



Region 1 Conference

May 15-17, 2026

Hosted by:

**High Hopes Therapeutic Riding and
NESAR (New England Special Activities Resources)
Old Lyme, Connecticut**

PATH Intl. Region 1 welcomes you to an educational and fun weekend with your friends and colleagues in Connecticut. Your registration fee includes continental breakfast and lunch on Saturday and continental breakfast on Sunday. *This conference is in-person only and there is no single-day registration.*

CONFERENCE LOCATION

High Hopes Therapeutic Riding

36 Town Woods Road
Old Lyme, CT 06371

LODGING OPTIONS

There are many options in the areas surrounding Old Lyme. Town names that are in reasonable proximity include Old Saybrook, Niantic, East Lyme and Waterford. Off-season vacation rentals may also be available. We encourage you to book your room(s) early!

PATH INTL. REGION 1 CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

Online registration will be available March 23, 2026, through May 1, 2026. After May 1, 2026, registration will need to be completed on-site.

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

Pre-conference Registration March 23, 2026, through April 17, 2026:

PATH Intl. Mentor Training Course* \$200 members \$250 non-members

**Registration includes lunch on Friday and a manual. This is a 12-hour course scheduled for ½ day Thursday and all day Friday. Register by April 17, 2026. If fewer than 8 are registered by this date, this course may be cancelled, and refunds will be issued. Registration on-site is not available. No reimbursements after April 17, 2026.*

Conference Registration March 23, 2026, through May 1, 2026:

Full Conference \$200 members \$270 non-members

Conference Registration on-site after May 1, 2026:

Full Conference \$260 members \$330 non-members

Conference 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 **May 1, 2026**.

Deadline for 50% Refund – Request received in PATH Intl. office by **May 17, 2026**.

Individuals who do not submit a written request to PATH Intl. by May 17, 2026, will not receive a refund.

Education:

This conference satisfies up to **9** hours of continuing education requirements. The Mentor Training Course is an additional **12** hours.

AGENDA
All times are EST

Thursday, May 14, 2026

11 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Mentor Training Course Check-in – High Hopes Front Desk

12 – 4 p.m.

Mentor Training Course Part 1 CE – Classroom

This course is a professional development course to provide a formalized education process to enhance the skills of those who wish to mentor and to provide current PATH Intl. certified professionals with a continuing education opportunity while enhancing personal observation and feedback skills. Quality mentorship is not only a key component to achieving certification, but to attaining the knowledge, skills and abilities to competently perform the job of an equine-assisted services instructor. PATH Intl. Certified Professionals who mentor are an important part of the success of the candidates and the certification programs, thus enhancing professionalism of the industry. Competent mentorship means safer, more effective services which builds the trust of parents, caregivers, disability service providers, medical professionals, and the public. Includes a manual and lunch on Friday.

Marsha Anderson, PATH Intl. Advanced Instructor, CTRI®, ESMHL has a master's degree in animal science from Texas A&M University. She has been involved in EAS for over 30 years and founded Equul Access, Inc., a PATH Intl. PAC, in 2002. Marsha is a PATH Intl. mentor, mentor trainer, associate advanced instructor evaluator, advanced instructor workshop faculty, standards course faculty, and lead site visitor. She served six years as the PATH Intl. Region 6 Representative and was chair of the Region Representative Council (now known as the MOC). She has also served on PATH Intl. committees, subcommittees, and task forces, including the Riding Certification Subcommittee and the Certification Oversight Committee. She is currently the PATH Intl. region conferences coordinator.

Friday, May 15, 2026

8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Mentor Training Course Part 2 CE – Classroom, includes lunch

4:30 – 6 p.m.

Conference Registration – High Hopes Front Desk

Tours – approx. every 15-20 minutes based on demand

6 – 8 p.m.

Welcome Reception and Facilitated Networking

6 p.m.

Silent Auction to benefit NESAR Opens

7 – 7:30 p.m.

PATH Intl. Region 1 Meeting

Saturday, May 16, 2026

8 – 9 a.m.

Conference Registration – High Hopes Front Desk

Tours – approx. every 15-20 minutes based on demand

Session A

9 – 10 a.m.

A1, Stories that Inspire: Using Narrative to Strengthen Fundraising and Engagement CE

Storytelling is a powerful tool in the therapeutic riding industry that can drive engagement, inspire donations, attract new participants, recruit volunteers and elevate an organization's social media presence. This session will explore how the art of storytelling can be utilized across various communication channels to strengthen an organization's fundraising efforts, recruit new riders and volunteers, and increase visibility on social media platforms. By sharing compelling narratives of how EAS changes lives, centers can foster deeper connections with their audience and stakeholders. The presenters will share practical strategies for integrating storytelling into an organization's messaging and campaigns, drawing on real-world examples. Learn how to craft authentic, heartwarming stories that resonate with potential donors, supporters and participants. Attendees will gain insight into how to use storytelling to humanize an organization, build lasting relationships, and create content that drives action.

Hayley Plas is a lifelong equestrian with a deep passion for horses. Growing up riding and owning horses, Hayley has experienced the profound impact that horses can have on individuals, a passion that has shaped both her personal and professional journey. Hayley initially worked in the corporate world, honing her skills in communications and strategy. However, driven by a desire to find more meaningful work, she merged her love for horses with her professional experience by earning her PATH Intl. CTRI® certification. Over the years, she has taken on multiple roles at a PATH Intl. PAC, including volunteer manager, instructor, and program manager. In her current role as communications director, she has successfully combined her two professional passions — marketing and EAS — into one impactful career.

Nicole Makos is a nonprofit manager with a wealth of experience from a diverse career in the arts, management, hospitality and human resources. Nicole is a Pennsylvania native and a proud graduate of Seton Hill University. Before relocating to Connecticut, Nicole had the pleasure of working with several Pittsburgh and Philadelphia based nonprofit organizations. When a new opportunity brought her to New England, she dove right into the nonprofit community, working with distinguished organizations such as Goodspeed Musicals and Long Wharf Theatre. Always looking to continue her education, Nicole expanded her expertise by earning a graduate certificate in arts leadership & cultural management from the University of Connecticut and completed the Leadership Greater New Haven program through the Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce.

A2, The Effect of Rider Weight During Mounting CR Riding

This master's thesis research was conducted onsite at High Hopes assessing horse behaviors during mounting as a means of assessing equine welfare. An ethogram was developed and videos of mounting sessions were scored accordingly. Data analyses compared various factors such as horse ID, rider ID, or relative rider weight, to horse behavior scores. Behaviors were also analyzed to create behavioral profiles or groupings of behaviors that tended to be seen together. Attendees will understand the scientific process in equine welfare assessments and the findings of this research and practice drawing appropriate conclusions based on the research findings.

Lily Bensko completed her master's degree in equine science through the University of Edinburgh, winning the equine program's Dissertation of the Year award. She conducted her research at High Hopes, with the help of High Hopes staff and horses, to improve knowledge of how rider weight impacts the horses' wellbeing. She is a PATH Intl. CTRI® and ESMHL.

10 - 10:15 a.m.

BREAK

Session B

10:15 - 11:15 a.m.

B1, Use Salesforce to Manage Equine Expenses CE

If your center uses Salesforce of any flavor (NPSP, Equiforce, LitNim, etc.), learn how to track your equine expenses per animal without buying anything new. Attendees will learn how to set up expense categories, enter each expense and allocate the expense to multiple categories and to individual equines. Learn how to run reports that show quarterly and annual costs per animal and compare those costs to equine-utilization. Learn how to use Quickbooks online reports and a little AI to create an expense upload into Salesforce. Links and instructions will be provided to all attendees.

Teri Walker is the founder and CEO of CommonTeri Services. In 2014, Teri combined her experience in technology with her experience in nonprofit management to found CommonTeri Services to help nonprofits who use Salesforce. She and her team care for people by using systems and data, with a passion for serving nonprofits who deliver direct services like EAS. Teri has 17 years of experience in designing Salesforce solutions for nonprofits and has multiple certifications in Salesforce and Agile project management. CommonTeri first became a PATH Intl. sponsor in 2019.

B2, Navigating the River of Client Behaviors DE

Research indicates and supports that all behavior is a form of communication. This presentation will provide tools to translate the behaviors seen in the barn into communication that can be interpreted, and discuss common behaviors seen during EAS and how the professionals, staff and volunteers can assist the individual down a positive path. Equine professionals are adept at reading equine behavior as communication, now apply that to students for a positive and safe learning environment.

Leora Barry is a licensed occupational therapist (OTR/L), and licensed massage therapist. As an OT, she has worked in a variety of inpatient and outpatient settings. She has extensive experience incorporating the equine environment and hippotherapy (using the movement of the horse as a treatment tool), in her occupational

therapy treatment sessions. Leora is an HPCS, PATH Intl. CTRI® and an MA licensed riding instructor. Leora has mentored many PATH Intl. CTRI®s and candidates and occupational therapists. She is passionate about sharing her knowledge and learning from others to continue the professionalism, growth and empathy of our industry. Leora runs an EAS program in western/central MA and is an adjunct professor at WNEU in their Doctor of Occupational Therapy program.

11:15 - 11:30 a.m.

BREAK

Session C

11:30 - 12:30 p.m.

C1, Dementia and Communication: How Horses Help Bridge the Gap DE

This session will discuss comparing how horses communicate with each other to how people living with different types of dementia communicate, especially at the mid-late to late stages of the disease. Learn how involving those nonverbal and intuitive cues will help care partners better communicate with and understand people with dementia.

Victoria McLeod-Tardiff is a PATH Intl. CTRI® with over 20 years of teaching experience and passion for anything to do with horses and bringing awareness to the needs of those living with dementia. She has also worked in long term care with elders for over 33 years, specifically with those living with dementia. Victoria teaches dementia awareness at The Barron Center in Portland, Maine, and has a small farm where her three beloved horses live, one of which is a retired EAS horse.

C2, Just Because It's Free, Doesn't Mean It Fits CR Riding

Therapeutic riding programs tend to rely heavily on donated tack, which can often be unsuitable or even unsafe for program use. This presentation will provide a practical and welfare-focused approach for evaluating saddles for safety and functionality within therapeutic riding environments. An emphasis will be placed on horse welfare, rider safety and program liability rather than brand prestige or cost. Attention will be given to the realities of high-use saddles and the need for consistency across both horses and riders. During the presentation, modern technologies and common gimmicks will be discussed. A large variety of saddle features and accessories can mask poor saddle fit or even introduce additional risk in program settings. Clear guidance will be provided on which saddles and accessories should never enter a program tack room. Learn a structured approach to evaluating saddles considered for program use and feel empowered to make horse-first decisions that support safety and ethical program practice.

Julia Fabiani is a qualified saddle fitter with The Society of Master Saddlers. Working as a saddle fitter and saddler across lower New England and New York, she is known for a horse-first, welfare-led approach to saddle fitting. With a background in equine veterinary medicine and extensive saddlery experience, her work bridges anatomy, biomechanics and practical craftsmanship. Alongside fitting services, Julia offers saddle and bridle repairs, maintenance and thoughtful modifications, allowing her to assess equipment not just on the horse, but from the "inside out." Her professional focus is on improving comfort, performance and long-term soundness through correct fit, informed education and ethical practice.

12:30 - 2 p.m.

LUNCH with the PATH Intl. Update & Field Test Standards Update

Session D

2 - 3 p.m.

D1, Women & ADHD – Distraction Isn't Even Half of It! DE

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in women is often underdiagnosed or misdiagnosed due to symptom presentation differences compared to men that frequently emphasize inattentive symptoms. This presentation will explore the unique impact of executive function (EF) deficits on the lives of women with ADHD across their lifespan. Executive functions are higher-order cognitive processes, including planning, organization, working memory, inhibitory control, and emotional self-regulation, which guide goal-directed actions and behaviors. By shedding light on these often-overlooked aspects, this presentation will explore providing tailored support for women & girls with ADHD, bridging strategies from the barn to daily life.

Marci Bender is a PATH Intl. Master Instructor, CTRI®, and The HERD Institute Equine-facilitated Learning Foundation 1 practitioner. With over 25 years of experience in the equine-assisted services industry, Marci is currently the education & impact director for High Hopes Therapeutic Riding with a focus on mentoring, participant evaluations, mobile equine outreach, internships, research collaboration, and staff training & professional development. She is a lead accreditation site visitor and the PATH Intl. Region 1 Representative.

D2, Beyond the Ring CR All

This presentation will focus on the benefits that occur outside of the arena. From postural changes and balance challenges to sensory activities, explore ways to enhance services through creative trail development and usage. This interactive session will take place on the trails of High Hopes and include a guided walk and detailed discussion at various sensory stations focusing on the specific benefits available through intentional activities.

Carolyn Jagielski, PT has over 40 years of experience providing services to individuals with disabilities in the EAS environment. A founding member of the American Hippotherapy Association, Carolyn integrates hippotherapy principles seamlessly into each session. Through her many years as a faculty member for instructor training courses, Carolyn has shared her insights and knowledge with hundreds of professionals in the field.

Kitty Stalsburg is a PATH Intl. master instructor, evaluator, mentor and site visitor. Currently the program manager for PATH Intl. Innovation Circles, she interacts daily with centers all over the country. Kitty has over 40 years of experience in the field teaching participants and providing training and education.

3 - 3:15 p.m.

BREAK

Session E

3:15 - 4:15 p.m.

E1, More than a Ribbon: National Adaptive Virtual Horse Shows CE

For many adaptive horsemanship participants, the opportunity to participate in horse shows is limited not by desire or ability, but by barriers such as travel, health concerns, financial constraints and program capacity. The National Adaptive Virtual Horse Shows (NAVHS) was created to remove these barriers while preserving what matters most—purposeful goals, personal growth and the pride that comes from achievement. This presentation introduces a progression-based virtual show, intentionally designed for EAS. Classes are structured in divisions that support the competitors' development over time, allowing competitors to advance at an individualized pace while reinforcing correct position, effective communication, horsemanship skills and partnership with the horse. Progression is not about comparison, it is about recognizing effort, improvement and personal milestones. Participation in NAVHS adds measurable value to programs by increasing participant motivation, strengthening lesson objectives, and providing tangible recognition through placings, ribbons and year-end performance awards. Instructors can integrate show preparation into lesson plans, reinforcing horsemanship, independence, confidence and sportsmanship. For competitors, the experience builds self-esteem, fosters connection to a broader adaptive equestrian community, and provides a sense of accomplishment that extends beyond the arena.

Elizabeth Pellegrino (formally Doskocz); was founder and director of Freedom Horse Farm for over 17 years. She is a PATH Intl. advanced instructor, ESMHL and mentor. Elizabeth has been instructing for over 25 years. She is a past PATH Intl. Region 2 Representative.

Kara Stark McGrew has been professionally involved with horses since graduation from Stephens College in Columbia, MO. Kara is owner of KSM Equestrian Enterprises and the founder and executive director of the Helping Horseshoe Therapeutic Riding Club, a nonprofit organization. Kara is a PATH Intl. member, PICC member, CTRI, advanced instructor and mentor. Kara is an active member of the HRH of NJ, the state organization for therapeutic riding programs. Kara managed the HRH annual show which also hosted the Area 3 Special Olympics show for 14 years. Kara is an equestrian, Special Olympics coach, an active member of the Arabian Horse Society of NJ and a licensed official for the United States Equestrian Federation.

E2, Nuts and Bolts of Mini Horse Outreach Part 1 CE

Many programs are exploring adding miniature horse outreach to their roster. This presentation will walk through important considerations to designing strategies to get minis on the road to spread your mission. Key topics will include safety, financials, handler requirements, transportation, appropriate visit sites and equine suitability.

Mackenzie Lareau is the program manager at Riding To The Top Therapeutic Riding Center in Maine. She is a PATH Intl. CTRI® and ESMHL, and in the final stages of the Mini Handler Certification process through Seven Oakes Farm with her own mini horse, Phoenix.

4:15 - 4:30 p.m.

BREAK & Silent Auction Closes at 4:30 p.m.

Session F

4:30 - 5:30 p.m.

F1, Strategic Planning Tools to Reduce Overwhelm and Improve Outcomes CE

For many professionals, large-scale projects and annual initiatives often feel as though they “sneak up,” resulting in compressed timelines, reactive decision-making, and persistent stress. This experience is especially common in mission-driven organizations where limited staffing, competing priorities, and cyclical demands contribute to a constant sense of urgency. This workshop-style session addresses the structural and planning challenges that underlie these patterns and offers practical tools to support more proactive and sustainable workflows. Attendees will leave the session with both conceptual tools and a customizable planning template designed to support their next fiscal year. By adopting a structured and intentional approach to calendar planning, participants can replace reactive workflows with systems that promote clarity, accountability, and confidence—ultimately enabling more focused and effective work.

Nicole Makos See bio for Session A1.

F2, Nuts and Bolts of Mini Horse Outreach Part 2 CE

Continuation of session E2.

5:30 p.m.

Dinner on your own

Sunday, May 17, 2026

Session G

9 – 10 a.m.

G1, The Effects of EAS on Individuals with Parkinson's Disease DE

This presentation will detail the research study that was created from an occupational therapy lens to advocate for the potential benefits of incorporating EAS into rehabilitation/disease management for the parkinson's disease (PD) population as an intervention that addresses functional mobility needs for safe completion of activities of daily living (ADLs) and overall quality of life. This study examined the following topics: Integration of occupation-focused evidence-based practice into unmounted EAS for individuals diagnosed with PD; Integration of appropriate standardized assessments to implement proper safety precautions; Interpretation of standardized assessment results to develop personalized interventions and goals; and how to grade up and grade down activities to match the needs and goals of participants. Lastly, this study has also developed an evidence-based practice manual detailing EAS and its place in PD rehabilitation.

Arielle Johnson is a doctoral occupational therapy student who will graduate in May of 2026. Arielle is pursuing her OTD at Springfield College, where she also received her bachelor's degree in health science (Pre-OT) in May of 2023. As a lifelong horse lover, she is passionate about combining her love of horses with occupational therapy.

10 – 10:15 a.m.

BREAK

Session H

10:15 – 12:15 p.m.

H1, Equine & Human Movement DE

This interactive presentation will begin with a brief overview of equine movement and human movement and the interplay between the two when a horse is ridden. Participants will learn about three-dimensional movement imparted by the horse and how an individual's own freedom of movement is affected (and vice versa). From the classroom, attendees will then watch a variety of horses without a rider on them, and then with a rider on them, to see these concepts in action. The session will end with discussion regarding specific types of clients. Attendees will be invited to share their own experiences and discuss possible strategies for improved human and/or equine movement.

Sarah Bronson, PT is the executive director at Riding To The Top Therapeutic Riding Center, a PATH Intl. PAC in Windham, Maine. She is a PATH Intl. CTRJ® and Registered Therapist. With nearly 40 years of experience as a physical therapist and 30+ years in the EAS industry, she brings her knowledge of body mechanics, disability awareness and equine movement to this presentation.

We look forward to seeing you soon in Connecticut!