

# New business offers therapy through horses | Franklin Hamburg Lafayette NJ | Local News

HAMBURG — Diane Simon M.S. CCC-SLP, owns a company called Pedia-Rehab Inc. which provides speech-language therapy and “equine assisted” therapy services to children and adults.

Now, after moving to Georgia for nearly a decade, this vital business is back in Sussex County.

In 1994, after she graduated from William Paterson College with a Masters degree in Speech-Language Pathology, Simon started a small private practice in Upper Saddle River.

“After a year, I then relocated the practice to a horse farm in Hamburg in order to offer 'equine assisted therapy' and 'hippotherapy' to my clients,” she said. “I have been involved with horses my entire life so it was my passion to be able to use horses in my therapy work. I obtained my certification in hippotherapy and never looked back.”

Simon said, “Although using horses in therapy is still considered an experimental or alternative treatment, the benefits to some clients have been astonishing, especially for those with Autism. I often see progress in a few sessions, which makes it exciting for me and the client. My typical client will often seek out hippotherapy after other traditional methods of therapy have failed, so it makes me really happy when I can offer them some hope.”

In 2001, Simon moved the practice to Georgia for 15 years and then just recently returned home to New Jersey in 2016.

“It’s so nice to be home and everyone in Sussex County has welcomed us back with open arms,” she said.

Simon offers traditional speech language therapy as well as therapy using the horses.

“We call the part of the business that uses horses in therapy 'Top Form Horses' and this is also our website name [Topformhorses.com](http://Topformhorses.com),” she said.

“Therefore, people can get the same speech-language therapy here as they might receive at a regular rehab clinic. The barn therapy office and the farm environment are what make us really unique. It’s something that children and adults really seem to respond well to. I like to make therapy as enjoyable as possible because people are already very stressed over their illness or disability. I think that keeping a positive attitude toward therapy is very important for achieving goals. I always encourage the involvement of the entire family in the therapy process and somehow the horses really help to bring people together.”

Simon loves the quote by Winston Churchill: “There is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man.”

“Our clientele includes special needs children and adults with a variety of speech, language, and cognitive disorders,” she said. “We see children with developmental delays and adults that may have lost speech and language due to a stroke or other brain injury.”

As the business grows, Simon said she hopes to add more speech therapists and horses. She also hopes to possibly offer other rehab therapies, such as physical and occupational therapy.

“Horses are my life,” Simon said. “I started riding at the age of nine in day

camp and was hooked every since. I rode hunters and did some eventing. Over the past few years, I have been studying classical dressage and I love using the groundwork dressage exercises to keep the therapy horses happy and fit. We have a large outdoor arena and an open grassy field for training the horses. In the future we hope to expand our riding lesson program.”

If people want more information, they can visit the American Hippotherapy Association

For full information about what Simon does, visit:

<http://www.topformhorses.com/> , email [info@topformhorses.com](mailto:info@topformhorses.com) or call 973-827-6039. The Speech Therapy Office & Equestrian Center is located at 30 Beaver Run Road in Hamburg.