

# Naples Therapeutic Riding Center Celebrates Record-Setting Kentucky Derby Party

*Annual event more than doubles proceeds from previous year, strengthening programs for children and adults with physical, social, and mental health needs*

NAPLES, FL, UNITED STATES, May 5, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Naples Therapeutic Riding Center](https://www.einpresswire.com/naples-therapeutic-riding-center) (NTRC) was off to the races on Saturday, May 2, welcoming a sold-out crowd to its Kentucky Derby Party and raising over \$425,000 in support of its mission to improve the lives of children and adults with physical, social, and mental health needs through therapeutic riding and other equine-related programs.

Held on NTRC's campus, the event brought the excitement of Derby Day to Naples with festive fare, signature cocktails, live race viewing, and standout race-day style. Guests arrived in bold hats, colorful Derby attire, and coastal-inspired looks, filling the evening with energy, generosity, and celebration.

Beyond the finish line, this year's Kentucky Derby Party marked a major milestone for NTRC, exceeding its 2026 event goal and more than doubling proceeds from last year's event. The funds raised will support the full scope of NTRC's equine-assisted programs and services, helping strengthen participant programming, community



Gary and Connie Sharpe, pictured with NTRC Executive Director Michelle Schweber. Their generosity, including a matching gift, helped inspire support for NTRC's mission and made this record-setting event possible.



Guests at Naples Therapeutic Riding Center's Kentucky Derby Party watch the race together from the covered arena, bringing Derby Day excitement, colorful style, and community spirit to NTRC.

outreach, scholarship opportunities, expert herd care, and the safe, well-maintained campus environment that makes this work possible.

“Wow, what a night,” said Michelle Schweber, Executive Director of Naples Therapeutic Riding Center. “We are just so grateful. The hats, the race, the energy in the arena, it was all incredible, but what makes this event so special is who it supports. Every dollar raised helps our participants and riders find confidence, connection, success, and joy through the power of our horses. That is what this night is truly about.”



Colton, the evening's featured program participant, shares a special moment with event sponsor Colleen Kravis during Naples Therapeutic Riding Center's Kentucky Derby Party.

Connie and Gary Sharpe played an extraordinary role in the evening's success, providing matching gifts for two of the event's most meaningful fundraising moments. Their generosity inspired guests to raise their paddles with purpose, amplified the impact of each gift, and helped turn an exciting night of giving into a record-setting celebration for NTRC.

The evening's success was further elevated by the exceptional generosity of Angela and Don Smith, whose support helped push the event to a new level and strengthened the impact of an already unforgettable night.

From the roar of the live race broadcast to the generosity shown throughout the evening, the Kentucky Derby Party captured the best of what makes NTRC special: community, connection, celebration, and a shared commitment to helping participants learn, grow, and thrive.

With continued community support, NTRC is able to uphold the highest industry standards while growing programs that meet the needs of children and adults across Southwest Florida.

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