



Rural Development • Rural Housing Service • Community Facilities

## RD funds give Exceptional Equestrians a permanent home

Exceptional Equestrians of the Missouri Valley, Inc. (Exceptional Equestrians) is a volunteer-based, not-for-profit organization formed in 1991 providing enjoyable, affordable horsemanship experiences for therapeutic benefits. The organization serves more than 100 individuals a week, ages 2 and up, with a wide range of diagnosis from autism to Down’s syndrome to ADHD. The program depends upon volunteers, with more than 90 volunteers engaged weekly. Demand for the services increased to the point of overwhelming the organization’s facilities. Exceptional Equestrians needed expanded facilities to house and care for horses and to provide proper therapeutic activities based upon specific maladies affecting clients to meet the growing need.



*The Heroes on Horseback program offers therapeutic riding services to disabled United States veterans or those experiencing PTSD.*

The Board of Directors sought financial assistance from USDA Rural Development. Rural Development approved a \$750,000 Community Facility Direct Loan for the purchase of facilities and land.

Rural Development funds were used to purchase a horse stable and approximately 31 acres. The 31 acres contains new facilities including an outdoor arena, a heated, dust-free indoor arena, horse stalls, office space, lounge area, tack room, storage area and pasture with a mile-long sensory trail. Exceptional Equestrians has increased the number of horses available for therapy. In addition, the new facilities provide improved accessibility features which allows for a larger variety of therapies to respond to a wider range of client diagnosis and treatment needs.

One of their programs, Heroes on Horseback, offers therapeutic riding to disabled United States veterans or those experiencing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This program is being offered at no cost to veterans. Exceptional Equestrians has both veterans riding for therapy and volunteering to assist clients through the program.

**Obligation Amount:** \$750,000 loan

**Date of Obligation:** January 2013

**Congressional District:** Representative Leutkemeyer, 03; Senators McCaskill and Blunt

**Partners:** N/A

**Demographics:** Franklin County

**Impact:** Therapy activities will be expanded, clients will experience more accessible and compatible treatment options thereby reducing stress, horses will have increased pasture and care facilities and staff and volunteers will have the equipment and space necessary to work.