

# 2014 **BEST** OF THE **BEST** INSPIRING STORY



Claire Canfield at Naples Equestrian Challenge.  
photo Scott McIntyre

## Claire Canfield and the Naples Equestrian Challenge

**A** HORSE IS A HORSE, OF COURSE, OF COURSE. UNLESS, OF COURSE, THAT HORSE IS ONE OF 10 USED for therapeutic purposes by the Naples Equestrian Challenge, an innovative nonprofit that offers children and adults with special needs the opportunity to thrive by participating in horseback riding and other equine-related programs.

Of all the inspiring stories we've encountered this year, none is more touching than that of Claire Canfield, a three-year-old beauty who was born five weeks early with Prader-Willi Syndrome, a rare chromosomal disorder that can lead to low muscle tone, lack of coordination, speech disorders, delayed motor development and an abnormal metabolism.

Though Claire's disorder has severely delayed her speech (she communicates mostly through sign language for now), she's making steady progress on her language skills with the help of NEC, and we here at The Journal have no doubt that she'll be chattering up a storm in no time flat.

"Claire's story is just one of many amazing life-changing benefits NEC provides to children and adults with special needs," said Executive Director Kim Minarich, whose organization has assisted more than 500 special-needs children and adults this year. "Equine therapy is a vital alternative therapy for many children and adults with special needs — both physical and mental — and many of NEC's participants are referred to NEC by their pediatrician, neurologist, physical therapist or occupational therapist."

# 2014 **BEST** OF THE **BEST** SPEAKER

## Ashley Judd for Planned Parenthood of Collier County

**N**APLES IS A TOWN THAT DRAWS A LOT OF BIG NAMES — NO QUESTION about it — but few names were bigger than that of Planned Parenthood's keynote speaker for its 10th annual Choice Affair in February at the Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club.

Following in the extremely large footsteps of a long line of heavy-hitters, Ashley Judd, an accomplished actress and passionate advocate for women's rights (not to mention the sister and daughter of a famous pair who comprise a legendary country-music duo), headlined Planned Parenthood's premier fundraising and awareness event that has captivated attendees since 2004.

Then again, we wouldn't have expected anything less from Planned Parenthood's signature get-together, which has hosted a glittering roster of past speakers that includes Gloria Steinem, Ellen Goodman, Jane Fonda, Kathleen Turner, Helen Thomas and Anna Quindlen.

Though there's no word yet on whom next year's speaker will be, we're betting that you've probably heard of them (and will want to hear from them, too).



Actress and activist Ashley Judd, center, chats with Trish Hare, left, and Karen Coney-Coplin before the start of the Planned Parenthood of Collier County's 10th Annual Choice Affair on Feb. 1. Judd was the featured speaker of the night at the Naples Beach and Golf Club. photo Scott McIntyre