

CHERYL HUNTER GROUP PITCH FEST OCT 8, 2022

Mary Rottschafer's Pitch

Imagine a young girl, Evie, who is visiting our farm, and she sees an adorable bunny who she wants to pet. But she can't reach it... she's confined to her wheelchair.

I'm Mary Rottschafer, a former 4th grade teacher and director of the Critter Barn, a 3-acre, educational working farm. Since 1990, we've offered school field trips, farm classes, and a volunteer program that thousands of kids have participated in. However, if you are a wheelchair user, it is difficult to navigate our farm. In fact, kids with disabilities often have other physical limitations that shorten their visit – and they're the ones who need time with the animals the most. According to the National Center for Learning disabilities, now more than ever, teachers are searching for strategies to keep students engaged and motivated. So in 2017, when Critter Barn was given 36 acres to build a new farm, I met with teachers and architects to plan a farm with no barriers, so everyone could come. Imaging paved sidewalks that not only take you to every barn, but through the barns, so all the animals are accessible to every visitor. And Evie? In the wheelchair? She will be in a Rifton activity chair, that comes with a big tray in front of her. And on that tray will be the adorable bunny for her to touch and hug.

Learning shouldn't have to be a struggle. I'm offering a segment that focuses on the value of inclusive learning environments and real, hands-on activities, so your viewers can witness some of the miracles we see at our farm every day.