

When Rebecca was born, she was a cute, quiet and sleepy little baby. Soon after we brought her home, she was barely eating and started to lose weight. At the direction of Rebecca's pediatricians, Rebecca was admitted to the hospital and we consulted with a geneticist.

At the age of four months, Rebecca was diagnosed with Prader-Willi Syndrome (PWS). PWS typically causes low muscle tone, short stature (if not treated with growth hormone), and a chronic feeling of hunger that, coupled with a metabolism that utilizes drastically fewer calories than normal, can lead to excessive eating and life-threatening obesity. Learning issues, social and motor deficits also exist.

We were devastated by the news. The pressure of this diagnosis and all the hurdles Rebecca would have to overcome in her life nearly crushed us. We did not know how to help our beautiful little girl. With the help of her therapists, Rebecca was able to walk by the time she was 16 months old. But by age two, she was still unable to jump, run or walk on her tippy toes. Her upper body strength was extremely weak, and her speech and cognitive delays were apparent. We were told that riding a horse is one of the best ways to strengthen core muscles and we needed a fun activity that would compliment her therapy. So after a little research, we found Special Strides Therapeutic Riding Center.

It seems like yesterday when we arrived at Special Strides and watched little 2 year-old Rebecca hysterically crying on the back of Marco as she rode for the first time. Thankfully, after that first session there was no more crying, only elation at the mention of Special Strides. It quickly became one of Rebecca's favorite places to be. The Special Strides staff has helped Rebecca achieve what once seemed improbable. Through hippotherapy, Rebecca has gained greater coordination, stamina and strength. She is now better able to take on the daily challenges of lower muscle tone and poor coordination.

Thank you Special Strides for all the care, expertise, and enthusiasm that you put into your program. Words cannot express our gratitude for all that you have done for our daughter. Just being on the farm at Special Strides makes you feel that you are part of something truly extraordinary. And thank you to everyone who donates to this program. Your contributions help secure the future of this magical place, so that it will be available to help children like Rebecca grow to their full potential.

Rebecca's Story

When you think of magical places, Walt Disney World or Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory may come to mind. But for a certain group of children, "Special Strides Therapeutic Riding Center" fits that bill. It's a place where children can be themselves. They are accepted for who they are and the disability they have does not set them apart from the rest. It's a place that helps children with disabilities go further than they could imagine.

SPECIAL STRIDES 2011 ANNUAL

Barn Benefit Dance



Rebecca age 5
(story on back)

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN US AT THE



Barn Benefit Dance

In Memory of Andrew Fernandez

Chairs **Bob & Dorene McDaid**

Co-Chair **Jack Aaronson**

Benefiting **The Steven Werthan Memorial Fund**

Saturday October 29th, 2011

Gourmet Cocktail & Dinner Reception

Open Bar

7:00 PM

118 Federal Road, Congress Hill Farm, Monroe, NJ

**Followed with an unforgettable performance
by THE BSTREETBAND**

World's Longest Running Tribute Band!

**For the Best of Bruce Springsteen
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