

Mission Moments

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Back in the Saddle

Just like riding a bike? Try, "Just like riding a horse!" That has been the experience of Jessica, a young woman who recently returned to her passion for horseback riding with the assistance of her Tangram Program Manager, Kim Shanklin.

Jessica first discovered her love for riding twelve years ago when she started taking lessons at Agape Therapeutic Riding, an equine therapy program for people with disabilities. After being unable to ride for more than a year due to illness, she was eager to get back in the saddle. Jessica started services with Tangram earlier this year, and when she was able to return to Agape at the beginning of last month, she was right at home again!

One major challenge to riding is the steep ramp Jessica uses to mount her horse. When she first started riding again, she rolled up the ramp in her wheelchair, but now has already gained the strength to walk up with just one person supporting her. Jessica's mom, Laura, attests that horseback riding has improved her daughter's physical strength and given her a greater sense of serenity, too. When she's riding, Jessica confidently steers her horse wherever she wants to go—which, most of the time, is out of the barn! Jessica loves riding outside, and being able to guide her horse there gives her a great sense of control, as well.

The benefits of this therapeutic habit have stretched well beyond Jessica's weekly lessons. Kim has observed that Jessica is using her wheelchair less and walking more now — at home and out in the community. Both on and off the horse, Jessica is experiencing increased mobility and independence, which have made her a happier person. She is smiling more now and, although she is nonverbal, is more vocal than she had been.

Reflecting on how Jessica has developed since coming to Tangram and returning to horseback riding, Laura said, "My daughter's finally doing what I've been wanting for her for years." Jessica is a great example of the amazing outcomes that equine therapy can achieve for people with disabilities. Riding can improve balance, posture, and gait, as well as emotional and social well-being for people with both physical and developmental disabilities.

We're thrilled to see how Jessica is thriving, and excited to help more people with disabilities enjoy the passions that allow them to flourish!

We can't do that without YOU—our supporters! [Donate today to support more success stories like this one!](#)

