

# Rollins Community Foundation

## Mission

**Whole child development through martial arts mentorship education and therapeutic equestrian experiences**

### Our Mission

**Rollins Community Foundation helps children and adolescents develop the confidence, discipline, emotional strength, academic habits and practical life skills they need to thrive.** In collaboration with Charm City MMA, schools, families, farms and community partners, we create consistent opportunities for young people to learn, move, connect, explore and lead.

Our work is grounded in a whole-child approach. We combine martial arts, mentorship, academic reinforcement, social-emotional learning, physical wellness, cultural exposure, career exploration and hands-on experiences. Each part of the program reinforces the others so that lessons practiced in the gym, classroom, farm and community can become habits young people carry into school, home, relationships and future employment.

### How We Help Young People Grow

**Martial arts is more than recreation in our model.** It is an engagement and youth-development strategy. During structured training, students practice listening while tired, following multi-step directions, managing frustration, staying composed under pressure and making thoughtful decisions instead of reacting impulsively. Coaches help students connect those skills to classroom behavior, conflict with peers, communication with adults, self-advocacy and responsible decision-making.

**Young people also receive academic support and broader enrichment.** Depending on the program setting, activities may include homework help, grade-level learning, STEM, cooking and nutrition, financial literacy, language and cultural learning, sports development, field trips, competitions, career exposure and community service. Positive adult relationships and consistent expectations help students build accountability, perseverance and a stronger sense of belonging.

### Therapeutic Equestrian Riding and Live Horse Interaction

Our therapeutic equestrian program extends youth development beyond the studio and classroom. Through community partnerships, students enter supervised farm environments where they can interact directly with live horses and learn from experienced equestrian professionals. For many participants, this may be their first meaningful opportunity to work with a horse or see themselves belonging in an equestrian setting.

Activities may include learning horse anatomy and behavior, grooming, safe barn practices, equipment awareness, supervised care, leading and ground-based exercises, observing a horse's body language and riding according to each student's age, readiness, consent and applicable safety requirements. Students learn that trust is built through patience, consistency, clear communication and respect for the animal.

Live horse interaction gives students an immediate and honest form of feedback. Horses respond to movement, energy, touch and direction, encouraging young people to slow down, notice their emotions and body language, follow instructions and communicate with intention. In this setting, students can practice confidence without force, leadership without aggression and courage without ignoring safety.

## **The Connection Between Martial Arts and Horsemanship**

The same habits that support progress in martial arts also support safe and successful horsemanship. Focus, posture, balance, coordination, core control, leg awareness, respectful boundaries and calm decision-making all matter in both environments. A student who learns when to pivot, how to control movement and how to breathe through uncertainty in the studio can apply those lessons when guiding, caring for or riding a horse.

These experiences can support physical development, confidence, patience, stress management, responsibility and emotional awareness. They are especially valuable for young people who benefit from structured movement, predictable routines, supportive coaching and a safe opportunity to try something new. The program is designed as youth development and enrichment; any clinical or medical therapeutic services would be provided only by appropriately qualified professionals.

## **What Students Experience**

- **Belonging and positive relationships.** Students learn alongside peers and trusted adults who know them, encourage them and hold them accountable.
- **Confidence through practice.** Young people take on age-appropriate challenges, learn from mistakes and recognize their own progress.
- **Emotional regulation.** Students practice identifying feelings and triggers, pausing before reacting, communicating needs and resolving conflict safely.
- **Physical and practical skills.** Martial arts, fitness, horsemanship and riding build coordination, balance, body awareness, endurance and responsibility.
- **Academic and career readiness.** Homework routines, enrichment, leadership and career exposure connect daily habits to long-term goals.
- **Access to new environments.** Field trips, farms, competitions, cultural activities and community events help young people discover interests and imagine new possibilities.

## Who We Serve

We serve school-age children and adolescents from Baltimore City and surrounding communities through in-school, afterschool, summer and community-based programs. We are committed to creating welcoming experiences for young people across cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, with particular attention to students who may benefit from additional structure, positive adult relationships, physical activity, academic reinforcement, mentorship and access to opportunities beyond their immediate environment.

A young person does not need to arrive as an athlete, martial artist or rider. We meet students at their starting point and help them build skills one step at a time. Every participant should have the opportunity to feel safe, respected, capable and connected.

## How We Define Success

Success is not measured only by belts earned, techniques mastered or time in the saddle. We look at whether young people attend consistently, strengthen academic responsibility, communicate more effectively, manage frustration, develop confidence, follow through on commitments, build healthy relationships and engage positively with adults and peers.

We document participation and retention, skill progression, student reflections, staff observations and family feedback. When information is available through families and school partners, we also consider indicators such as school attendance, classroom engagement, academic progress and behavior. Over time, we want to see young people graduate, pursue education and employment, lead in their communities and return as mentors, staff members or program leaders.

## An Invitation to Families Young People and Partners

For families, our promise is a caring and structured environment where your child can be challenged, supported and seen. For young people, our message is simple: you belong here, you can learn new things and your starting point does not determine your future. For schools, funders and community partners, we offer a practical way to invest in youth development through connected experiences that reinforce academic growth, wellness, confidence and leadership.

Partnership can take many forms, including student referrals, program hosting, transportation support, farm access, professional instruction, equipment, sponsorship, scholarships, volunteers and funding. Together, we can give more young people the consistent support and meaningful exposure they need to recognize their strengths and build a future with greater choice.

**Our long-term vision** is to help young people move from participation to leadership: learning skills, practicing responsibility, mentoring others, pursuing education and careers and returning to strengthen the next generation. We want every participant to leave with lasting tools - the ability to pause, assess, choose thoughtfully, persevere and keep moving forward.