



# FACT SHEET

Sundays 8/7c on ABC

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## Luther Family and Freedom Hills Fact Sheet

Renee Sherrard-Luther grew up on a 156-acre farm in Port Deposit, Md., known as Rolling Hills Ranch. At the age of 2, Renee's father passed away and the farm was left in the care of her hardworking mother who hosted families in need. Dedicated to the farm and helping her mother, Renee had a strong love for riding and helping those in need, especially children.

Majoring in Equine Studies and volunteering at a therapeutic riding program, she later became an instructor and opened her own facility and non-profit organization, the Freedom Hills Riding Program, which is now in its 25<sup>th</sup> year of operation.

The organization has helped thousands of people enjoy and benefit from their therapeutic riding lessons including those who suffer from a wide range of physical problems that include brain injuries, broken necks, autism, cerebral palsy, and other developmental issues.

She also been involved with her community's Special Olympics programs in Equestrian helping many of its participants win gold medals. She's accomplished much for her community all the while facing personal tragedy: her husband Carl was diagnosed with liver cancer and passed away a few months ago.

On her own, Renee now has to raise and support her children, in addition to maintaining her riding facility. Struggling with finances, Renee fears she will have to close the facility, which she promised her husband she would fix up. In addition her house has many problems including foundation problems, lack of insulation, unsafe windows and doors and a kitchen with broken appliances.

### Quick Facts:

- Since 1982, Freedom Hills, a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, has been bringing horses and people with disabilities together. The organization is dedicated to improving the quality of life for the disabled and challenged, and does not turn anyone away due to finances.
- Freedom Hills participates in the Special Olympics at county and state levels and has also participated in the National Games.
- Any physically, emotionally or challenged individual can participate. Classes are conducted by trained instructors and assisted by volunteers and physical therapists. As always, safety is our highest priority.
- Internationally, riding is recognized as one of the most beneficial forms of therapy for disabilities. Developed in Germany in the late 1960's, therapeutic riding has been successfully practiced in Europe, Canada and the United States. For the physically impaired, riding a horse can play a significant role in rehabilitation. A horse's gait is similar to the locomotion of the human pelvic area. Riding helps strengthen spine and pelvic muscles; as well as, provide all the criteria of low-level aerobics. The discipline needed to master riding can improve concentration and emotional control for the mentally impaired. Frequently a strong bond develops between the horse and rider.