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RUSK PROGRAM PUTS KIDS

Back in the Saddle

"The riding programs, I have always felt, are extremely helpful in severely disabled persons and truly therapeutic. They are a great asset in helping the disabled."

— Howard Rusk, M.D. (1901-89)

Five-year-old Andrew Levy mounts Trigger and confidently trots off.

Then Celina Montalvo, age 7, mounts Spencer and does the same. Neither child shows any fear astride these huge but gentle horses. The children, horses, and their walkers are all participants in Equestria, a program at the New York Therapeutic Riding Center.

Equestria serves New York City children and adults who have physical, mental, or emotional disabilities. Thanks to a generous gift from KiDS of NYU, Rusk Institute became the first hospital in New York City to sponsor children for Equestria.

What's unrivaled about Equestria is the highly trained, multidisciplinary staff. A Therapeutic Riding Instructor, Janice

Fett, and a Physical Therapist, Andrea DePalma, are always present during classes.

"This has been great for Celina," says her mother, Anna Cividanes. "It makes her feel more like a regular kid who is doing something special that other kids can't do." Other benefits include relaxation and stretching of spastic and rigid muscles, reinforcement of normal movement patterns, and improved balance, posture, and coordination.

"It is fitting that the Rusk Institute is the first hospital to sponsor children for this innovative therapy," says Richard Brodie, Founder and President of the New York Therapeutic Riding Center. "The spirit of Dr. Rusk is still very much alive." ■



Andrew Levy riding Trigger, lead walker Anna Mazzariello, and side walkers Deanie Barth, PT and Althea Finley



Celina Montalvo aboard Spencer, with side walkers Andrea DePalma, PT and Kelly Poltie, PT