



# GIVE THE GIFT OF RIDING

## MEET REBECCA

*Rebecca's Mom, Leah writes:*

Rebecca Tung was a miracle we fought years for. The journey to meeting her included the loss of her twin sisters, an experimental surgery to avoid a hysterectomy, three blood transfusions, an ectopic pregnancy battle, three months of bed rest, emergency C-section, 18 days in the NICU and...finally, we had our daughter!

She was cherished and nurtured by all the family. Then, six months later, she wasn't following toys with her gaze. Tests began, and we discovered she was born with brain damage that affects her brain's ability to interpret images. "No worries" the Dr. said... "There's nothing you can do, just keep her in therapy and her brain will grow as best it can." We began a long road of multiple therapies a week to maximize her potential. The journey was tricky and, along the way we added epilepsy, cerebral palsy, and autism to our list of diagnoses.

Meanwhile, we put Becca in every kind of therapy we could get our hands on. I always joke that this girl has been in school since she was 6-months-old. So, I put her on the Tara's Chance waiting list when a doctor suggested horse therapy to help lower her risk of scoliosis, and another friend of mine said, "Becca would love Tara's Chance! Sign her up!"

Two years later, we were able to secure a spot and we are so grateful. This girl has been to so many therapies, that she can smell "work" from a mile away. But when we would drive to "horse" she would say, "Time to ride a horsey!" She wouldn't whine and cry through the whole session like she does in PT or OT. She would laugh and sing and smile ear-to-ear. She would come back to mom like she just got off a ride at Disneyland! What a joy!



*Rebecca and her mom, Leah*



*Rebecca riding Riley*



*Rebecca riding Ryan*

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Rebecca's Story on



Now she's ten years old and she has been riding for three years. One year ago, she passed all her vision tests at school and she has graduated from her PT therapy needs. She has grown stronger in her core strength and posture and now (unusually) loves stairs, which she works on every time she rides at Tara's Chance! She shares her horse's name with friends and family and talks about her rides with such pride.

I cannot tell you how many relationships I've built with the staff and other parents at Tara's Chance that have carried us through the daily challenges of special needs life. The support we've found here goes far beyond horse therapy. Maintaining her busy therapy schedule is a task, but I'm always going to make sure there's time to "ride horsey."



*Rebecca and her parents, Darrell & Leah*

## A WORD FROM MATT HOWELLS, OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Rebecca's journey, marked by extraordinary resilience, unwavering hope, and years of fighting for every milestone, reflects what so many families experience long before they ever reach our arena. When Rebecca arrived at Tara's Chance, she had already endured more therapies, hospital stays, and diagnoses than most children face in a lifetime. Yet here, atop her horse Ryan, something shifted. She smiled. She laughed. She found joy in a type of therapy that felt nothing like therapy at all. Her core strengthened, her vision improved, and she grew more confident with every ride.

Tara's Chance was founded in 2012 on the belief that every child, just like Rebecca, deserves the opportunity to grow physically, cognitively, and socially. We believe that, no matter the diagnosis or even the uncertainty of one, every child should have access to an activity they truly love, a place where they can experience joy without limits. That joy is unmistakable when Rebecca rides. If you have the chance to see her in the arena, you'll hear her singing Disney songs with her beautiful voice from the moment she mounts to the moment she dismounts. Her smile and laughter are contagious, filling the arena with a light that's impossible to miss. Using her communication device, she proudly declares, "I am brave, I am beautiful, and I can do anything." What a profound truth, not only for Rebecca, but for every child we serve. At Tara's Chance, we hold that belief close to our hearts. We want every child to feel brave, to feel beautiful, and to discover that they can accomplish anything on and off horseback.

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# YOUR SUPPORT MADE HISTORY THIS YEAR

This was a transformative year for Tara's Chance in many ways. After an extraordinary and visionary gift from the Murphy Family Foundation and the Svet Family, Tara's Chance officially closed on the property we have operated on since 2012. Purchasing this two-acre ranch, the place our families have long called home, ensures that thousands of children with special needs will always have a space designed for their growth, their joy, and their sense of belonging. I want to thank Jackson Titus Law Firm, Geoff Olsen, Dottie Jensen, TAIT Engineering, EEC Environmental, the Fullerton City Council, and our Board of Directors for guiding this process with exceptional professionalism and thoroughness, ensuring every detail of the transition was handled with care.



*Tara's Chance first rider, Bella, cuts the Ribbon*

For more than a decade, Tara's Chance has operated with a simple philosophy: put every resource possible into the children. Working alongside the disability community for 13 years, we have ensured that our program remains accessible and safe while adapting facilities that were never originally designed for therapeutic riding.



*Rendering of the new arena, restroom, walk path, and mounting area*

But owning this ranch changes what is possible. Instead of continually finding ways to make the space work, we can now build it the way it should be. We can dramatically enhance accessibility, improve the experience for our riders and families, and create a purpose-built environment that truly reflects the level of care every child deserves.

This year, we took a bold step forward and launched a capital project to shape this property into the space our riders deserve. With our community's incredible support, we set a \$400,000 goal and met it in full. We are deeply grateful to everyone who contributed to this campaign and believed in our vision for the future.

As we look to the year ahead, we are ready to take the next step, and this is where we need your help. With the property secured and the new arena fully funded, our focus now shifts to expanding our herd, adding essential staff and volunteer capacity, and investing in the equipment and resources we need to safely welcome more riders. Today, 125 children, children just like Rebecca, remain on our waitlist, each one eager for the chance to experience the joy, confidence, and therapeutic growth that happen here every day. Your generosity will help us open our gates to more of these families, reduce long delays in services, and ensure that every child who needs Tara's Chance has the opportunity to ride, to grow, and to belong. Please consider making a year-end donation to Tara's Chance to help us continue this life changing work.

*Matt Howells*

Matt Howells, Executive Director