

Jenna Walker – Sports

The award for Sports is given to a woman who has impacted our community positively by providing exceptional leadership, mentorship, and sportsmanship in athletics. This year, we present the award to **Jenna Walker**, Program Director at Central Illinois Riding Therapy in East Peoria.

C.I.R.T. is a non-profit organization serving children and adults with mental, physical, emotional, and behavioral disabilities through a comprehensive therapeutic horseback riding program. Jenna started as a volunteer with the program in 1998 when she was in high school, and 27 years later her enthusiasm remains infectious.

Ranging in age from 4 years to riders in their 80s, each student's needs are carefully considered when creating an individualized therapy plan. Jenna matches students to horses based on specific tasks they need to learn, physical abilities, personalities, and more. When done well, the student doesn't even realize they are doing therapy, yet they are gaining confidence and hand-eye coordination, increasing core strength, learning to work as a team, and more.

To raise awareness for this crucial program, Jenna often speaks to other organizations about the therapy that C.I.R.T. does and the amazing results that she has witnessed. She also helps organize and promote several fundraisers each year, as the program is funded primarily by donations. Jenna and her staff of volunteers are committed to the principle that persons with disabilities are entitled to the same opportunities and rights as their non-disabled peers, and no one in need of their service is turned down for an inability to pay.

For her work implementing and expanding Central Illinois Riding Therapy's program, we award **Jenna Walker** this year's YWCA Sports Award.