

DYLAN ROLAND COLLINS, CHAMPION WESTERN RIDER
With Down's Syndrome
THE REECE CENTER FOR HANDICAPPED HORSEMANSHIP

Having Down's Syndrome plays no part in the ability to ride horses, especially when riding is taught so well at the Reece Center for Handicapped Horsemanship in Palmetto, Georgia. Other disabilities don't matter either. Everyone is treated as an individual, so the classes are suited to the special abilities of the students. Here's just one of their great success stories.

Dylan Roland Collins is now nearly 20. He started riding at the Reece Center years ago when it was still in Ellenwood. Having an extra chromosome, Dylan has low muscle tone. This makes him somewhat clumsy. Riding has helped to develop strength in his body and, just as importantly, has built his confidence. Over the years of lessons and practice, he has been able to compete in front of hundreds of onlookers. In Special Olympics equestrian events, he always places well and quite often wins a gold medal. He has gained the respect of his teachers, fellow riders, and classmates, who admire him for his outstanding performances as much as for his general congenial demeanor.

Dylan first learned to ride in the English style. Showing his ability to handle his horse well, he was soon competing in various equestrian events as the only Special Olympics athlete representing Fayette County, Georgia. Developing his equestrian skills, Dylan conquered the Western saddle and reins and now represents Fayette County in Western events. Consistently winning gold or silver medals in various events, he has moved into more complicated and stringent levels of competition.

Through the diligent teachings and compassionate expertise of the Reece Center and its volunteer staff, Dylan and the other riders have expanded their goals and reached them. Although the Center has experienced numerous difficulties (lightning strikes that burned the barn, hail that ruined the roof of the rebuilt barn, lack of funding, illness, etc.), the staff and volunteers continue to give generously of themselves to make it a place of happiness and companionship. Countless hours of hard work go into the maintenance of the grounds, buildings, and arena. Caring and concern are given freely to all the horses, students, and parents, so the Reece Center has become almost a second home for many. It is a place where the heart rules. The excellent staff and volunteers make it a confidence-building experience for all who ride there. The students have become a tight team, cheering on one another to continue to improve their skills and health. Riding for the Reece Center has made a huge, wonderful difference in Dylan's life and in the lives of those who ride with him.

Sincerely,
Tracy Collins-Parks
Dylan's Mom

