

Deirdre Messina

I have loved horses my whole life. It probably started with my 6th Birthday. My parents gave me a pony party at a nearby stable. I fell in love with my pony "Oreo". After that I was hooked. I began drawing pictures of them, collecting Breyer Horses, and watching every horse movie I could get my hands on. Most of my childhood, I spent daydreaming of keeping a horse in my yard, or riding one to school. I even pretended my dog was the "Black Stallion", and rode him around the house. He was a kind and tolerant Labrador Retriever.



My parents signed me up for weekly lessons and I attended summer camps. Although I rode once a week, it seems like I spent my whole childhood on, or around horses. As I got older my priorities started to shift. Although my love for horses had never changed, I became more interested in my social life, and just being a teenager. I found myself spending less and less time at the barn. In the blink of an eye, High School was over and it was time to start my life. All of my friends were going away to college to pursue their dreams, but I was still figuring mine out. I was lost.

One day I realized how much I missed being around horses. I decided it was time to go back to the barn I had spent so much time at as a kid. I rode an incredibly gentle and willing horse there. He taught me a lot and helped me regain my confidence. During this time I pursued a degree in Business Management. The confidence I gained while riding carried over into my personal life and my academics. I was finally finding my way.

Unfortunately, like most lesson horses, my greatest teacher was for sale. I knew it was only a matter of time before he would go. Lucky for him another rider who loved him as much as I did purchased him. I tried to ride other horses, and I even switched barns, but once again I was feeling lost. That's when I drove past Sunnyside. I have lived in Monmouth County most of my life. I've spent many beautiful days at Thompson, and Holmdel Park. I was shocked that I had not heard of this place. I called Pat Bernstein and shortly after I attended a workshop.

From the moment I walked through the doors, I knew this place would change my life. Everyone was so friendly. I started volunteering and signed up for a horse psychology course that Cindy Ross was teaching. I realized then that I had finally found what I had been searching for. I'd like to thank to the staff at Sunnyside for sharing their knowledge, and inspiring me to pursue my certification. After 3 years of volunteering, it was time to become an instructor. I recently attended an instructor training course at High Hopes Therapeutic Inc., and I am now a PATH international certified instructor. I look forward to being a part of this wonderful team.