**Contact Information**

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**Project Title and Explanation**

**Project Title:** Insight Summer Horse Camp

**Explanation:** Marmon Valley Ministries (MVM) is a non-denominational 501(c)3

nonprofit summer camp ministry at the Marmon Valley Farm in Zanesfield, Ohio that is

committed to providing wholesome farm fun for children of all ages 7-17.

My parents, Bill and Phyllis Wiley, founded Marmon Valley Farms and started the summer

camp program in 1964. Since then, nearly 34,000 young people have experienced a summer

camp experience combining horsemanship, outdoor activities and Bible study. MVM is Ohio’s

largest horse camp and is still operated by the Wiley family, along with a Board of Trustees.

Starting with the *Original Horse Camp*, which teaches the basics of horsemanship and is

appropriate for all riding levels, MVM has expanded to offer five different horse camp

experiences, including the *Horsin’ Around Camp*, with a 100% focus on horses, and the

*Equestrian Camp*, an all girls upper level English riding camp.

In 2011, MVM conducted a pilot program of a new camp experience, the *Insight Horse Camp*

*(IHC)* for blind/visually impaired youth*.* Thirteen blind or visually impaired children, and a

sighted friend, attended the camp starting Tuesday evening August 9, 2011, through Saturday

morning, August 10, 2011.

Mornings were spent in age and ability appropriate horsemanship classes learning basic skills.

Campers learned horsemanship skills and safety, including tacking up their horse and how to

control their horse at a walk and trot. Each camper experienced a trail ride in the woods. In the

afternoon, campers were instructed in archery, kayaking and rock wall climbing.

With the help of Elli Kalas, a Vision Impaired Specialist with the City of Newark Schools, camp

activities were adapted to accommodate the unique requirements of the group. Audible cues

were used in the riding arena and throughout camp at various activities. For example, instructors

drumming on arena barrels enabled campers to orient themselves in the arena space and helped

them navigate their horse though a barrel pattern.

Counselors also facilitated daily Bible study discussions as campers explored the Scriptures

together to help them discover valuable lessons for life and develop inner character.

**Purpose**

While there are many summer camp experiences available throughout Ohio, there are few

designed specifically for blind youth. *IHC* is the *only* summer camp in Ohio for blind youth that

focuses on lessons in horsemanship and Bible study. In 2012, we are committed to expanding the

program by making a meaningful camp experience available to 20 blind youth between the ages

of 7 and 17 and a sighted sibling or friend, 40 campers total. MVM is working with the Ohio

State School for the Blind and Lion’s Clubs in Ohio to identify boys and girls interested in

attending the camp.

Farm animals, including horses, have always been a thrilling attraction for kids and adults alike.

Learning horsemanship is not only an exciting and fun experience, it also helps to develop

character, promote responsibility and build confidence.

*IHC* provides an environment where blind children can experience life in the great outdoors ,

participate and succeed in a variety of fun and challenging activities, learn teamwork, develop

decision-making skills, gain independence and return to a sighted world with a greater sense of

confidence in their own abilities. (See Attachment A, an article written by a blind camper about

her experience at a horse camp, to get an idea of the kind of experience we want to provide).

**Budget**

Total cost for *IHC* will be $15,000. We are asking campers to pay $50, but no one who wants to

come will be turned away. We respectfully request $2,500 from ACA Ohio.

In 2011, MVM received $4,000 of funding from the H&B Family Foundation of Lima, Ohio. It

is our intention to request $5,000 from the H&B Family Foundation at our update meeting with

them later this month. The Bellefontaine, Ohio Lion’s Club donated $100 last year and is

assisting us in scheduling presentations to other Lion’s Clubs throughout the state. The United

Presbyterian Church in Belle Center Ohio donated $2,000 to the program last year and a

representative of their Missions Committee is submitting a request for the same amount in 2012.

We continue to identify other foundations/organizations interested in meeting the needs of the

blind. Individual donors and prospects are being approached about funding *IHC*, as well.

The grant money will be used to cover the cost of use of the horses, lodging and meals for

campers. If the full amount of our request to ACA-Ohio is not received, it will not significantly

impact the program.

**Time Framwork**

The camp will be for 4 Days/3 nights, starting Tuesday evening August 14, 2012, ending on

Saturday morning, August 18, 2012. It is our intention to make the *Insight Summer Horse Camp*

a permanent part of our Summer Horse Camp lineup.

**ATTACHMENT A**

Article from *Future Reflections, The National Federation of the Blind Magazine for Parents and*

*Teachers of Blind Children*

Vol. 26, No. 2 Special Issue: Sports, Fitness, and Blindness

**My Horseback-Riding Camp Experiences**

by Ana Gschwend

A few years ago on a nice, warm, Monday morning, I arrived

at the Fountain of Joy farm for a weeklong horseback riding

camp. I am totally blind and when I was younger I attended a

therapeutic riding program in Clifton, Virginia. However,

that program didn’t really have much of an influence on me.

It was discontinued due to a shortage of participants only a

few weeks after I started. While I was there, I had very little

one-on-one time with the instructors. I started the program

with a fear of horses and the fast pace of the program didn’t

really lessen the fear. It just made it worse.

The Fountain of Joy farm was different. I was encouraged,

praised, and given time to learn and explore throughout the

week. The camp is run by a Christian family with a mentally

challenged daughter, and they knew how to deal with kids

with a variety of disabilities. Although I was one of the first blind people to enroll in the camp,

they had the same expectations, hopes, and rules for me that they had for the other campers. The

camp ran from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. It was all the way out in the town

of Sprague [Canada], which is far from where I live with my mother. But both my mom and I

were impressed with the camp, and we thought it was worth the commute.

Now, on to the story. On the first day, I arrived with a mixture of emotions inside me. I felt

excited, scared, and happy. I was excited about seeing the horses that the family owned. I was

scared because I didn’t know how patient my horse would be. And I was happy to meet other

kids and new people. A few weeks earlier, my mother, aunt, and I had paid a visit to the farm

when just the family was there so I could get a general idea of where everything was. I was

supposed to have an aide with me throughout the week, but no one made a move to get me one

so that plan was brushed aside. I’m glad. An aide might have given in when I got scared and

refused to do a task, and probably wouldn’t have had very high expectations of me. I taught the

family about how and when I might use a sighted guide and a few other tips on dealing with a

blind person. Everyone was positive, excited, and supportive about my decision to go to their

camp.

We started the week by painting little birdhouses. I had some help with this, but the person did

not do it for me. I chose the colors I wanted (even though I’m blind, I have favorite colors) and I

painted the house with the paintbrush myself.

Then it was time to get down to the horseback riding business. At the first riding program, I had

worn gloves so I wouldn’t have to touch the horse’s rough mane or get my hands dirty. Janice,

the mother of the adult children on the farm, (all of her children in some way contributed to the

running of the camp), put a stop to that right away. She told me to put the gloves into my bag,

that I would work with the horses with my bare hands just like everybody else. Good for Janice!

If she’d said, “Oh, I understand. You’re blind and I know blind people don’t like getting their

hands dirty. You can wear the gloves as much as you want,” then I would not have had the full

tactile experience of dealing with a horse.

For most of the first day, I worked one-on-one with Janice. She and I started out by feeling the

horse’s body. Janice was very descriptive and took advantage of the fact that I had some

knowledge of the horse’s tack, and kept asking me what I thought the different pieces were used

for. She also had me stroke, brush, and talk to the horse. I was really afraid of the horse, and

Janice could tell that. So, little by little, she got me used to the horse I would be riding for the

rest of the week.

The next day, I led the horse around the yard with the help of an adult, and then I mounted the

horse. Within the next day or two I was riding without any help from an adult. And I was riding,

confidently! Then we did some trotting. At first I freaked out, but after a while I grew to love

trotting. By the end of the week, I was ready to trot around the paddock for the horse show held

to show the participants’ families what the kids had learned throughout the week.

Horseback riding is a very good activity for anyone, blind or sighted. For blind people, it’s very

tactile and for people that are a bit nervous about it, the help of a gentle horse is greatly

appreciated. I encourage you to enroll your kids in horseback riding lessons. They might enjoy it,

or they might hate it. But give it a try. As my horseback riding instructor, Rita, would say,

“Never say never.”

**About Myself….**

I am fourteen years old and I live a fairly normal life, just like I would if I was sighted. I go to a

regular school, I attend mainstream classes. I live in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, but I spent six

years in an elementary school in the USA when we lived in Virginia. I was in a classroom with

other blind and visually impaired children.

I was born with very limited vision (my eye condition is Peters Anomaly), and my birth mother

died when I was four months old. I spent a year in a very poverty-stricken orphanage. I was

adopted by Mary and William Gschwend at twenty-one months of age. At age six, I lost my light

perception. Now, I am totally blind, but I don’t feel sorry for myself and I don’t want any pity

from other people. So, there’s a little bit about me. I hope you enjoyed my story.

ATTACHMENT “B”

Photos from 2011 Insight Summer Horse Camp