

# THE Enterprise

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## The healing power of horses

*Therapeutic riding center offers hope for variety of challenges*

By Carole Roche  
CORRESPONDENT

The path leading to the creation of the Horse Power Healing Center, a therapeutic riding facility near Eagle, has been a long and circuitous one for Linda Lee Konichek.

"Growing up in the forties and fifties, I watched the Cisco Kid and Roy Rogers on TV, and was awed by the powerful relationship I saw between man and horse," Konichek explained.

"Like so many girls, I wanted a horse of my own but we lived in Milwaukee and that wasn't possible."

As often happens, life moved forward and, in the coming years, Konichek graduated from college, got married and taught English in Texas while her husband, Norm, served in the military.

A few years later, the couple returned to Wisconsin. "We decided to settle in Genesee, and our two children, Matthew and Wendy were born there," she said.

Yet the dream of a rural lifestyle – one that included horses – remained a goal, and in 1984, the Konicheks

moved to a 114-acre farm outside the Village of Eagle, southwest of Waukesha.

By then, the family constellation included a small, grey Morab mare by the name of Ta-Ket (Taco), a present to daughter Wendy on her 12th birthday.

"Wendy had always loved horses, and had been begging for one for several years," Konichek said. "My husband finally agreed with the stipulation that Wendy find free boarding for the animal. Of course, he had no idea she'd actually find a place, but, amazingly, she did.

"Little did we know that Taco would change all of our lives," she added.

For the next three years, Taco learned everything put before her including barrel racing, penning and Western Pleasure – and, her temperament could not be faulted. "Taco was loving and kind and seemed to know just what we wanted before we even asked her," Konichek said.

"Wendy and I both agreed that if we ever owned a farm, we would

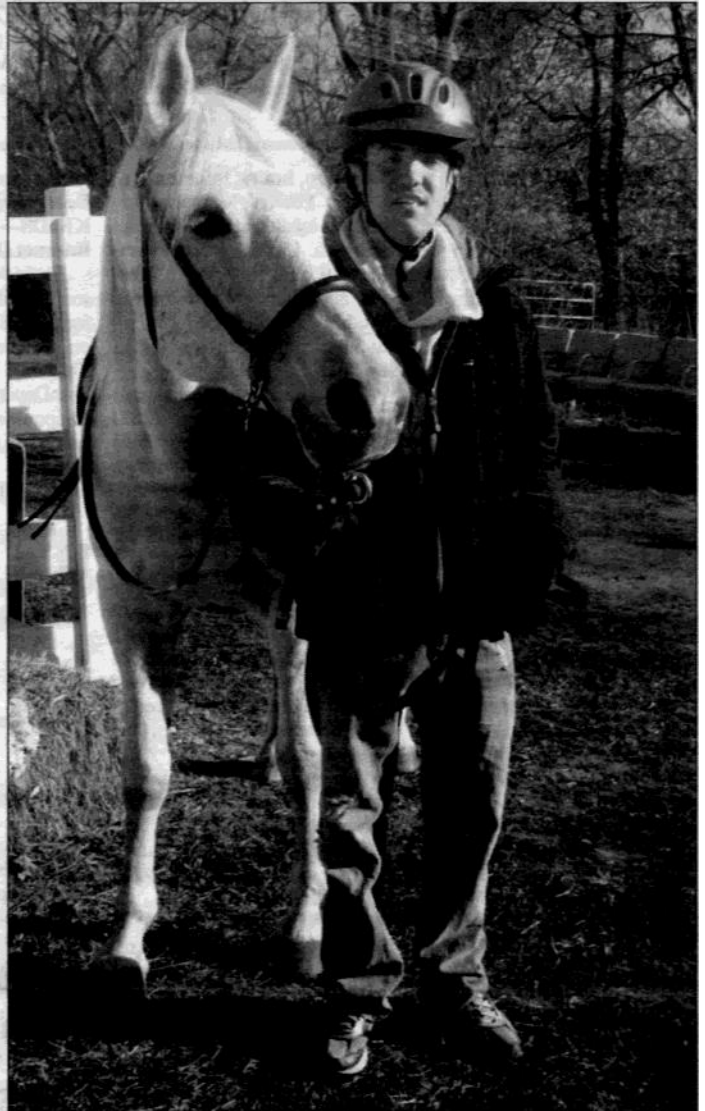


PHOTO SUBMITTED Palmyra-Eagle Enterprise

Josh Horne, a student of Horse Power Healing Center, who has told his mom that he hopes to ride independently some day, poses with the healing center's horse, LM Ark-One Shawna.

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raise Morabs."

With the move to Eagle in 1984, Jericho Creek Farm soon became a reality, and with Taco as their foundation mare, the Konicheks began to acquire additional mares for their Morab breeding program.

Taco delivered her first foal, Chaheetah, in 1986, and the mother-daughter team has delivered over 80 Morab foals since then.

"The more I've learned about the Morab breed, the more I've come to value their positive qualities – their strength, intelligence, durability and people-friendly disposition," Konichek explained. "They exhibit the best of both the Arabian and Morgan breeds."

In 1987, determined to spread the word of what Konichek describes as the "magnificent Morab," she and her daughter became founding members of the International Morab Breeders' Association. That same year, Linda was appointed director of the Morab demonstration at the Midwest Horse Fair – a position she has held for more than 20 years.

The abilities of the cross-breed horse with the heart of gold had come full circle for this mother and daughter team.

### Room to grow

"Wendy became interested in therapeutic riding after high school when she worked with children with special needs,

### A rich history

In 1952, Danish Liz Hartel won the silver medal for Dressage in the Helsinki Olympic Games while suffering from partial paralysis of both her lower limbs, caused by Polyomyelitis; she had used horseback riding to rehabilitate herself and became the inspiration for the establishment of the first therapeutic riding centers in the U.K. and Scandinavia.

**“Josh's dream is to one day ride independently, and I have no doubt that he will eventually accomplish that goal.”**

**– Chris Horne,  
Josh's mom**

and later on was a home health aide with mentally and physically challenged individuals. She had always believed that therapeutic riding had much to offer," Konichek said.

First used in Germany to address orthopedic dysfunction such as scoliosis, the use of therapeutic riding has, over the years, become an accepted treatment option for a large number of challenges including multiple sclerosis, downs syndrome, autism, and depression.

The modality has been shown to not only improve physical coordination and cognitive abilities but also to enhance social skills and communication.

In 2006, Wendy began attending seminars at North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) as a preliminary to obtaining certification as a therapeutic riding instructor.

"With our team of Morabs, we knew we had the perfect therapy horses, but we also knew we had to have a certified instructor," Konichek explained. "The process is lengthy but an essential part of a therapeutic riding program."

In the fall of 2009, Konichek was introduced to Liz Partridge, an in-home autism intervention counselor. "I met Liz thru a poetry-writing friend of mine, Anjie Kaskan, whose son, Brindley, has severe autism.

"Liz was Brindley's counselor and a lifelong horse woman who had shown a variety of breeds and had competed in dressage, jumping and carriage driving; she had also gone thru the NARHA certification program," Konichek said.

In 1996, Partridge had suffered a severe spinal cord injury in a car accident, but with the aide of her horse CT, had



**Horse Power Healing Center's Linda Konichek, from the left, and her daughter, Wendy, stand by three of their Morab horses: Taco, from the left, Taco's daughter Jericho's Royal Ashlin, and Taco's granddaughter, Jericho's Thee Sonata. The center offers a variety of riding programs for children and adults with disabilities.**

PHOTO SUBMITTED Palmyra-Eagle Enterprise

learned to walk and ride again. Because of this, she was determined to share her passion for horses with others dealing with physical and emotional issues.

Partridge had previously co-founded – and was the lead instructor – at the Avalon Therapeutic Center in Ixonia, and had taught horsemanship skills to individuals with physical, mental and emotional challenges.

"I knew that with Liz, our horse power team was complete," Konichek said.

That team included six Morab horses including three of Taco's daughters – who would each go thru a desensitization program enabling them to feel comfortable with any adaptive devices their riders might require. All passed with flying colors.

### Small steps, big dreams

In April of 2010, the Horse Power Healing Center became a non-profit corporation; on May 22, 2010, they held their official opening.

"We started with seven students in individual classes, plus we had two trained sidewalkers on each side, something that we insisted upon to ensure safety. For non-riders, we also offer an equine learn-

ing program that includes grooming, horse handling, and physical care," Konichek said.

For many students, including Josh Horne, 21, the program has already produced some amazing results. Weighing less than one and one-half pounds at birth, Josh had overcome numerous challenges in his young life including the need to be tube fed until the age of 13. His mom's belief in horses turned out to be instrumental in successful therapy for Josh.

"I grew up showing horses, and always believed in the possibilities of therapeutic riding for my son," Josh's moth-

er, Chris, explained. "Since enrolling him in the Horse Power classes I have seen a number of positive changes including a strengthening of his gait and posture, and an increase in his confidence and self-esteem.

"Josh's dream is to one day ride independently, and I have no doubt that he will eventually accomplish that goal," she added.

Since its inception, the Horse Power Healing Center's mission has been to provide children and adults who face physical, mental, or emotional challenges with healing empowerment through horses. Using Josh as just one ex-

ample proves that the center is accomplishing its goal.

A quote that has been attributed to several people including Will Rogers, Winston Churchill and Ronald Reagan, seems fitting for the healing center, regardless of who said it first: "There is nothing better for the inside of a man than the outside of a horse."

The Horse Power Healing Center is located at S101 W34628 Highway LO, Eagle, WI 53119.

For more information visit [www.horsepowerhealingcenter.com](http://www.horsepowerhealingcenter.com) or contact Linda Konichek by calling (262) 594-3667 or emailing [jcmorabs@centurytel.net](mailto:jcmorabs@centurytel.net).



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