

August 20, 2019

Dear ESS Friends,

With 2019 more than half over, I realized I'm past due with my targeted goal of sending out a mid-year newsletter. So here it is! I want to keep you informed about all the wonderful things happening at ESS!

This year had been very different than last year's challenges with the drought. The abundant winter snows and spring rains brought lots of green grass, plentiful weeds, and beautiful flowers, PLUS there is no shortage of hay! All the moisture created additional work, but we are not complaining!

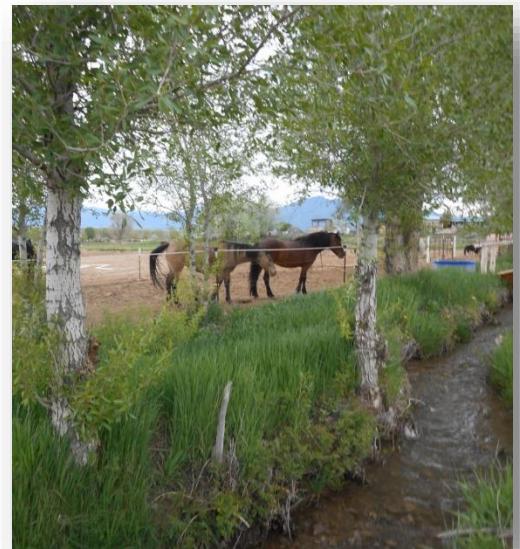
We got an early start to preparing for the summer programs with the help of the kids who come to ESS once a week. This is the third year the group of home-schooled and private school kids have been coming through the winter months. Their days here consist of classroom time, doing some clean-up / volunteer work, and grooming and working with the miniature horses and donkeys. This spring we added another activity – putting them on the lesson horses and doing practice lessons. The kids enjoyed learning to ride as we prepared the horses and volunteers for the therapeutic riding program.

Joining ESS this year was psychologist Dr. Jon Katz who moved to Taos with his wife, Kyla, in May. Over the summer months we have continued to build our equine-assisted activities and therapies (EAAT) programs with Dr. Katz. This has been a huge thing for us. We have worked for years to provide programs with high standards, and one of my biggest dreams has been to be able to offer top notch EAAT programs for persons of all ages. Dr. Katz is an amazing therapist who understands the horse-human connection. Sessions can be scheduled with Dr. Katz and our team of beautiful equines to work on healing challenges from the past and present. He is now approved to accept Medicaid and various other insurances, which makes our program available to many more persons.

We continued to do regular and therapeutic kids' lessons this summer, though less than usual, as we worked on the therapies program with Dr. Katz and I continued to heal from a compression fracture in my knee. But with the help of our wonderful volunteers, we have done many special activities also. In June we had a group of 25 kids from the Truchas summer school program, ranging in ages from 5 to 13, who spent a day at ESS. They each created a book about horses as an art project, groomed the miniature horses and donkeys, and got to ride on the bigger horses. It was a fun day for all!

New also this summer was our Read to the Donkeys program, based on the R.E.A.D. program with dogs. Reading to the Donkeys is a great way for kids to improve their reading skills. The donkeys are small, calm and well behaved. Reading out loud to the donkey, with the assistance of a volunteer, is motivating. It 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 story books are used for this program, including our own miniature donkey Bindy's life story, soon to be published as a soft cover book.

Every year we have a clinic or other special educational event that is geared towards learning how to take better care of our horses. Over the years we have learned and expanded our holistic equine management practices with everything from addressing nutrition, to barefoot hoof care, natural horsemanship and balanced, centered riding, to using bitless bridles. Our horses are vital to our programs, and we want them to live as natural a horse life as possible, which enables them to be healthy and well adjusted. All our equines were either unwanted



or rescues, many of whom have suffered neglect, starvation, abuse or other trauma. Their resiliency is often an inspiration to those who come to know them here at ESS.

So this June we hosted a Masterson Method® equine bodywork clinic to further support the EAAT programs. The clinic was specifically for professionals working in the field of equine-assisted activities and therapies and approved by PATH, Intl. The purpose of the clinic was to enable those of us who work with 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. The horses are amazing teachers and they are our partners in helping people to heal. But we need to offer support for them as well, and the Masterson Method® is a gift that we can give back to these horses who give so much to us. It's been great seeing how the horses are benefitting from this bodywork as we incorporate it into our programs.

The past couple months we have spent extra time training some of our younger horses so that next year we will have more program horses. For the past several years, training was the thing we did the least of because we simply did not have the time or experienced trainers to work with. Just the day to day care of nearly 30 horses is often all we can manage along with the regular lessons and activities. But this year we have had assistance from Eddie Crain, the director of Healing America's Heroes, based near Chama, NM. Eddie has come to ESS to help out and we are currently working on developing a program format in which ESS and Healing America's Heroes will work together to provide retreats or EAAT sessions for military veterans with PTSD. Healing America's Heroes also has a psychologist on staff and they have been doing equine therapy and fly fishing retreats in the Chama area for the past couple years, but after seeing all that we do here at ESS, they were excited about joining up with us to provide even more with their programs. And our horses have definitely benefitted from the extra training!

As always, it is exciting to see our rescue horses thrive and take on a new life after they come to ESS. Foxy, our newest rescue who came to ESS last November dying of starvation and very sick with sinus infections and severe dental issues, is a whole new horse. Foxy needed two surgeries to get the sinus infection cleared up, lots of rehab with medications, nutrition, hoof care, and now he has blossomed. Witnessing a horse like this fighting his way back to health is something to experience and it is easy to see how he found his way into our hearts as well.

Please come out and visit ESS! As always, we need volunteers, program participants, sponsors for the horses, donkey, and mini's, physical and moral support. We greatly appreciate ESS friends and family. Please pass the word on to anyone you know who may be interested in the work that we do here.

From all of us at ESS, THANK YOU for your support!



Ruth Bourgeois
Exec. Director



Above - Scout, April 2019
Below - Scout, November 2018



Foxy, July 2019



Foxy, November 2018

