

Reaching Beyond Boundaries: Emilio



Emilio, a happy, sweet, smiling baby! With his joyous demeanor and big bright eyes, his parents, Afra and Diego, had a hard time realizing that anything could be wrong with their eldest boy. However, when Emilio was about 12-months old, they started to have their suspicions and decided to seek out treatment therapies. When Emilio was 4-years old, his physical therapist recommended NCEFT thinking he would do very well with horses since they had a machine there that simulated the movement of a horse.

During his first few sessions at NCEFT, Emilio had a hard time adjusting to the new environment and animals, but by the fourth session, Emilio started to light up and get excited in the car as they drove up Runnymede Road, approaching NCEFT's white gates!

When Emilio first started at NCEFT, he was passive in many ways and had very little language, sound, or expression. It was unclear if he had any communicative intent at all. Emilio started in speech therapy with Holly Wittman, SLP, and later transitioned to occupational therapy (OT) with Kim Desautels OTD, OTR/L. The focus of Emilio's OT sessions was to improve his sensory processing, neural organization, trunk control, balance, ability to sit upright, gross and fine motor coordination, and communication.

Between the speech and OT therapies, Emilio's parents are delighted that he has been able to come out of his shell. Emilio has also gained more strength, endurance, coordination, and has improved eye-contact. He participates more in the activities during his therapy sessions, and has shown improvement in his overall functional independence. Additionally, Emilio has a pretty special connection with his patient and gentle equine-partner, Elf!

Emilio, pictured on his equine partner, Elf, fully engaged in his therapy session activities.



Emilio now has a strong communicative intent, especially when he gets off his horse and is ready for a fun ATV ride around the property. Although Emilio does not talk, he tries to communicate, "Go, go, go!!" while riding the ATV. He recently started using a talker to help him communicate. Emilio beams with pride and joy when he connects with someone and they understand what he is saying.



Emilio riding backward on Elf during an occupational therapy session.

Emilio has also participated in NCEFT's Happy Trails Summer Camp. He has a special bond with his teenaged camp "buddy" and loves playing in the outdoors. His mom says that he would be at camp for ten hours a day if he could, and that he really picks up on the special "vibe" at NCEFT where he feels joy, full acceptance, and inspiration. Emilio's parents describe NCEFT as not only a place where he goes for therapy, but a place where Emilio has created a community of support. He's been able to grow and develop, he has friends, and he feels strong and included.



Afra and Diego call NCEFT, "a vibe of goodness".



Emilio in his element at NCEFT!