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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **THERAPEUTIC RIDING PROGRAM LOSES BARN, RIDING EQUIPMENT TO FIRE**

Fairfax, VA – July 20, 2007 – The Northern Virginia Therapeutic Riding Program (NVTRP), a nonprofit organization located in Fairfax, VA, lost its barn and all riding equipment due to a barn fire on Thursday night. The fire occurred sometime between 9:00 and 10:00 p.m. No people or animals were seriously injured in the fire. At this time the cause is still undetermined. Lessons have temporarily been suspended.

According to Breeana Bornhorst, Program Director, "Of our 12 horses, Clancy was the only horse in the barn during the fire. Miraculously, he was able to kick out his stall door to escape. Seven other horses were in an adjacent paddock at the time, but were able to break through a gate and into an adjoining field to get away from the intense smoke. We are extremely fortunate that our riders, staff and horses are doing well."

NVTRP provides equine assisted activities to more than 60 children and adults with disabilities every week. It has operated in the Clifton community for 27 years and relies heavily on donations to provide therapeutic horseback riding lessons. "The fire has delivered a big hit to our program, but we are determined to persevere. We are reaching out to the local community to help us get the program up and running again without delay," said Rhonda VanLowe, NVTRP Chair, Board of Governors. "We are assessing the situation and may need to find a new location to operate. We will also have to replace all of the tack, equipment, equine medications and feed we lost in the fire. We are asking for the community to help us get back on our feet so that our riders are able to get back on the horses as soon as possible. Anything will help."

Lessons are a major contributor to the riders' overall mental and physical health. "I've seen what a difference this program can make. Since he started riding with the program, my son has gained a better sense of balance, is more confident getting around, and more enthusiastic about being around others," said Tootie Rivera, parent and board member. "It would be tragic if our riders were unable to ride. For many of them it's their one opportunity to get out on their own and feel free."

To donate or for more information, visit <http://www.nvtrp.org> or contact Breeana Bornhorst at 703-867-1698.

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