



Region 6 Conference

March 13-15, 2026

**Hosted by: NDSU / Bison Strides
Fargo, North Dakota**

PATH Intl. Region 6 welcomes you to an educational and fun weekend with your friends and colleagues in North Dakota. Your registration fee includes hors d'oeuvres Friday evening, lunch on Saturday and breakfast on Sunday.

CONFERENCE LOCATIONS

NDSU Campus*

Friday, Saturday Morning & Sunday

A. Glenn Hill (AGH) Center
1306 Centennial Boulevard
Fargo, ND 58105

Saturday Afternoon

NDSU Equine Center
5140 19th Ave N
Fargo, ND 58102

LODGING

There are MANY options available in Fargo. Don't delay getting reservations - there are typically multiple sports tournaments in Fargo during this time of year. The below are two options near campus.

WoodSpring Suites
1090 35th St N.
Fargo, ND 58102
(701) 532-1600
\$89/night

Candlewood Inn and Suites
1831 NDSU Research Park Dr. N
Fargo, ND 58102
(701) 235-8200
\$159/night

PATH INTL. REGION 6 CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

Online registration will be available January 2, 2026, through February 27, 2026. After February 27, 2026, registration will need to be completed on-site.

IF YOU ARE A PRESENTER OR CONFERENCE COMMITTEE MEMBER, REMEMBER TO REGISTER WITH YOUR CODE!

Registration January 2, 2026, through February 27, 2026:

Full Conference \$145 members \$215 non-members \$120 PATH Intl. Higher Ed

Registration on-site after February 27, 2026:

Full Conference \$205 members \$275 non-members \$180 PATH Intl. Higher Ed

Refund Policy:

No refunds due to weather unless the conference is canceled.

Written cancellation request is required for refund. Email manderson@pathintl.org

Deadline for Full Refund – Request received in PATH Intl. office by **February 27, 2026.**

Deadline for 50% Refund - Request received in PATH Intl. office by **March 13, 2026.**

Individuals who do not submit a written request to PATH Intl. by March 13, 2026, will not receive a refund.

Education:

This conference satisfies up to 11 hours of continuing education requirements.

AGENDA

All times are Central

Friday, March 13, 2026

4:30 – 6 p.m.

Registration

6 – 7 p.m.

Welcome and Keynote

Social Entrepreneurship Rooted in Inclusion and Change **DE**

Addie Loerzel is a passionate advocate, social entrepreneur and founder of Spread Your Sunshine, a nonprofit dedicated to creating joyful experiences for children facing health or financial challenges. With a personal commitment to promoting inclusion and empowerment, Addie has transformed her own experiences with Spina Bifida into a platform for positive change. She leads initiatives such as Addie's Sunshine and Treats, a mobile ice cream cart that provides volunteer opportunities for young people with disabilities so they can learn valuable employment skills. As a student at North Dakota State University, Addie is also breaking barriers as a college student with a disability. Through her work, she is inspiring others to embrace leadership, kindness and resilience, and her dedication continues to make the world a brighter place for children and families in need.

7 – 8 p.m.

Facilitated Networking and Hors d'oeuvres

Saturday, March 14, 2026

7 – 8:10 a.m.

Registration & Announcements

Session A

8:10 – 9:10 a.m.

A1, Connecting Communities and Saving Lives: Suicide Risk Assessment **DE**

Suicide Risk Assessment delivers the skills and knowledge needed to effectively deploy the evidence-based Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS). In addition to utilizing the C-SSRS tool, participants will understand how to provide the most appropriate support to someone at risk, such as collaborative safety planning or connecting to other resources.

Skylar Manney is a licensed social worker with a passion for community programs, advocacy and outreach. She is a 2024 graduate of North Dakota State University with a degree in human development and family science and earned a Bachelor of Social Work from Minot State University. As a 2023 Gilman Scholar, she had the opportunity to study abroad at Deakin University in Melbourne Australia, broadening her global perspective on social systems and development. She is currently the community engagement and development coordinator at FirstLink in Fargo, ND.

A2, Turning Tension into Teamwork: Navigating Conflict with Confidence Part I **CE**

Conflict is an inevitable part of working with passionate people, volunteers and mission-driven organizations. Rather than viewing conflict as a threat, this session explores how it can serve as a catalyst for growth, clarity and innovation. Through interactive discussion and case-based examples, participants will examine strategies for identifying root causes of tension, communicating through difficult conversations, and reframing disagreements as opportunities for building trust and alignment. Participants will recognize the value of conflict as a natural and potentially productive part of team and organizational development; apply practical communication strategies to address tension between staff, volunteers, board members and clients; and develop confidence in leading or mediating conversations that transform conflict into constructive collaboration and stronger organizational culture.

Katie Tyler, Ph.D. serves as the program director and extension specialist for Rural Leadership North Dakota at North Dakota State University. She designs and facilitates leadership development programs that strengthen communication, collaboration and community impact across North Dakota. Her work emphasizes applied leadership theory, organizational culture and conflict management within complex systems. Dr. Tyler's professional background includes facilitating strategic planning, team development, and transition management for nonprofit organizations, boards and community groups.

9:10 – 9:20 a.m.

BREAK

Session B

9:20 – 10:20 a.m.

B1, Moving with Purpose: Physical Activity for Individuals with Neuromuscular and Spinal Cord Disorders DE

Physical activity plays a vital role in maintaining health, function, and quality of life for individuals with neuromuscular and spinal cord disorders. Understanding current guidelines and principles can help professionals safely support meaningful participation across a variety of settings—including equine-assisted programs. This session will review evidence-based physical activity recommendations, discuss how neuromuscular and spinal cord conditions affect movement and response to activity and highlight strategies to promote engagement, safety and individual success. Participants will gain practical insight into how purposeful movement supports mobility, balance and overall well-being, offering a foundation they can apply within adaptive or therapeutic environments. By the end of the session participants will be able to describe current physical activity guidelines for individuals with neuromuscular and spinal cord disorders; explain the physiological effects of these conditions and the benefits of regular physical activity for affected individuals; and identify strategies to adapt activity levels, goals and monitoring to support safe, individualized participation across adaptive and therapeutic settings.

Marty Douglas, Ph.D. completed her undergraduate degree at Missouri State University in psychology and went on to complete her PhD at Michigan State University in the areas of 'adapted physical activity' and 'psychosocial aspects of physical activity'. She works with undergraduate and graduate students at NDSU in the area of exercise science, specializing in adapted physical activity and disability sport.

B2, Turning Tension into Teamwork: Navigating Conflict with Confidence Part 2 CE

Continuation of Session A2

10:20 – 10:30 a.m.

BREAK

Session C

10:30 – 11:30 a.m.

C1, Sustaining the Mission: How to Raise Money While Wearing All the Hats CE

Equine-assisted services programs thrive when supported by strong, reliable financial foundations that allow them to deliver high-quality, sustainable care to both clients and horses. While the word *fundraising* often makes people cringe, the truth is that—with the right plan, mindset, and tools—it can be both engaging and highly effective. This presentation will equip participants with practical, mission-aligned strategies to elevate their fundraising efforts and build confidence in resource development. Attendees will walk away with actionable tools to strengthen financial sustainability, deepen community engagement and enhance the long-term viability of their equine-assisted programs.

Jakelle Hoffmann has a passion for connecting people with purpose. With over 20 years of experience in the philanthropy sector, she has witnessed firsthand the transformative power of generosity across higher education, religious and nonprofit organizations. Hoffmann currently serves as grant manager for the Offutt Family Foundation in Fargo, ND, where she continues to foster meaningful impact through strategic giving.

C2, Yoga and Mindfulness for Acquired Brain Injury: Evidence, Innovations and Best Practice DE

This presentation will discuss the benefits of yoga and mindfulness practice for adults living with acquired brain injury. Discussion will include types of acquired brain injury, various mindfulness and meditation techniques and how yoga practice may be adapted for acquired brain injury. Current

research and evidence will be shared as well as resources to access ABI-friendly yoga and mindfulness programs. Participants will define yoga and understand the evidence-based benefits for adults with ABI; define mindfulness and understand the evidence-based benefits for adults with ABI; identify best practices in adapting yoga for the ABI community; and identify access to ABI-friendly yoga and mindfulness programs.

Jena Gorden is a Speech-Language Pathologist at Onword Therapy in Fargo, ND. She has over 20 years of clinical experience working in the field of adult neurorehabilitation. Jena received her Bachelor of Science degree in Speech-Language-Hearing Sciences and Master of Science degree in Speech-Language Pathology at Minnesota State University Moorhead. She is a Certified Brain Injury Specialist with the Brain Injury Association of America and holds her Certificate of Clinical Competence with the American Speech Language Hearing Association. In 2021 Jena pursued her RYT-200 yoga instructor training as well as LoveYourBrain Yoga certification.

11:45 a.m. – 1:15 p.m.

Lunch & the PATH Intl. Update & Field Test Standards Update

1:20 p.m. Travel to the NDSU Equine Center

Session D Afternoon sessions are at the NDSU Equine Center

2 – 4 p.m.

D1, Leading from the Ground Up: Experiential Learning in Equine-Guided Leadership CE

This hands-on presentation explores how interactions with horses can strengthen leadership, teamwork and problem-solving abilities. Through equine-guided activities conducted on the ground, participants will experience the unique feedback that horses provide in response to human body language, emotional energy and clarity of intent. These authentic, real-time interactions offer powerful lessons in trust, communication and collaborative decision-making. The session combines guided exercises with group reflection to help participants translate equine experiences into practical leadership and team-building applications. By engaging directly with horses, attendees will discover how self-awareness, adaptability and empathy can drive more effective and cohesive teamwork in any professional setting.

Amber Bach-Gorman, Ph.D., NCC, LPC/LPCC, CCS #049 is the owner of Amber Bach Gorman Counseling and Consulting where she specializes in assisting clients in healing from complex trauma. She continues to work with the community teaching AKC Canine Good Citizen/therapy animal classes at her local kennel club, educating dog owners about partnering with their canines in therapy work. She was the previous assistant director and clinical coordinator at the NDSU Counseling Center where she developed an animal-assisted therapy program at North Dakota State University partnering with canines and equines. She is a Pet Partners Volunteer Therapy Team evaluator, an AKC Canine Good Citizen evaluator, and board member for The Association of Animal Assisted Intervention Professionals (AAAIP).

Carrie Hammer, DVM, Ph.D. is the associate dean for academic programs in the College of Agriculture, Food Systems and Natural Resources at North Dakota State University. She was the previous director of the equine science program at NDSU, where she taught upper-level courses in nutrition, production and management and health and disease. Carrie enjoys partnering with equines to foster human growth and learning and has served as a member of the Scientific Advisory Council for the Horses & Humans Research Foundation.

D2, Sustainable Saddle Fitting CR Riding

This presentation focuses on the importance of proper saddle fitting as a cornerstone of equine and rider welfare, accessibility and inclusion. Attendees will explore how saddle fit impacts horse comfort, rider balance and overall performance, while also addressing the financial barriers many programs face in accessing quality tack. Through demonstrations and discussion, attendees will learn practical strategies for evaluating fit, selecting appropriate saddles and pads and identifying cost-effective solutions that do not compromise safety or quality. Attendees will identify the key elements of proper saddle fit that ensure safety, comfort, and performance for both horse and rider; recognize how inclusive and adaptive approaches to saddle fitting can meet the needs of diverse riders and equine partners; and develop strategies to source, adjust, or recommend affordable tack options without compromising quality or welfare standards.

Calie Lindseth and **Caddie Craddock** are the dynamic sister team behind Brassy Bit Tack in Glyndon, MN, whose mission is to provide safe, inclusive, quality and affordable tack to riders everywhere. They are committed to their education and understanding of saddle fit, horse and rider biomechanics, saddle building and repair, while never losing focus on their shared passion – their equine partners! Calie and Caddie have sent thousands of saddles to all 50 states, 35 countries and support countless riders in our local area and they are excited to share their knowledge and passion for saddle fitting.

4 – 4:15 p.m.

BREAK

Session E

4:15 – 6:15 p.m.

E1, Grounded Connections: Trauma-informed Equine-Assisted Learning for Youth DE

This hands-on presentation explores how equine-assisted learning (EAL) can be a powerful tool to foster social-emotional learning (SEL) in youth through trauma-informed and culturally competent practices. Participants will engage in experiential, ground-based activities with horses that model the importance of trust, emotional regulation, and relationship-building. The session emphasizes creating psychologically safe and inclusive environments that recognize the diverse experiences and backgrounds of youth participants. Through interactive exercises and reflective discussion, attendees will examine strategies for facilitating EAL sessions that build self-awareness, empathy and resilience. The presentation will also highlight how equine behavior and feedback can guide youth toward greater emotional intelligence and healthy interpersonal skills.

Shania Rentschler, MS, NCC, LPCC is a mental health therapist on White Earth Reservation and PATH Intl. CTRI® for NDSU Bison Strides. She is an alumna of the NDSU Equine Science program with a minor in equine assisted activities and therapies. She received her master's at Minnesota State University, Moorhead in clinical mental health counseling and pursued a post-master's certificate program through the University of Denver in equine assisted mental health. Shania works specifically with children and adolescents in the school and community setting and specializes in trauma, conduct behaviors, anxiety, ADHD, complex family systems and grief.

Emily Dilliard, NCSP earned her bachelors in equine science and minor in equine assisted activities and therapies from NDSU, and master's in school psychology from Minnesota State University Moorhead. She is a PATH Intl. CTRI® and ESMHL and leads the equine-assisted learning program at Bison Strides. Emily is a School Psychologist and principal at Explorer Academy, a Fargo public school that serves students in grades K-8 through special education programming with integrated project-based opportunities that support the whole child.

E2, Enhancing the Wellbeing of Horses Through Complementary Veterinary Care CR All

Equine-assisted services horses support the physical, emotional and cognitive health of humans. To sustain their wellbeing and optimize performance, an increasing number of programs are integrating complementary veterinary modalities alongside traditional care. This presentation explores the role of complementary therapies such as chiropractic adjustment, acupuncture, massage and nutritional support to maintain the health, soundness and emotional balance of the herd. The discussion will include evidence-based benefits and common indicators for incorporating each modality into your herd's care program. Case examples and demonstrations will illustrate how complementary therapies can enhance recovery from musculoskeletal strain, reduce stress and extend the working lifespan of program horses. Attendees will gain practical insight into collaborative, whole-horse care strategies that promote both welfare and performance within EAS settings.

Lacey Carlson, DVM obtained her veterinary degree from Colorado State University. During her time there she became certified in veterinary acupuncture through CuraCore Academy. She completed her training for animal chiropractic at Options for Animals and is certified through the International Veterinary Chiropractic Association (IVCA).

6:15 p.m.

Dinner on your own

Sunday, March 15, 2025

8 – 9 a.m.

Hot Breakfast and the PATH Intl. Region 6 Meeting

9 – 9:10 a.m.

BREAK

Session F

9:10 – 10:10 a.m.

F1, Rewiring Through Riding: Neuroplasticity in the Arena DE

Equine-assisted services provide a uniquely dynamic therapeutic environment shown to foster meaningful neurological change. This presentation explores the connection between equine movement, sensory integration, emotional regulation and neuroplasticity—the brain's ability to reorganize and form new neural pathways. Using current research, case examples and practical arena strategies, participants will deepen their understanding of how purposeful equine interaction supports physical, cognitive and emotional development. Attendees will learn how mounted and unmounted activities can be intentionally structured to activate neural systems involved in balance, motor planning, executive function, attachment and stress response regulation. This session will equip instructors with evidence-informed tools to promote measurable neurological growth through rhythmic equine movement, relational connection and therapeutic engagement in the arena.

***Katie Oakland** is a PATH Intl. CTRI® and Licensed Associate Professional Counselor (LAPC) dedicated to enhancing quality of life through the healing power of horses. Her professional values follow her personal values, Faith, Family & Horses. She lives with her husband and three kids and they ranch and rodeo. Katie has a foundation in clinical mental health counseling and specialized training in EAS. Katie blends neuroscience, trauma-informed practice, horsemanship and community connection to support individuals across all abilities. Katie serves as an instructor at TR 4 Heart & Soul, where she helps riders build emotional regulation, confidence, motor coordination and communication skills through intentional equine interaction. She is also faculty at Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College, where she teaches coursework that integrates horsemanship, human development and wellness principles, supporting future equine and behavioral health professionals.*

F2, Building Purpose-Driven Teams Through Connection, Reflection and Action CE

Volunteers are the heartbeat of every program, but sustaining their energy and purpose takes intentional effort. In this hands-on session, participants will use a Volunteer Journey Map to visualize how volunteers enter, grow and thrive within the organization. Through guided reflection and small-group discussion, they'll identify motivators that drive volunteer commitment, apply experiential learning strategies to deepen engagement, and develop one actionable step to strengthen their volunteer systems and retention efforts.

***Leigh Ann Skurupey, Ph.D.**, is assistant director of 4-H Youth Development in NDSU Extension and serves as the department chair for agricultural and family education. She earned her doctorate in animal science with a specialization in equine nutrition from the University of Florida. Leigh Ann is a carded judge with NSBA, APHA, PTHA and ASHA, as well as a passionate educator of youth.*

10:10 – 10:20 a.m.

BREAK

Session G

10:20 – 11:20 a.m.

G1, Six Riders, One Lesson: Group Therapeutic Riding Lessons CR Riding

This presentation provides practical strategies for managing large-group therapeutic/adaptive horseback riding lessons (up to six riders), focusing on safety, engagement, and individualized instruction. It will cover lesson planning, arena management, volunteer coordination, equine selection, and inclusive teaching techniques. Attendees will learn how to optimize space, minimize congestion, and accommodate diverse learning styles while fostering an accessible and engaging environment for all riders. Through interactive discussions and real-world examples, this session will equip instructors with the tools to run effective and efficient group lessons.

***Katie Luessenhop** is a PATH Intl. CTRI® with over 12 years of instructional experience and a Bachelor of Science in Education from the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater. Her involvement in the EAS industry spans nearly two decades, including her time as a volunteer, and roles as a volunteer coordinator and program coordinator. Katie is also a PATH Intl. Mentor, dedicated to supporting the development of future instructors in the field.*

G2, Advance Your Program Using the 6 A's CE

At our core, we all feel the need to be seen, understood and acknowledged. In this session you will learn to incorporate the 6 A's to advance the experience of everyone involved in your EAS

program. Using a hands-on, interactive approach, we will employ a specific method to support your participants, volunteers, parents/guardians, community members and board members. This method will catch you being good and define when and how to deal with challenges in building relationships across all facets of your organization.

Nate Hendrickson earned his bachelor's in health & physical education & developmental adapted physical education. He is currently an employee of TNT Kid's Fitness and is contracted by Fargo Public School as a movement specialist at Explorer Academy, a K-8 Level D setting school. He began his career as volunteer and then an instructor at a therapeutic riding program. Nate has spent the past 18 years serving individuals of all abilities ranging in age from infancy to geriatric, varying in physical, cognitive, social, emotional and sensory ability. Nate has also had the opportunity to provide experiential learning opportunities for undergraduate students at multiple higher education institutions, as well as physical and occupational therapy students.

11:20 – 11:30 a.m.

BREAK

Session H

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

H1, Utilizing Tracking Systems to Establish and Maintain Sustainable Equine Working Conditions CR All

We will introduce a tracking system to EAS industry professionals that combines criteria of participants alongside horse information to identify sustainable workload limits for each equine during one session that informs for future sessions. The method tracks how many times a horse goes in EAS and evaluates the level of stress each activity and client puts on the horse. Using an individual stressor score will assist in determining a tolerable level of work for each horse's participation. Furthermore, the score can be utilized to determine how a horse's needs have changed and provide insight into deciding which clients need to be on or off boarded. It can also be beneficial in understanding when horses need to be retired, and when new horses need to be brought on. The Horse Goes system, JIM Stressor Score Scale, and Well-Being Score system, allows the horses' sustainable amount of work to be determined and tracked through EAS sessions.

Michelle Haury grew up riding and showing American Saddlebred horses and lived on a farm with many broodmares who were incredibly tolerant and taught her a great deal about nonverbal communication and boundaries. Her EAS career started in 2012 and she is currently the education manager at We Can Ride. She is a PATH Intl. ATRI, ESMHL, and Mentor. Her interests are in fostering healthy communication between equines and humans to build strong partnerships that benefit everyone and creating an optimal workload for each of our equine coworkers.

Liz Zelles grew up in an aggressively un-horsey family but has spent the better part of two decades working to include horses in her life. She rides dressage with her paint mare, who has inspired her desire to create sustainable jobs for our equine partners. She has been a CTRI since 2021, and working with We Can Ride since January 2024, with experience working at two other PATH Intl. centers throughout her career. She strives to ensure horse happiness and success within EAS. She is currently pursuing an animal science degree with an emphasis in equine management at the University of Wisconsin River Falls.

H2, Is It Sensory, Behavior or Both? DE

Understanding behavior often requires distinguishing between sensory-based actions and those driven by other underlying factors such as emotional or learned responses. This presentation will explore the overlap between sensory behavior and other emotional responses. The discussion highlights the importance of a holistic approach when assessing behavior, considering both sensory input and broader contextual influences. Recognizing when a behavior is purely sensory, functionally adaptive, or a combination of both can lead to more effective support strategies and improved behavioral interventions.

Katie Havelka, COTA/L has many years of experience with emotional regulation, behavior and incorporating equine movement into treatment sessions. She earned her applied science degree in Occupational Therapy Assistance from NDSU in Wahpeton, ND. She lives in Fargo, ND with her husband and 3 children. Her time at the NDSU Equine Center fills her bucket because helping kids reach their therapy goals through the unique modality of equine movement is especially important to her. Whether it be big or small, Katie loves making a difference in her clients' lives.

12:30 p.m. **Safe travels and see you next year - March 12-14, 2027, in Darien, WI!**

We look forward to seeing you soon in North Dakota!

***Campus Parking Instructions and Directions to NDSU Equine Center 5140 19th Ave N.**

Campus Parking

Please plan to park in the Memorial Union (MU) parking lot. This is a pay lot Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. so please plan to pay on-site if you arrive prior to 5 p.m. on Friday to avoid a parking ticket.

Directions to NDSU Equine Center

The NDSU Equine Center is 3 miles west of the NDSU campus on 19th Ave N (19th Ave N borders the north end of campus and 12th Ave N. borders the south end of campus). Head west on 19th Ave N. about 3 miles until you see a green and yellow NDSU Equine Center sign flanked by red brick. Turn left into this gravel road and park on the north side of the building. The Equine Center is heated to between 40 and 50 degrees but please dress for the weather in layers.