



Therapy HORSES



by Catherine Nichols

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by **Catherine Nichols**

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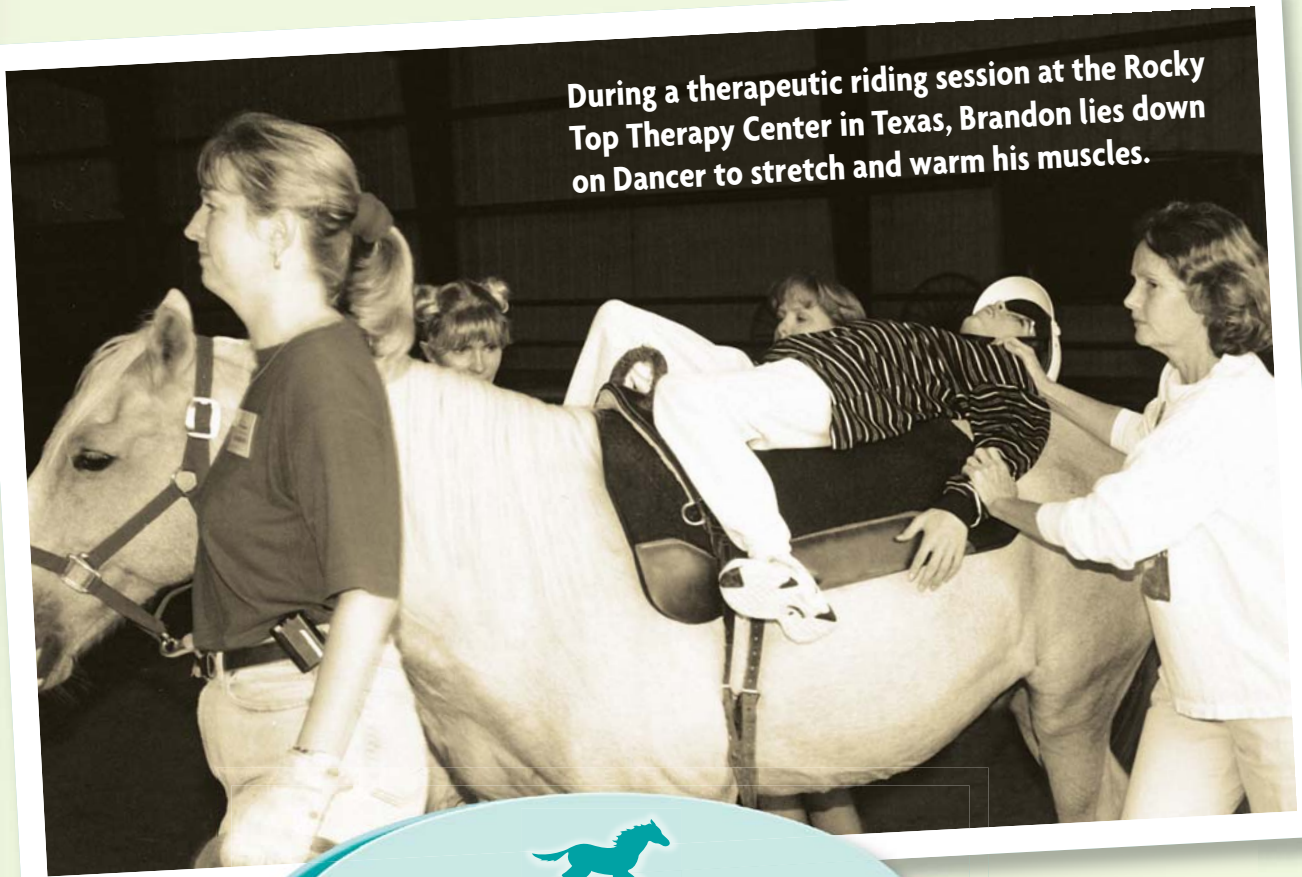
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A Four-Legged Friend

It was Brandon's first time on a horse. Although he was nervous, he tried not to show it.

Brandon is not like most other kids his age. He has **cerebral palsy**. Since he can't walk, he usually gets around in a wheelchair. However, Brandon was giving up his wheels for Dancer, his new four-legged friend.



During a therapeutic riding session at the Rocky Top Therapy Center in Texas, Brandon lies down on Dancer to stretch and warm his muscles.



The warmth from the horse's body loosens Brandon's tight muscles and makes him feel better.

After Brandon was placed on top of the horse, he looked down. What a long way to the ground! He took a deep breath. As he had been taught, he gave the **command**. “Walk on!” he said to Dancer. The horse started to move.

Since that first ride, Brandon has had many others. Horseback riding is not just fun for Brandon. It’s also **therapeutic**.



Dancer is a palomino just like this horse. These types of horses have golden coats with white manes and tails.

Healing with Horses

Dancer is a therapeutic riding horse. These special animals work with people who have **disabilities**. Riding a horse can help disabled people strengthen their muscles. It also allows them to improve their balance and **coordination**.



Alicia stretches her muscles on her horse, Solomon.

Another **benefit** of riding is that it gives disabled people a sense of freedom and **independence**. If a person is in a wheelchair or uses crutches, riding offers him a chance to get around without help. Many people also end up forming strong bonds with the horses. They often become best friends.



Amy Rynder bonds with her therapeutic riding horse.



Therapeutic riding horses also help increase a person's **self-esteem**.

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About the Author

Catherine Nichols has written many books for children, including several on animals. As a teenager, she worked as a volunteer in a horse stable and rode horses. She lives in Beacon, New York.

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Therapy HORSES

Brandon has cerebral palsy. Since he can't walk, he usually gets around in a wheelchair. However, Brandon is taking a break from his wheelchair for Dancer, his new four-legged friend. Riding Dancer is not only fun, it's also therapeutic. The warmth from the animal's body loosens Brandon's tight muscles and strengthens them.

Dancer is one of thousands of therapeutic riding horses. Look inside to learn how these heroic horses are trained and how they help people with emotional and physical disabilities.



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