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November 2019

Dear ESS Friends,

2019 marked our 14th year in operation as a non-profit horse rescue and center for equine-assisted activities and therapies. It was a typical year with the addition of a couple more equines, the loss of a few beloved ones, the programs, the people, the horses, along with many different activities and special moments.

This year we hosted a Masterson Method® clinic for professionals working in the field of equine-assisted activities and therapies. The clinic was to enable those of us who work in these programs to take better care of our program horses. People often have no idea how stressful it can be for these animals to be therapeutic riding horses or to work with persons that have mental, cognitive, emotional or other issues. These horses are amazing teachers. They are our partners in helping people to heal and it is a gift to support for them as well with therapies like the Masterson Method®. Following this clinic, I continued on with the training requirements and completed my certification as a Masterson Method® Equine Specialist.

An added bonus of the clinic was that one of the participants, an Advanced Level Instructor with PATH, Intl. (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, International), fell in love with our three year old gelding, Lit'l Black. She adopted Lit'l Black and also Sally, one of our miniature horses. It was wonderful to see these two go to such a good new home. Sally is now working as a therapy horse and as a lead line mount for pre-school aged children. She had been trained and well prepared here for that, and her new owners are very happy with her. Lit'l Black is also doing great, growing up to be a confident and well-mannered horse, now with a forever home, new horse friends, and a family that loves him. The adoption of these two sweet horses was bittersweet. While it was sad to see them leave, we couldn't be happier for them. I would gladly adopt out all of our rescues if they could have such a beautiful future.



Scout and Lit' Black

Bindy was our little super star again this year. In addition to being cute, charming (and not to mention hard-working!), Bindy was the inspiration for our new Read to the Donkeys program. Several children enjoyed reading the new story book that tells all about Bindy's life and adventures since he first came to ESS in 2005. The program, designed to promote reading and help children improve their reading skills, was a great new addition to our equine-assisted learning activities.

We often have visitors who have been to Barbara Meikel's Fine Art Gallery in Santa Fe and purchased artwork created by Barbara featuring Bindy. This year Barbara created a bronze statue of Bindy and Marley, his best donkey friend, as well as paintings of our donkey family.



*Feeding time
for the mini and
donkey herd.*

*Gypsy made her
debut this summer
as a lesson
horse for the
kids' program.*



Our programs were also enhanced with the addition of psychologist Dr. Jon Katz, who has a special interest in equine-assisted therapy. After moving to Taos this year, he now has an office in town and has come to ESS to meet with clients who want to experience psychotherapy with horses. We look forward to doing more in the way of group activities as well as private sessions with our now complete team of horses and professionals!

Probably the highlight of my year was attending the PATH, Intl. Annual Conference. It was the first time I have been to the national conference, which was held in Denver. It was the 50th Anniversary of the organization, which has grown to encompass not just therapeutic riding but all forms of equine-assisted learning and therapies. I enjoyed seeing other PATH professionals that I knew, therapeutic riding instructors like myself, and making many new friends while getting ideas for our programs from the many educational sessions offered. One of the requirements of being a PATH accredited instructor is that we must complete 20 hours of continuing education every year. It seems like it is becoming harder all the time to become PATH certified and I am proud to be associated with this organization that – in my opinion – sets the standards for the industry. They are doing a lot of work to formalize accreditation for professionals working with equine-assisted therapies. While it is a bit daunting at times to meet all the requirements, I feel that following PATH guidelines is important to maintaining the quality and integrity of our programs. And I am very proud to announce that ESS is now a PATH, Intl. Member Center. I have been an accredited instructor for several years, and ESS now also has the status of being a Member Center.



BB and Bindy

In addition, ESS is now a member of the United Horse Coalition (UHC). The UHC was formerly the American Horse Council's Unwanted Horse Coalition, formed in 2006 to bring attention to the issue and challenges of unwanted horses. The UHC promotes education and options for at-risk and transitioning horses with the goal of ensuring that all horses are treated humanely and with dignity. Their website, <https://unitedhorsecoalition.org/>, has many resources available for all aspects of horse care and welfare.

Our mission at ESS is to improve the lives of both horses and humans. This means bringing a new level of understanding and compassion to the work that we do, not just with horses, but also with people who seek out a connection with these beautiful animals.

Please join us for the Holiday Horse Party on Saturday, November 30 from 11 to 3. Bring your family and friends and meet our wonderful horses, donkeys, volunteers, and enjoy our decorated barn and holiday refreshments. There will be the usual sale of gift certificates donated by local merchants, bake sale, and arts and crafts. Weather permitting, there will be free pony rides for the kids and a grooming corral with the mini donkeys to pet and brush.

We are grateful for your support and friendship. If you are in the Taos area, come out and visit ESS!
Best wishes for the coming year, from all of us at Equine Spirit Sanctuary,

Ruth Bourgeois, Exec. Director



June, a group of 26 kids, ages 4 to 13 from Truchas, enjoyed a day at ESS. They did an art project, creating a book about horses, groomed the mini's and donkeys, and had rides on Kat and Lady, followed by lunch in the classroom.



The gift of life is given to us for ourselves and also to bring peace, courage, and compassion to others.

John O'Donohue, Excerpt from his book, Eternal Echoes

PS – Just a few notes about ESS donations

We are very thankful for the donations that we receive from people who care about horses and care about the work that we do here at ESS. Often these donations come from first time visitors to ESS, people who are impressed with what they see and experience here.

Our equine herd consists of horses of all ages, sizes and types. All are either rescues or unwanted horses. For some it is truly a place of sanctuary, their last stop in this lifetime before they pass on due to old age or health issues or injuries that cannot be fixed. Others come for rehab after a life of neglect or abuse. Some of these horses are adopted out to new homes. Others become partners in our equine-assisted activities and therapies programs. Every horse or donkey that comes to ESS gets the care and attention that they need in order to have a good life.

One of the most important things about coming to ESS, whether it is a horse or a person who comes to take part in one of our therapeutic programs, as a volunteer, or as a visitor is that they must feel safe. As we match up horses and people, it's all about the relationship and the partnership that evolves as each learns to care for the other.

We work hard at ESS to ensure that we provide this place of safety, offering opportunities for healing and learning. Our November letter tells about some of this year's activities. We were able to do all these things and more because of donations. ESS is a volunteer-based organization. We do not have a staff, but we have many wonderful volunteers who put in countless hours helping take care of the horses and assisting with activities.

All donations go towards the care of our horses, the expenses associated with putting on our programs, and maintaining our property so that we can do these things. If you are wondering where your \$\$ will go in the coming months also, here are a few of our current projects and plans:

- A large hay shed (much needed!) – in progress
- Installing an efficient heating/cooling system for the classroom so that we can do more indoor activities in the winter months. These would include more programs for kids at risk and elders.
- A new wheelchair ramp. We've worn out the old one!

Aside from the much needed financial support, this year we also received greatly appreciated in-kind donations. We now have stall mats in the center isle of our barn, making it safer and more comfortable to work in. We had a couple very nice dressage saddles donated, along with blankets and heated water tubs, grooming supplies, veterinary supplies, cleaning supplies – lots of wonderful items that have enabled us to take better care of our horses and donkeys.

ESS has grown greatly over the years and our biggest challenge now is to create a way to be sustainable, not just year to year, but for the future generations of horses and horse lovers, clients and special needs individuals who we serve. We are working towards that goal and have some ideas for the coming year. Watch our facebook page and email news for updates.

Thank you for being a part of all the wonderful work that we do here at Equine Spirit Sanctuary!

