

about driving, and soon after, the driving program was offered to participants.

One person at Riding To The Top said, "Truly there is not one aspect of our organization that has not been touched by this volunteer—from barn work, to lessons, to various building projects, to fundraisers—Pat is always thinking about how she can help. She is a friend to all and brings great joy to other volunteers, participants, staff and horses alike, and I can't think of anyone more deserving!"



PATH Intl. Youth Equestrian **Zoie Cissell**

Some people can conquer the world with a smile, and that's what Zoie Cissell of Hearts & Horses, Inc., does. It began as a simple request. "Our daughter has multiple, life altering diagnoses; would you evaluate her to see if equine movement and being at the barn can help?" And so began an incredible journey of discovery, laughter, joy and adventure at this PATH Intl. PAC in Loveland, CO.

Challenges? Zoie has had

them. She was born with cerebral palsy, epilepsy, cystic fibrosis and microcephaly. It is difficult for her to sit up, so core development is especially important. In the beginning her physical therapist had a brace for Zoie to wear while riding that went from mid-chest to her waist, cushioned by four pool noodles. Now her core has strengthened to the point where she uses just an abdominal binder and minimal assistance from her team. She works hard staying centered on her pony's back. One team member said, "It's been amazing to watch a horse, team and rider working hand-in-hand to accomplish this goal of sitting and trunk control."

Zoie's physical improvements have been amazing. But beyond that, Zoie has fun at her sessions. The staff plays her favorite music, and they encourage her to sing along and enjoy herself. Whenever she's on her horse, she lets the staff know she's happy in her own chit-chat language. One instructor said, "That's why we come here—it's the joy she feels. It's not just her favorite therapy, it's mine too."

Another instructor said, "If you ever visit the center, and hear music playing and laughter ringing out, stop by to watch how this little girl continues to show that no matter how significant your disabilities may be, with the help of an amazing equine and team, there are no limits to what you can achieve!"



PATH Intl. Adult Equestrian **Kristin Albers**

Nominees for this category are typically characterized by strength, perseverance, good attitude and willingness to learn. That's what makes them exceptional, and that's exactly how her nominators from Exceptional Equestrians in De Pere, WI, described Kristin. Her enthusiasm and willingness to achieve her goals is the standard other riders look up to.

They wrote, "Kristin is one of the kindest and most respectful individuals in our program, especially when interacting with her horse, Tia. She always begins each session by checking in with Tia to say hello. When grooming she uses a gentle touch and talks to her horse as if they are long-lost friends. There are some days when she would like grooming to go on forever so as not to break the physical/emotional connection. The time she spends with her team and her horse Tia, who she calls her best friend, is the highlight of her week."

She works diligently on her