



Helping Disabled Kids Ride Horses

Mari Parino, Xenophon

Xenophon is an organization that works with children with disabilities on horseback. It's been in existence for 17 years now, basically started with a borrowed horse on borrowed property with one student, and we now ride 50 children a week. We have five great program horses, and we're looking to expand our program even more, so we're really thrilled that Chevron is here helping us today because they're winterizing our barn so that we can operate throughout the year, which will be a huge help.

Paul Shankwiler, Chevron Volunteer

I first came to Xenophon in 2002, about eight years ago. It turned out one of the times I was here, they were actually conducting classes with the handicapped kids on top of the horses, and just seeing those kids who've struggled so hard in their life feeling that sense of victory on top of the horse and the smile on their faces, I just—I was hooked. And so, for the last eight years, I come and I plan out the projects that need to be done. We've got two Chevron groups this year.

The first project in 2002, we built an observation platform here, where the parents could stand and watch their kids when they were in the horse arena. I think our next project was—this, the tack room, where they keep the horse equipment, all the saddles and reins. And then two years later, we built the shed or stable up there. 2008, we built the ramp that the kids use for mounting the horses, and here we are 2010, and our project this year is we're weatherizing what they call their barn. It's their tack room, office, kitchen—because right now there's a three-year waiting list of special needs kids that want to take classes here. And right now they don't operate in the winter. But once they do that, they'll be able to serve more kids.

I know Chevron has had a huge impact on Xenophon. I know when I came out a month or so ago to take measurements for the materials they needed to buy for this project, all the employees and volunteers who were here at that time all—I said, "I'm here from Chevron." They all said, "Oh! We love Chevron. You've done so much for us." And that's a good feeling to know that my company is doing good in the community.