

Grace Lake Ministries

Therapeutic Horsemanship

Newsletter Spring 2010



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Did you know?

Over the past 5 years, Grace Lake has provided our services free of charge to over half of our riders? We have been able to do this because of you and the gracious support of our community. This support comes in many different forms such as, financial contributions which make up 2/3 of our annual income; in-kind donations of horses, saddles, hay, grooming supplies, desks, and office supplies; and the many hours and talents that our volunteer staff share.

I Love My Job!

It was a beautiful, sunny Saturday morning at the barn and in backs a truck load of hay. This was a delightful surprise to me and the horses, but God had one more surprise that morning. The man delivering that hay had a daughter with a disability. He was desperately seeking help for his daughter's condition. One year ago after a dental procedure, her mental and physical state began to decline. He looked me straight in the eyes and said, "Can you help her." I didn't feel very capable, but I know God and He is very capable. His daughter has no health care and serious health problems. His family could not afford to give her the treatment that she needs for her condition.

After meeting her the following day, she was very interested in riding. Riding would benefit her greatly by strengthening her weak muscles and preventing much of the problems that are intermittently occurring. For her safety, she must have a thorough medical exam before riding a horse. This may not be possible for the family to afford without insurance. I have spent my morning tapping every resource possible to help this family get this sweet girl the medical care she needs. Thank God that He will answer this prayer! Thank you Ceci for your help!

Psycho What and Horses?

This is not about our board of director's and it is certainly not about that horse we got rid of last year. This article is about Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP).

EAP is experiential psychotherapy that involves equines. It may include, but is not limited to, such mutually respectful equine activities as handling, grooming, longeing, riding, driving, and vaulting. EAP is facilitated by a licensed, credentialed mental health professional working with an appropriately credentialed equine professional. (www.NARHA.Org)

How is it possible for horses to be a valuable partner in counseling and emotional healing through the use of Equine Assisted Therapy (EAP)?

Horses have been used successfully for decades in various types of therapy throughout most of Europe. In the U.S., it is a relatively new and emerging field in which horses are used as tools for emotional growth and learning together as a team with a licensed mental health practitioner and horse specialist. Since horses are prey animals, they contribute to therapy sessions in a different manner than animals typically used in Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) such as dogs and cats. As prey animals, horses will almost always run when they experience fear or feel threatened which mimics what most people do in similar "emotional" situations even though running away may be on an emotional level. Horses feel much safer when they are able to rejoin their herd, thus, can be considered relationship experts and have much to teach people about effective communication, balance in relationships, social skills, etc. Interaction with horses helps to build self-confidence and self-esteem as the relationship between a horse and a person deepens.

Horses are able to give immediate and spontaneous feedback by reading verbal and non-verbal communication. They "mirror" back to us feelings we are experiencing such as fear, happiness, mistrust, which we are often not even aware of ourselves. There are a plethora of ways that an individual can relate to a horse such as through grooming or cleaning hooves (tactile); by the manner in which one talks to a horse which can reveal how an individual communicates with others; and through ground work exercises which can reveal the level of an individual's sense of power in life. Throughout the interaction, the counselor helps group members process their feelings and offers ongoing feedback and insight with the assistance of the accompanying horse specialist.

Horses can offer individuals hope and encouragement regarding difficult situations in their lives. Whether someone is experiencing difficulties in their relationships, trouble with school or low self esteem, the horses utilized in Equine Assisted Therapy can provide love, acceptance and insight. Many adolescents report that they have learned lessons in effective communication, problem solving and self care that can be applied to their everyday lives and relationships. Since horses are large and powerful, this provides an opportunity for a person to overcome fears they may be experiencing and assists in the development of confidence. Accomplishing a task involving a horse provides individuals with skills that they can effectively take into the "real world" to better deal with life challenges and is brought back into other areas of life including family and community.

Astrid and Holly will be partnering with our equine friends to provide Equine Assisted Therapy at Grace Lake.



Welcome Astrid

Astrid Dallacroce Thomsen is a Licensed Professional Counselor and Supervisor (L.P.C.-S.), as well as a Certified Chemical Dependency Counselor (C.C.D.S.) and Certified Compulsive Gambling Counselor (C.C.G.C.) for the State of Texas. She received her undergraduate degree from Tulane University in New Orleans graduating cum laude and completed her Masters Degree in Counselor Education from the University of North Texas in 1991. After completing a two-year long training program with Dallas Group Psychotherapy Society and becoming a Certified Group Psychotherapist in 1992, she recognized how powerful group process can be in patients' healing and growth. She has worked extensively with at-risk children and adolescents and their families in her private practice, at several shelters and in psychiatric hospital settings. In 1994, Astrid began to incorporate Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) in her therapy sessions, becoming a Delta Society Certified Handler. The AAT sessions helped her to recognize the almost "magical" therapeutic effect that animals seemed to have on individuals in therapy, especially with children and adolescents. Having had a passion for and working with horses all of her life, it was natural that she eventually began to incorporate Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) into her practice. She has had EAP training through Greg Kersten's OK Corral Training Program, as well as SpiritHorse training. Her comprehensive training and years of experience have generated valuable insights and expertise that she brings to her work as part of the EAP treatment team. Astrid currently has a no-kill, organic farm where she rescues and rehomes abused and abandoned animals.



Take a Hike for your community!

Grace Lake Ministries invites you to support our program by participating in "Take a Hike...For Your Community" on Saturday, March 27, from 9 a.m. until noon at The Heard Natural Science Museum & Wildlife Sanctuary.

Our organization has signed up to be one of the beneficiaries of this unique, collaborative community fundraiser hosted by The Heard and the Volunteer McKinney Center.

This fundraiser is really easy! All you need to do is go to The Heard's website and register for the event (www.heardmuseum.org) and be sure that you select "Grace Lake Ministries" as the non-profit to benefit from your hike registration.

Registration is only \$20 for adults; \$5 for kids ages 3-17 (2 and under are free); or \$40 if you're registering a family of three or more at one time.

Here's the best news! For each person registered, Grace Lake will receive \$10 per adult ticket and \$3 per kid ticket.

Once at the event, you'll choose to take a tranquil hike at your own pace on a half mile, mile, or one-and-a-half mile trail. Experience the beautiful Heard sanctuary while you support Grace Lake at this fun family event.

Other activities include:

- Complimentary Continental Breakfast & Bottled Water
- Free T-Shirt or Back-Pack (while supplies last)
- Bounce House
- Petting Zoo
- Free Face Painting
- Free Child ID Kits
- Non-Profit Organization Information Fair
- Sponsor Booths and Giveaways
- Heard Live Animal Presentation
- Easter Egg Hunt for children up to 7 years old in the Heard Meadow
- Blackland Prairie Raptor Presentation
- Door Prizes

Find all the details on-line at heardmuseum.org.

Competitive Trail Ride Fundraiser May 29 at Lake Lavon. Go to www.ACTHA.us for more information.

Free Family Counseling

The STAR (Services to At-Risk Youth) Family Connection is a free crisis intervention counseling program for the families of youth ages 0 to 17 who are running away, truant, experiencing family conflict or misdemeanor behavior. The program is funded by the STAR grant from Texas Department of Family and Protective Services and United Way.

This program helps youth

- Build self-esteem and confidence
- Develop strategies for school participation and success
- Learn how to manage anger
- Develop communication skills
- Learn consequences of behavior
- Take responsibility
- Encourage self-respect

Go to www.ntxyouthconnection.org for more information or talk to Astrid Thomsen 214-801-7476

You are invited to Barn Buddies on Friday evening!

Barn Buddies is a free community outreach program designed to bring families closer together through the love of horses. Each family will have the opportunity to share an evening of fun and learning while participating in different horse related activities. This session will be Friday evenings from 6pm to 7:30pm beginning March 26 through May 21, 2010. It is our goal that each person participating in this program be able to experience all areas of caring for a horse in a fun, safe, Christian, family friendly environment. Hot dogs and chips will be served.



Meet a Special Family

My husband, Johnny, and I married young. We had four children and divorced. While we were divorced I remarried and had two more children. I divorced that man and 8 years after divorcing Johnny we remarried. I say it is a God thing. Some people call it true love.

My family and I heard about Grace Lake through a church member when we started to have some behavior issues with our oldest Twin daughter. We had been looking for something to help our blended family to bond better. Becki told us to talk with Holly and see what she can help with. We did and Holly stated she wanted to start working with families not just children with disabilities. I again say God sent thing and some people say lucky.

We started going every Thursday night and let me tell you wow!!!! It was amazing. The kids loved being with the horses and My husband and I loved to watch the kids working together and not fighting. It has really showed me how to be more patient with not only my children but with my husband. It really helps the kids to be able to pray openly about anything at the end of every session. Since our first session with Holly, my son and husband have volunteered, and their father son bond is unbreakable. I am praying that my family can get a scholarship to continue with our bond in each other and with God.

Thank you

You may provide a scholarship to sponsor a member of this family for \$200. You can sponsor the entire family for \$1600.

Community Service Impact Project at Grace Lake

Grace Lake is planning to renovate the storage building and turn it into a counseling center and office. The First Baptist Church of Melissa offered to complete this project during their community service week in August. They will also be putting up arena lights, building storage space above the tack room, installing gutters, and several other building projects around the ranch.

We will be accepting donations for:

Building materials : plywood, 2x4's, screws, and insulation

Fencing materials: no climb horse fence, gates, and t-posts

Office items: laptop computer, desk, rolling chair

Please see Holly for a complete list of items needed.

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