

## *Reducing Loneliness Through Meaningful Occupation: An Equine-Assisted Community Program for Older Adults*

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### **Outline**

- Introduction
- Objectives
- About the Cheff Therapeutic Riding Center
- About the Silver Saddles Program
- Definitions and key terms explained
- Summary/literature review
- Conclusion
- Q/A



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## *Introduction*



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## *Objectives*

- **Describe** loneliness as an occupational concern affecting participation, roles, and well-being in older adults.
- **Identify** qualitative themes related to meaningful occupation, social connection, and role engagement from an equine-assisted community program.
- **Discuss** the role of equine-assisted, occupation-based interventions as a potential occupational therapy approach to reducing loneliness in older adult populations.

\*we will revisit this during Q/A at the end

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## *About the Cheff Center*



- Opened in 1969 as the first therapeutic riding facility in North America.
- The Cheff center serves those of all ages and disabilities, ranging from physical, cognitive, and emotional.
- Mission Statement: "To enhance the lives of individuals who have special needs through equine assisted services while leading the industry in education."
- Therapeutic Riding, Hippotherapy, and other programming.

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## *About the Silver Saddles Program*

- The "Silver Saddles" program at the Cheff Therapeutic Riding Center is focused on community engagement and meeting the needs of the active senior/older adult population.
- The program is designed to provide exercise as well as social interaction among participants.
- Participants must be over the age of 60, have a medical diagnosis, and their doctor's permission to participate.
- The group meets once a week for 1.5 hours; this includes participation in OT led exercise group, grooming and tacking of specifically assigned horse, riding lesson, and ending with a social hour and refreshments.

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## ***Key terms and definitions explained***

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- Therapeutic riding
- Loneliness
- Older adult
- Occupational therapy
- Equine assisted activity/service
- Social participation
- Meaningful occupation

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## ***Therapeutic Riding (TR)***

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- What is therapeutic riding?
- How does this fit with silver saddles program?
  - Riding skills
- How does this translate out of the saddle?
  - Communication, making decisions, balance and posture

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## *Loneliness*

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- What is loneliness?
- How does loneliness impact quality of life (QOL)
- Correlation between aging and loneliness

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## *Older Adult*

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- Health promoting effects of participating in work, volunteer, leisure, and social activities.
- An older adult is someone who is 60 years of age or older
- How can OT impact an older adult?
- How does the Silver Saddles group play a role

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## ***Occupational Therapy (OT)***

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- OT enables individuals of all ages to participate in ADL's while promoting tasks that the person wants and needs to do safely.
- How does OT fit in with the Silver Saddles program?
  - Exercise group
  - Tailored home exercise programs
  - General education about the body, exercise, and adaptations
  - Activity modification- horses and home/life

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## ***Equine-assisted activities/services***

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- Activities that are facilitated by equine professionals
- 3 main categories:
  - Learning
  - Horsemanship
  - Therapy
- How does this fit in with the Silver Saddles Program?
- Therapy and horsemanship take precedence in this case

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## ***Social Participation***

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- Participating in meaningful activities, leisure-based activities, and interpersonal relationships.
- Two main categories:
- Social participation and QOL and what is meaningful to the person.
- How does this relate to the Silver Saddles program?
  - Phone calls/group chats
  - Lunches
  - Community involvement

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## ***Meaningful Occupations***

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- Engaging in meaningful occupations can increase the QOL and a sense of belonging
- Client centered goals and positive intervention (horseback riding) can address loneliness and social isolation.
- Silver Saddles and a meaningful occupation
- Activities that promote participants to:
  - Have a sense of responsibility
  - Independence/purpose
  - Accomplishment
  - Team building/finding their voice

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## *Summary of Literature*

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- Participants feedback:
  - Social connectedness
  - Emotional well-being
  - Life satisfaction
  - Sense of belonging
- Findings are preliminary and largely qualitative; equine-assisted programs are meaningful and effective strategy for addressing loneliness in older adults.
- Group-based nature of the program; human-animal connection
- Benefits of equine-assisted interventions
- Promoting health and well-being

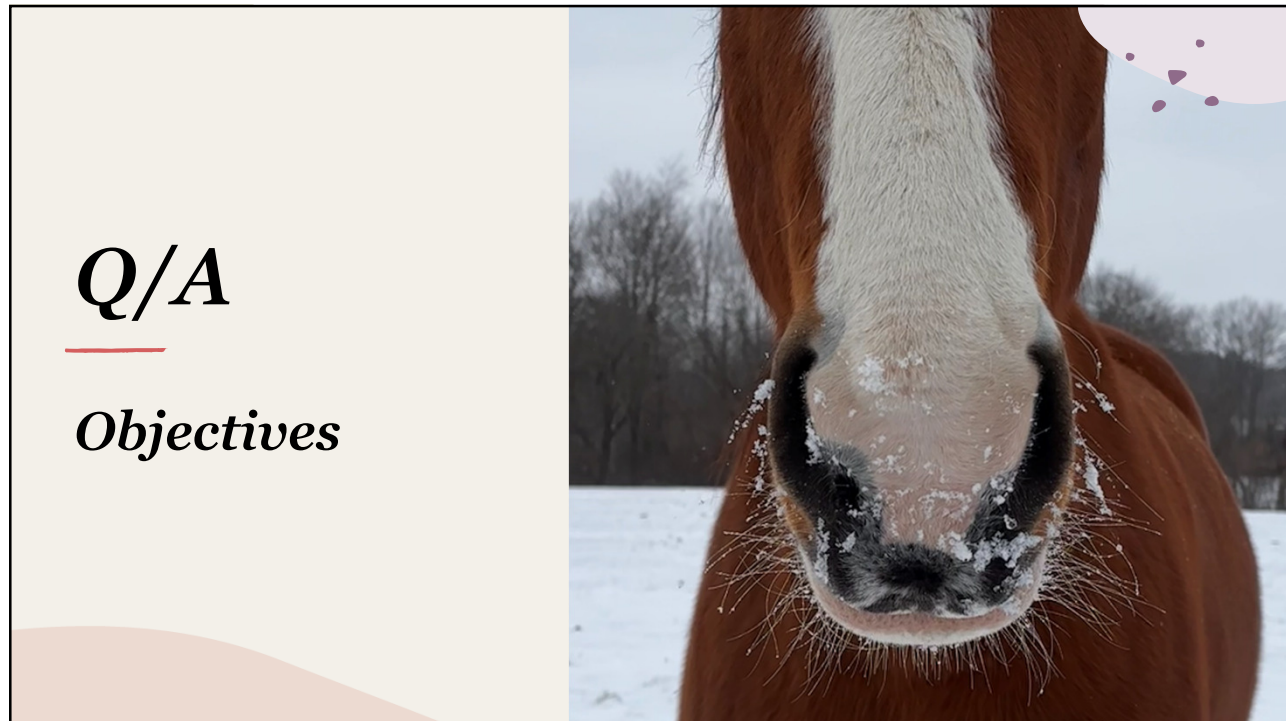
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## *Conclusion*

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- This program is an innovative and holistic approach to mitigating loneliness in the aging population.
- Interventions that align with core principles of OT.
- Implications for OT, future research, and community-based interventions.

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## Q/A

### *Objectives*

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## *Contact Information*

The Cheff Therapeutic Riding Center  
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 Augusta, MI. 49012  
 Phone: (269) 731-4471

Scheduling/sign up for Silver Saddles Program or TR, please contact:  
 Emily Fields- Barn/herd manager, Lead instructor  
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For OT related services, please contact: Samantha Dunleavy-Shotsberger OTD, OTR/L, Instructor  
 Email: [Sam@cheffcenter.org](mailto:Sam@cheffcenter.org)

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*QR Code for Handout*

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*Thank you!*

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