SmartPak has teamed up with PATH International to offer the Horse of the Month program, which celebrates one special equine assisted therapies horse that is hard at work at a PATH Intl. center. SmartPak named Wood Borne Noble Heart, also known as “Harvey,” as the horse of the month in January. Harvey began his illustrious therapeutic riding career in 2005 at the age of 13. Accustomed to the hustle and bustle of the Morgan show world, he adapted very quickly to his new life at the Cheff Therapeutic Riding Center, and almost immediately became a favorite of staff, volunteers, and students. Eight years later, he is the heart of the therapeutic riding herd.

Harvey is one of the few horses that works in every aspect of the program. He’s a stellar therapeutic riding horse—solid as a rock. He is often used for difficult riders that tend to make other horses nervous... the screamers, the “jumpers” (kids who just might jump off their horse at any given time), the wiggle worms, clients who are terrified to ride, and first time independent riders.

He works great in the Hippotherapy program, tolerating clients sitting backwards, sideways, kneeling, standing, etc., and is just as easy to ground drive as to lead. He will stand for hours being groomed, bathed, decorated, painted, and fussed with in the ground program and camps. He is a great choice for the parts of the horse labeling game, because he’ll stand forever with notecards taped everywhere. He’s also a favorite for the veteran ground program because he’s easy to ground drive and they get a kick out of him when he steals their doughnuts and cookies. If the riding center could clone him, there would most certainly be a barn full of Harveys!

Recently, Cheff Therapeutic Riding Center was contacted by a social worker who was interested in pursuing Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies with a client. This client was a teenage boy who had been diagnosed with some severe psychiatric issues. This boy was angry at the world, constantly combative, and had even had to be forcibly removed from school on more than one occasion—but he loved animals.

Empathizing with the caregivers, the instructors agreed to schedule a one on one under extremely controlled conditions to see if the client would be appropriate to participate. The strategy was to have him work with staff only at a time when there were no volunteers or clients present. Based on the situation, Harvey was selected to work with this client.

Harvey connected with this client immediately. In his usual way, Harvey broke the ice by unashamedly passing gas and pestering him for attention. The boy was immediately taken with him and agreed to ride. Once he was on, Harvey proceeded with his usual routine of stopping for a bathroom break, complete with a groan and grunt at the end. He then continued to toot his way around the arena with the boy aboard. As you might guess, his rider found this extremely amusing, breaking into a smile and laughing at Harvey’s antics.

Following his lesson, the boy was much more relaxed. When the instructors took him back to the viewing area to meet up with his mom, they were surprised to find her sobbing. Perplexed, the instructors who thought things went pretty well, all things considered, asked what was wrong. “Absolutely nothing’s wrong, everything is right,” she explained. “I haven’t seen him smile or laugh in over two years.”

Harvey has a knack for breaking through barriers simply by being himself. As previously mentioned, he has a huge sense of humor, and gets away with a lot of mischievous behavior simply because you can’t get mad at him—it’s so dang funny! He loves his job as a therapy horse and goes out of the way to make clients comfortable, often offering himself as the butt of jokes. Those who work with him couldn’t love him more.
ADVERTORIAL

**Here are just a few things that the staff at Cheff Therapeutic Center said about Harvey:**

“Harvey is the heart of the center. He is steady enough for our nervous riders, and mischievous enough to entertain a whole arena. With his limited sight, he is a role model for our students. Harvey seems to understand the students, and they are able to relate to him. He is patient when they are scared, and challenges them when they are becoming independent riders. Above all, Harvey connects with them. He listens as hard as a horse can listen, giving students his full attention. He proves that challenges can be overcome to live a joyful and caring life.”

-Hannah Homnick, Therapeutic Riding Instructor

“Because of his calm, patient, and inquisitive nature, Harvey is often cast as professor of “Horses 101.” In this capacity, he has positively impacted hundreds of participant’s lives from volunteers, to clients, to instructors, and instructors in training. Wise beyond his years, he has the uncanny ability to gauge any situation and respond appropriately. Routinely called upon for assessments, he welcomes clients into the world of horses by embodying the best equine qualities. He is one of very few horses in the program who are versatile enough to be used for everything (Hippotherapy, therapeutic riding, senior programing, ground programing, veteran programing, and more). His temperament, movement, and intuition make him a rock in our program.”

-Morgan, Cheff Center staff member

**ABOUT PATH INTL.**

SmartPak has teamed up with the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International or, PATH Intl. to recognize horses who participate in equine-assisted activities and therapies across the country. These hard-working and kindhearted horses help serve participants of all ages with a range of physical, emotional, behavioral and cognitive challenges. Horses involved in the program allow the participants to receive rewarding benefits by promoting an awareness of body, mind and spirit. The SmartPak Horse of the Month program recognizes an equine-assisted activities and therapies horse from a certified PATH Intl. center each month by sharing their story and providing one month of SmartSupplements in SmartPaks for the recipient.