

# Reading to donkeys fun for children

Program one of several at Equine Spirit Sanctuary, which now accepts Medicaid clients



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**Bindy is one of the donkeys children can practice reading to at the Equine Spirit Sanctuary in Taos. All children are welcome to come during the nonprofits visitor hours Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday at 13 Los Caballos Road, Ranchos de Taos, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.**

Courtesy photo

## By Ruth Bourgeois

Summer is the busiest time of the year at Equine Spirit Sanctuary. This year has been busy and productive, with many happy horse and people moments. It's hard to believe that the year is half over!

This year's focus has been largely on our equine-assisted activities and therapies (EAAT) programs. Psychologist Dr. Jon Katz is now approved to accept Medicaid clients, and we encourage anyone who would like to experience counseling and therapeutic activities with horses to call and set up an appointment. Sessions can be scheduled with Katz and our team of beautiful equines to work on healing challenges from the past and present.

New this summer is our Read to the Donkeys program. For some kids, it's not easy to learn to read. Reading and learning should be fun. Reading to the Donkeys is a great way for kids to improve their reading skills and build self-esteem and confidence in a fun, relaxed setting with our delightful little donkeys. The donkeys are small, calm and well-behaved. Reading out loud to the donkey, with the assistance of a volunteer, is motivating. It's relaxing, entertaining, inspiring and exciting.

Reading interesting stories helps to increase a child's attention span. Reading helps improve communication and build language and social skills. Reading well sets a child up for success in life, opening up endless opportunities for learning. Reading matters! Reading to the Donkeys is a form of pet therapy designed to connect kids with animals, building a bond that makes learning to read enjoyable and encourages kids to learn more and do more.

Age-appropriate donkey and horse storybooks are used for this program, including our miniature donkey Bindy's life story for the kids to read. This program is geared toward children in K-third grade. As we head into the coming school year, this program can help prepare kids by improving their reading skills in a delightful setting with an adorable donkey.

ESS is open for visitors Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., 13 Los Caballos Road, Ranchos de Taos. Volunteers are always needed and appreciated on these days. For more information, call Ruth at Equine Spirit Sanctuary (575-758-1212), or go to [equinespiritsanctuary.org](https://www.equinespiritsanctuary.org) (<https://www.equinespiritsanctuary.org/>) or [facebook.com/equinespiritsanctuary](https://www.facebook.com/equinespiritsanctuary).

Ruth Bourgeois is founder and executive director of the nonprofit Equine Spirit Sanctuary in Taos.