him and ride him. Bare back riding and going fast are her favorite things to do.

The changes we have seen in Mackenzie are remarkable. First off, she had always been hyper sensitive to wearing a hat or helmet, but Susie and the volunteers at Freedomfarm helped her work through it. We have seen less fussing when she needs to wear a hat in the cold or when she needs to wear a helmet for bike riding. We had been working for years to get her to this point and after a few months at Freedomfarm the results were amazing.



Mackenzie has had an enormous gain in confidence since starting at Freedomfarm. She went from a child who was scared to try new things to a child that wanted her horse to trot all the time. The confidence she gained has transferred to many other areas of her life. She is not as afraid to try new things and even if she is afraid, she has gained the skills to cope.



Her sense of balance has improved dramatically. While there are always people that are ready to catch her, she has learned how to take responsibility for her own weight while she is riding. This has carried over into her learning to ride a two wheel bike. She was able to show her friends at school that she could ride a bike and it really meant a lot to her. Her confidence was once again boosted by sharing this big accomplishment with her friends. I firmly believe that she is riding a bike because of her time on 'Snickers'.

The main reason we went to Freedomfarm was to improve her communication. She has said things like "Go Fast" and "baa baa" to ride bare back. She surprises us all with the words that will often fall out of her mouth while she is riding. The time with 'Snickers' is so beneficial to her development.

The folks at Freedomfarm are doing a FANATASTIC job working with their riders. The horses are nothing short of amazing. They are well seasoned, gentle horses that are 100% trained to work with riders like Mackenzie.

We appreciate each and every session at Freedomfarm. Mackenzie will be a rider there for years to come. We recommend Freedomfarm to anyone who is looking for an experience that is really beyond words. The horses are great, the volunteers are so special and Susie is a real blessing to the riders and parents alike.

Mackenzie's mom