

When the Cheff Therapeutic Riding Center opened in 1969, the facility was the first center of its kind, built specifically for the purpose of serving those with special needs in North America. Located near Kalamazoo, Mich. in the town of Augusta, the center serves riders of all ages, who have physical, emotional or cognitive disabilities. Cheff's mission is to enhance the lives of individuals, who have special needs, through equine-assisted services while leading the industry in education.

"Equine-assisted services change lives. Something truly magical happens when these clients and horses come together," said Tara East, Cheff's Executive Director for the past 17 years. "Our mission is to work with people with disabilities. You must have a diagnosis to ride here or participate in our therapy programs. We do riding, physical therapy, mental health, and addiction recovery. There is no age limit."

Among those who are served are at-risk children, senior citizens and U.S. veterans. However, slightly more than 80 percent of the center's patients are children. Those who come can have a variety of diagnoses: emotional, behavioral, neurological and/or physical. The 10-person staff served around 600 clients a year prior to the COVID-19 pandemic closures. Since then, that number has fluctuated but is now on the rise.

We're sponsoring the Cheff Shindig, the nonprofit's biggest fundraiser of the year, which generates about a third of its working budget. Unfortunately, because of COVID, the annual event hasn't been held for 2 years.

"For 53 years, Cheff Therapeutic Riding Center has been making a difference in the lives of so many, from children to U.S. veterans, through its equine-assisted services," said Cathy Cooper, Senior Director of Community Partnerships and Giving at Meijer. "Meijer has a long tradition of supporting wellness in the communities we serve, and our sponsorship of the August 26 Cheff Shindig is one way we're standing behind organizations that promote well-being for all."

Learn more about the Cheff Center and its annual Shindig [here](#).

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Additional assets available online: [\(1\)](#)

<https://meijercommunity.com/Cheff-Shindig-Supports-Children-At-Risk,-Senior-Citizens-and-U-S-Veterans>