

# THE Latham Letter

VOLUME XLI, NUMBER 5

Winter 2022

PROMOTING RESPECT FOR ALL LIFE THROUGH EDUCATION

## Healing Horses

*Heroes on both sides of the saddle*



**Two Heroes share their  
experience in Wyoming**  
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# MANDATE

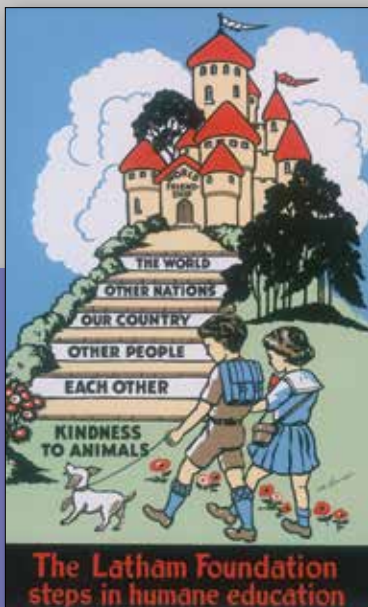
## Edith Latham's **MANDATE:**

"To promote, foster,  
encourage and  
further the  
principles of  
humaneness,  
kindness and  
benevolence to  
all living creatures."



WELCOME BACK, BROTHER BUZZ!

Brother Buzz, star of Latham's  
Brother Buzz films and our former  
Spokesbee, marks the end of articles.



### *The Latham Letter*

Balanced perspectives on humane issues and activities

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Promotion of Humane Education

# The Latham Letter

Volume XLI, Number 5, Winter 2022

## BALANCED PERSPECTIVES ON HUMANE ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES



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The Latham Foundation is a 501(c)(3) private operating foundation  
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Latham welcomes partnerships with other institutions and  
individuals who share its commitment to furthering humane  
education.

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**Hugh H. Tebault, President**

It is said that kindness is contagious – but in a good way. When I show kindness and respect to another person, that person then chooses to also show kindness and respect to others. One act of kindness can multiply and impact many lives.

At its core, humane education is about showing kindness and respect, encouraging each other to be our best selves and passing along what we've learned to the next generation. The exact methods used may vary somewhat in each society or community or even individual, but teaching humane education is always about ways of showing respect and kindness toward animals and other people.

In a society, we build on our individual traits to create a standard framework of rules to live by which we then recognize as a stable societal norm. Having this agreed framework of expectations makes our humane education work easier and more effective.

The work of kindness and promoting humane education is one that is not a fixed set of rules but one which is flexible, allowing individuals to respond in different ways to help each other. The best work is done personally. With the diverse citizenship in this country, stories of successful

# Expectations: Kindness is Contagious

humane education vary on the 'how,' but all reflect the depth of commitment to show respect and kindness.

In this issue of The Latham Letter, we are sharing stories of some of the many ways people and horses work together for the benefit of both in applied humane education environments.

These stories are from organizations that have submitted applications to and have been awarded grants from the Latham Foundation in recognition of their programs. ([See details of the grant program here.](#))

Latham is honored to recognize the outstanding work done by these organizations and to be sharing with you these first-hand stories of success. It is our belief that you will find elements of these programs that you can adapt and use in your own community's success story. 🐾



## In Memoriam

It is with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Roberta C. Wallis in 2021. From 1992 until her retirement in 2010, she was the voice of the Latham Foundation, answering a variety of questions asked by daily phone callers - questions such as "Where can I take my dog for obedience training?" or "Who can I contact regarding a neighbor's animal that is being abused."

In addition to handling the sale of Latham books and videos and the Latham Letter subscriptions, she also filled many requests for reprints of research articles showing the effectiveness of pet therapy or exploring the bond between humans and their animal companions. Roberta lived a life of compassion for others and will be greatly missed.



## In Honor of Betty White and her Work for Animals with Latham

Betty White did a few projects with The Latham Foundation through the years. She introduced two of our important films in their day dealing with the Human Animal Bond. The Latham letter also

has an article about her early work on The LINK when she participated in Latham's sponsored Child and Animal Abuse Prevention Seminar in 1993. Here is the link to our original article.

[www.latham.org/Issues/LL\\_93\\_W1.pdf#page=12](http://www.latham.org/Issues/LL_93_W1.pdf#page=12)

Please enjoy two of her videos produced with Latham:

***Kerry - The benefits of therapeutic and recreational horseback riding***  
[vimeo.com/208896986](https://vimeo.com/208896986)

***Cat Tale - with Betty White***  
[vimeo.com/288274790](https://vimeo.com/288274790)

Feel free to go to our website and search for more Latham Letter articles on Betty White or any other subjects you need:

[www.latham.org/latham-letters/?ll=Betty+White](http://www.latham.org/latham-letters/?ll=Betty+White)







## Two Heroes share their experience in Wyoming

By Tammy Oluvic  
CEO, Saddles In Service

Saddles In Service was founded in San Diego County, CA in 2017 by Navy Veteran, Mike Oluvic and

his wife Tammy. Our Mission is to combat the suicide rates of Veterans, Active Duty Military and First Responders and to promote mental health wellness and healing to these Heroes and their families through equine assisted learning and activities. Veterans, Active Duty Military, First Responders and their families that have been diagnosed with or are experiencing symptoms related to post-traumatic stress (PTSD), anxiety, depression, job-related stress, and/or traumatic brain injuries are part-

nered with a horse through their healing journey. In turn we help them to rediscover their joy, hope, confidence and purpose.

Our core values include Integrity, Respect, Empathy, Love, Compassion, and Learning. We embrace all humans and horses that walk through our gate as family, with respect and compassion. We encourage all of our volunteers and heroes to continue learning about themselves, others, and horsemanship. We lift one another up and don't break anyone down. We support each human and horse in their journey to become the best version of themselves, living a life of purpose and freedom.



*Continued on next page*



The Saddles In Service program offers Active Duty Military, Veterans, and First Responders the unique opportunity to explore their own healing alongside a rescue horse. Many men and women experience different stressors throughout their service to our Nation and communities. It is our goal to assist Heroes in their process of working through these stressors.

We have welcomed 580 Veterans and first responders to our program. We have delivered over 5,350 individual program sessions since we began in 2017. Twenty-four horses have been

adopted. Last month was an amazing month for all of us at SIS! We sent 7 more Heroes to our SIS Wyoming Cowboy Experience!

The first season of our Saddles in Service Wyoming Cowboy Experience was phenomenal! We were able to send nine veterans and first responders these past five weeks. Each one of them had a life changing experience. When I asked how their time was, I kept hearing the same words over and over to describe their feelings: Peaceful, purpose, confidence, hope, grounding, and it changed their life. Those words epitomize

what our Mission is at Saddles In Service and what we are doing to offer mental health wellness and healing to our Veterans and First Responders! We are dedicated and passionate about ending veteran and first responder suicides! With your help and the help of our sponsors, donors and volunteers, we will continue to do all we can to lower the number of suicides among our veterans and first responders. Our Wyoming Cowboy Experience will start up again in the Spring.

I want to share two letters we received from our Heroes who attended:



*Our General Manager, Tom Bercher*

*Continued on next page*



I am an Active Duty Master Chief Petty Officer going on 23 years of Service. I have been going to Saddles in Service for exactly a year to date. Prior to my Military Service I was involved in High School Rodeo and have had experience with horses.

Through the years I have been subject to a multitude of mental health issues: anxiety, depression, grief, and everything in between. Until I found Saddles in Service which completely re-opened a door I thought was closed.

From my first day with the program when I placed my hand on a horse, all of those good feelings and memories came back to me, from the feel of the horse, the smell of the tack, everything came back to me and I immediately felt at peace

for the first time in a long time, and it was where I needed to be.

I was so fortunate and grateful to get the opportunity to travel to Wyoming and spend time with Mr. Tom Bercher and his wife Rebecca up in the Bighorn mountains. Never would I have thought I would be on horseback in Wyoming, in the snow moving cattle. Wyoming is a beautiful state and it was a bit overwhelming to take all of the serene and peaceful beauty in at once. I had to remind myself on occasion when my mind started drifting to thoughts about work to just breathe in the fresh mountain air, adjust my reins, sit tall in the saddle and take in everything around me.

On one occasion Tom and I were almost at 10,000 feet with

a spectacular view when I said, "Tom do you know what I don't see? I didn't see the Ship!!," which perfectly captured exactly why I was out there in the first place...to relax, not think about work and just enjoy the ride!

I especially enjoyed the early morning coffee conversations with Tom and Rebecca just before breakfast and the conversations I had with Tom heading up the mountain every morning.

I also enjoyed hanging out with Ed at the Silver Rose Saddle Shop. Once again I would have never thought I would be making leather "Chinks" in a leather shop in Wyoming! Ed was amazing and although I enjoyed learning to work with leather, I also very much enjoyed just hanging out and talking with him in his shop.

Tom, Rebecca, Ed, and everyone else I had the pleasure to meet perfectly captivated the warm, genuine and refreshing people of the state of Wyoming. I am so thankful for the Saddles in Service program, my fellow Saddles in Service wranglers, teachers, and mentors and our donors for making all of this possible. I am truly grateful and truly blessed for this unique experience and opportunity!!

**- Matt C.**

*Continued on next page*



Thank you Saddles in Service for the opportunity to participate in the Wyoming SIS Cowboy experience. Tom and Rebecca's hospitality was beyond measure. The experience was educational, physical, spiritual and grounding. Tom's horsemanship knowledge and his ability to mentor allowed me to exceed my preconceived riding limitations.

On the first day in Wyoming during the "assessment ride," we rode the steepest terrain I have ever ridden. Learning to trust in the horse's natural ability to navigate terrain was rewarding and essential to the open-range riding we would encounter throughout the week.

It was not an easy week. Spending four to six hours in the saddle a day comes with some physical adjustment. Every day my riding confidence level increased; it compressed three months of riding lessons into five days.

The Big Horn Mountains are truly majestic. The sights, sounds, and smells of nature are so powerful. It's easy to forget the daily grind of urban/suburban life. Several times a day I would stop and take in the natural surroundings. Witnessing the relationship between the land, the cattle, and the cowboys was grounding. The cattle moved over a

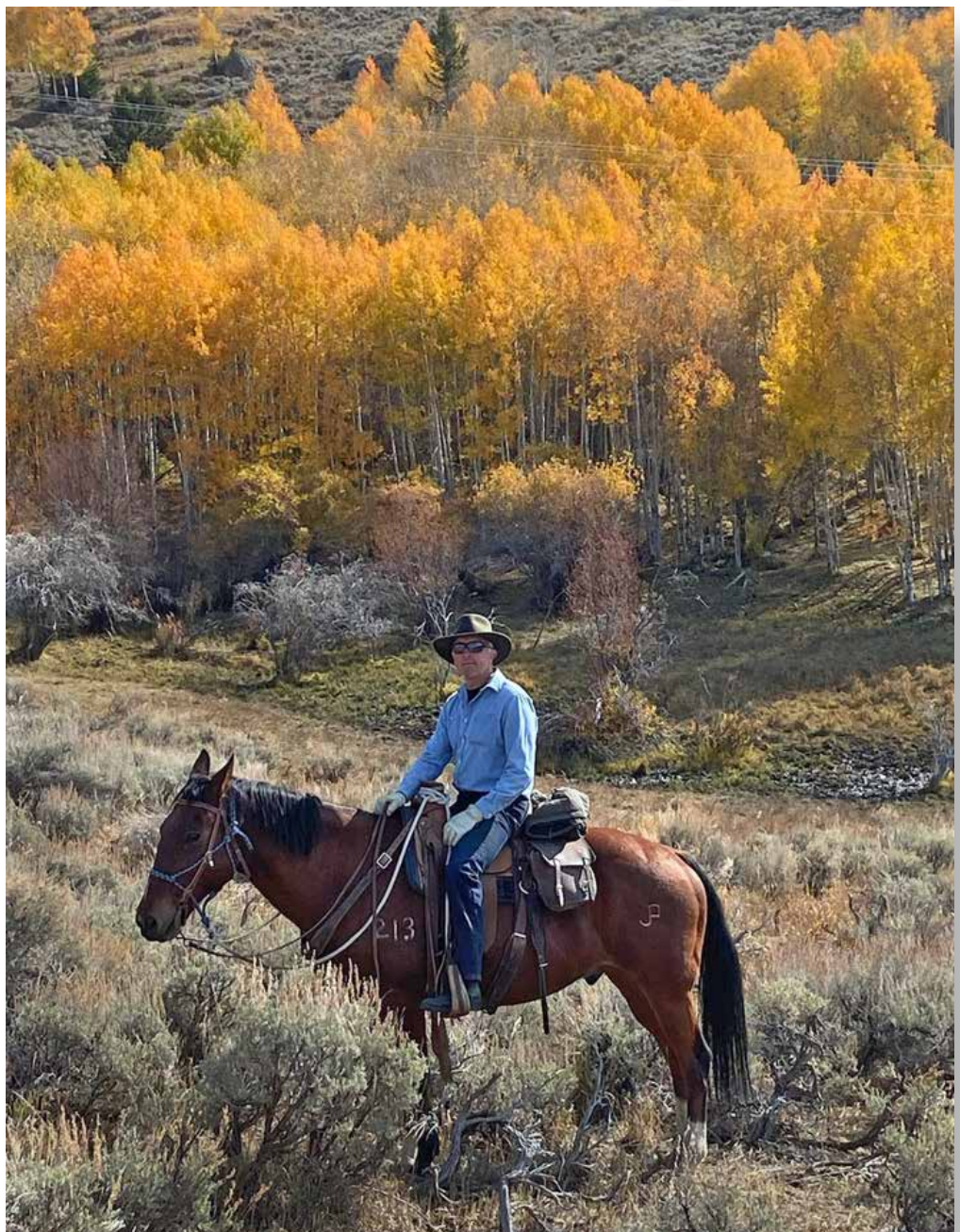
combination of private and publicly leased lands. Working the cattle on horseback without modern technology allowed you to reassess the basics of life.

The entire experience built up to driving over 200 head of cattle to Bald Ridge (elevation of 7,680 feet) in the Shoshone National Forest. Although the best part may have been the shortcut Tom had us take down the mountain that beat

the "real cowboys" back to the horse trailers.

Special thanks to Mr. Ed Smith, owner of Silver Rose Saddle. Ed provided a friendly face and many laughs while showing leatherworking skills in his shop. Finally, thanks to the cowboys from the Flinter Ranch and Double Doc Ranch for a memorable experience and some great trailside chat.

- Kevin B 







## Strengthening Detroit's Future Through the Power of Horses

*By David Silver*

Growing up in suburban New York, I knew next to nothing about Detroit but horses were an all-consuming part of life. My mom's infectious love of horses was passed down to me and my younger sister at an early age. I grew up with the immense privilege of owning my own horse, having access to top instructors, and traveling the east coast to compete in the sport of Three-Day Eventing. I was immersed in the ups and downs of competitive riding with very little reflection on

how horses were shaping me as a person and who had access to these opportunities I took for granted.

During my undergraduate experience at Dartmouth College, I took a step back from that intense riding relationship which gave me space to pursue other opportunities that were important to me. My political science coursework pointed to the vast inequities in our society and the importance of early investment in under-resourced

children to develop both academic and non-cognitive skills to improve life outcomes. From this Ivy League ivory tower, the focus was always outward on communities with far more challenges than I had ever encountered.

As I considered where to focus my energies after graduation, I still lacked first-hand experience with students and families in poverty. Teach For America (TFA) offered me the opportunity to fight on the

*Continued on next page*





underly success in school and in life. With echoes of my Dartmouth classwork, my second year of teaching was infused with conversations about traits like self-esteem, grit, and compassion, among others. It prompted me to reflect on how I had the opportunity to develop these skills during my formative years

front lines of the battle for equal opportunity in education. TFA gives applicants a big map of the dozens of regions where you can be placed and I quickly gave high rankings to big cities I knew and loved. I remember hesitating before giving Detroit a mid-tier position, thinking, “If I’m truly committed to opening doors for students in need, Detroit is as good a place as any.” As luck would have it, Detroit was a priority region for TFA in 2012 and I have lived in the city ever since.

I struggled immensely, like most first-year teachers, as I built relationships with my students while managing classroom behavior and working to deliver engaging instruction. It didn’t help that a failed state intervention into the Detroit school district left our school in disarray with 52 fifth graders in my class for the first month of school. Hiring a second teacher allowed us to split the class in half, but

my first year in the classroom was fairly disastrous for me and especially for my students. They were already severely behind educationally on top of the burdens they faced outside of school – from food insecurity, to residential transiency, to neighborhood violence, and more.

My growth as an educator was strongly influenced by professional development provided by TFA and the Masters classes I took at night through Oakland University. They emphasized more research on social-emotional learning and the importance of character skills that

and the formative experiences I had with horses were consistently the examples I shared with my students to make these abstract concepts more concrete. It was only through this new lens and the space to see my equestrian experiences from a distance that I could articulate how seeing my hard work pay off at my first international competition,



*Continued on next page*



important is their ownership of the character traits that are at the heart of our model – Perseverance, E m p a t h y , Responsible risk-taking, Confidence, and Self-control (PERCS). Our custom-developed curriculum prompts students, staff, and volunteers to reflect on how our experiences with horses strengthen these research-validated skills and

rebounding from repeated setbacks after injuries, and the pain of letting go of an old friend, among so many more experiences had equipped me with an internal toolkit I could apply to any new obstacle in my path.

My realization was that research shows these social-emotional skills impact life outcomes. Horses taught me these valuable lessons, and kids growing up like my students in Detroit would ordinarily never have access to the benefits that horses provide. This inequity seemed pressing for me to address not because there was something deficient about my students, but because I was privileged to have opportunities that I knew would help them overcome the far greater adversity on their path to success. Inspiring precedents in other US cities and Detroit's vast amount of open space, resulting from the

demolition of vacant buildings, also helped fuel my vision for an urban equestrian center where these opportunities could take root in Detroit's future.

I left the classroom in 2014, following my second year as an elementary school teacher, to incorporate Detroit Horse Power as a 501(c)3 nonprofit. Since 2015, DHP has been bringing Detroit youth from the city to partnering barns across southeast Michigan that generously donate the use of their space and their horses. It has been phenomenal to see our free summer horse camps and after-school program expand to average more than 100 participants across our recent program cycles thanks to outstanding partners, including the Latham Foundation. We love to see students grow in their riding and horsemanship, but even more

how we can apply them into our everyday lives. Despite the long distances we have to travel and the limits on our access to horses in this current state, our students have demonstrated tremendous growth and are expected to graduate high school with a choice of college or career.

My work leading Detroit Horse Power took a slight detour in December 2018 after a devastating car accident left me with a fractured skull, burst vertebrae, and traumatic brain injury. My recovery was nothing short of miraculous as I returned to work full time after slightly more than three months as a result of outstanding medical professionals, a robust support network, Detroit Horse Power's strong team, and the collective embrace of our broader community. I also know that my recovery was

*Continued on next page*





just the latest example of putting the PERCS skills into action after horses had instilled these critical life lessons in me at an early age. I saw this with the Perseverance to stick with physical and occupational therapy, Empathy to bond with other patients in my neuro-trauma units, Responsible risk-taking to get back in the saddle (after my neurosurgeon approved), Confidence to return to work at full force alongside my outstanding colleagues, and Self-control to listen to my body and make time for myself and the people I love.

This jarring but ultimately affirming experience came as we had been moving steadily closer to the goal of making these life-changing opportunities with horses accessible within Detroit's city limits at an urban equestrian center that will turn the burden of Detroit's vacant land into a community asset. In October 2019, less than a year after my accident, the Detroit Public

Schools Community District Board of Education voted to approve our control of a 14-acre demolished school site on Detroit's west side for DHP to develop into our future facility by 2024. Detroit Horse Power is well underway with our planning phase activities – site design, environmental due diligence, community engagement, city approval, and the early stages of a significant capital campaign – to make this vision into reality.

Recent events like the COVID-19 pandemic and national movement for racial justice have only strengthened our commitment to creating a permanent home for Detroit's youth to be able to access the experiential outdoor education opportunities that are traditionally unavailable to low-income, urban and minority youth. Opening this facility will scale our capacity to serve far more youth participants in an environment that reflects their voice and identity and strengthens the fabric of the

neighborhoods in which they grow up. And all of that comes in addition to other populations who could similarly benefit from the healing power of horses (children and adults with disabilities, veterans with post-traumatic stress, seniors, and more).

I am certain that our broader community that is committed to animal-assisted interventions can share their own experiences of how animals have shaped their lives and how they move through the world around them. Horses undoubtedly have a unique way of shaping us as a role of their evolution as prey animals and the special partnership opportunities through both riding and groundwork. Whether you are moved by our work in Detroit or interested in how our PERCS framework could be applied to expand access to horses in other under-resourced community, I would invite you to reach out and join our growing movement. By building a robust coalition of advocates sharing their time, talents, and resources, we can effectively realize this transformational vision for Detroit's future and beyond.



*David Silver is the Founder and Executive Director of Detroit Horse Power. For more information on how to support and get involved, visit [www.detroithorsepower.org](http://www.detroithorsepower.org) and reach out to David at [dsilver@detroithorsepower.org](mailto:dsilver@detroithorsepower.org)*



## YOUTH IMPACT PROFILES

### EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR URBAN YOUTH THROUGH HORSES



Elijah was introduced to DHP on the last day of school and was initially inspired to sign up for summer horse camp because of his strong interest in horses and desire to bond with students his age. When asked which PERCS traits he uses the most, Elijah exclaimed, “Self control! A lot of times I will be out of tune and if I use self control, I can be responsible for my actions around other people and around horses. You have better relationships with self control.” These skills and experiences translate into his interpersonal relationships and have expanded his reach with other students his own age. “Now that I have attended DHP for a couple of years, I get to interact with kids my age (older or young) and have really strong relationships with them. It influences me to do it in school now and share my experiences!”



First introduced to DHP’s summer camp in 2018, Corey was initially hesitant to sign up. He had never been around a horse and was going through some hard times. Despite these barriers, he thrived in that initial week and continued into the after-school program. For Corey, participating with DHP has meant “you get connected with the community. I don’t meet a lot of people and I can be anti-social. But when I step off the bus at DHP, I’m in a different world.” Corey has had his fair share of adversity with the loss of key family members and going through the worst parts of life early on. He describes his experience with DHP as therapeutic and inspirational. Corey says that horses “taught me how to never give up. Horses will always be there for you and they will always have respect for others’ feelings and opinions. Horses tell us to be strong, you got this, and you have someone in your corner to keep

pushing you.” Corey is passionate about opening our urban equestrian center in Detroit in order to expand access to these opportunities for young people in a similar position. “DHP will continue to be impactful because it’ll be available for people going through stuff, like I did. It’s a community and it’s going to be a wonderful place to escape with horses, people that have your back and support no matter what.”



In 2015, Mya eagerly signed up in DHP’s first ever season of summer horse camps because she had always loved horses and she was looking to try something new in Detroit. Through participating in DHP’s after-school programming, the Youth Leadership Council and summer camps, she has used the PERCS trait of confidence the most. Shy and reserved when first meeting new faces and doing new activities, DHP has given her the skills to be herself and act confidently in doing so. “Horses are like my best friends. I really don’t like opening up to people a lot, but when I get on horses I can talk to the horse with my body movements and thoughts. We automatically connect!” This ability to break out of her shell has allowed Mya to form strong bonds with her peers in the program and DHP’s staff. When they get together in and outside of programming, “they

are like family,” she describes. “They have taught me life lessons. When you meet new people you adapt and you will find great friends like I have.”

For more information please visit us at [www.detroithorsepower.org](http://www.detroithorsepower.org)



## Hautism

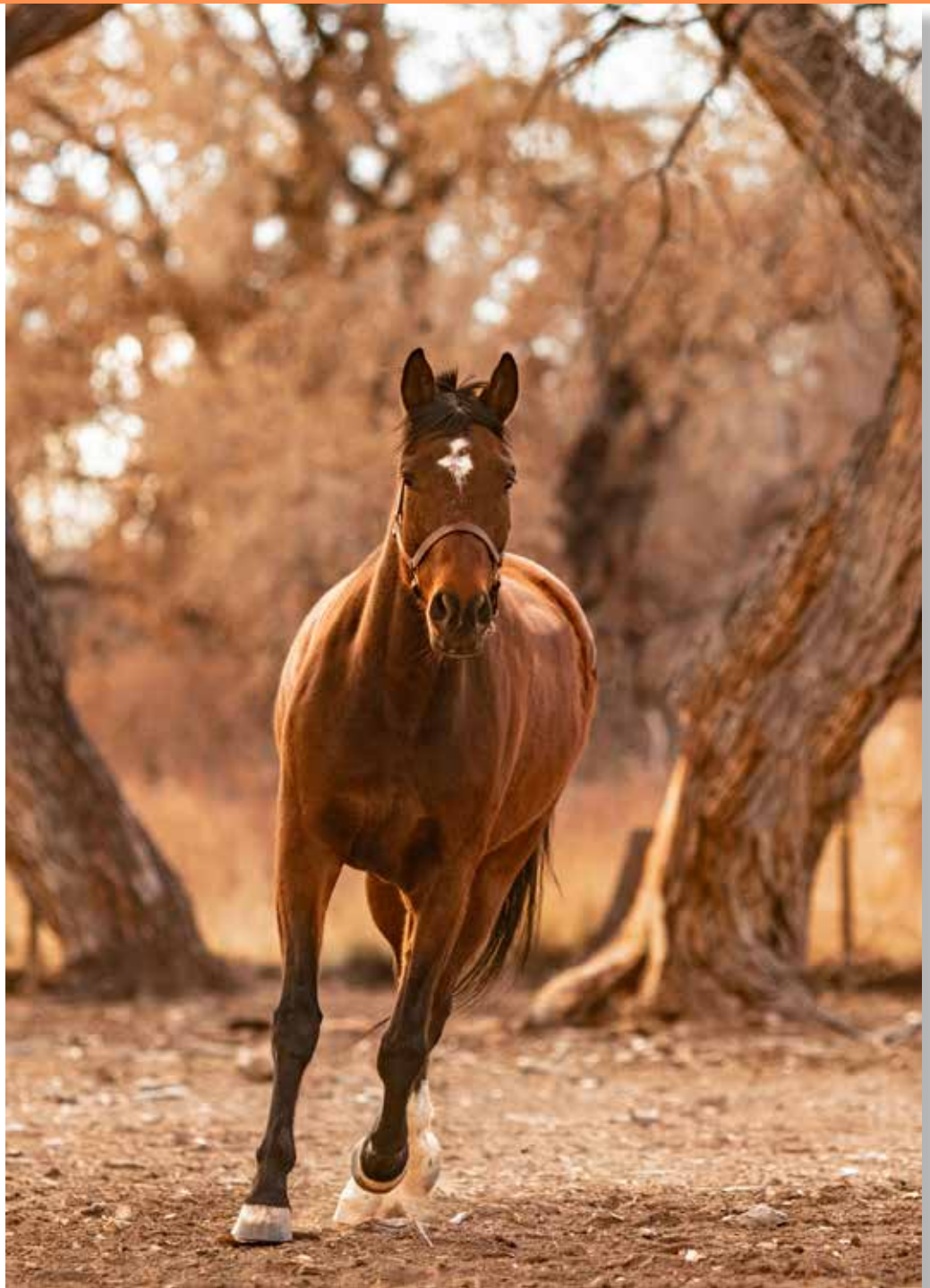
### *Is Equine Therapy for Autistic Adults*

*By Rebecca Evanko,  
Wilderwood Equine  
Therapy and Rescue*

Wilderwood was delighted and extremely appreciative to receive a grant from the Latham Foundation. The grant covered tuition and learning materials for one participant to complete Wilderwood's nine-month program in 2021.

Wilderwood's program was brand new in 2021, following a successful Pilot Program in 2020, and one of the greatest challenges was funding it: as a new program, we did not have any firm data to support its success. The provision of scholarship funding in this first year was critical to help recruit participants for an untested program who could then provide the data we needed for analysis.

To determine the Latham Foundation grant recipient, we designed a scholarship application that considered background information, statement of financial need, an assessment relating to desire for change, and a short essay. Our grant recipient was Amelia, a 17-year old autistic young woman.



*Photography by Cheyenne Chavez*

### *Our Participant*

At the start of the program, Amelia was about to graduate from high school. She interviewed with her parents, who were very keen to see her complete her studies with Wilderwood. At the time, she stated a desire to be a pastry chef, but did not have the test

scores required for the local college's Culinary Arts program. She also experienced challenges, typical for autistic people, with executive functioning, self-regulation, and sensory issues. She had no prior experience with horses.

Wilderwood's curriculum goals include positively impacting

*Continued on next page*

the cognitive, physical, emotional, and social well-being of autistic people, building transferable, real-world skills for successfully navigating the non-autistic world, and learning activities designed to address executive functioning, self-management, self-discovery, and communication. Coursework emphasizes equine-assisted transpersonal experiences, animal communication, self-awareness, stress management, and practical job and career skills.

Our first semester involved working with a focus on autistic strengths, planning goals, and communicating with the horses. As we explain in our philosophy of *Hautism*, horses are a lot like autistic people – and the program emphasizes working and connecting



with them on multiple levels. *Hautism* also incorporates nonverbal language that can be learned by people and then exchanged between horse and human for mutual benefit and understanding. As it develops, the communication fosters an exchange of reciprocal trust, kindness, and love. This, in turn, contributes to a sense of well-being and groundedness for both horse and human that

carries over into everyday life. During her first semester, Amelia connected very strongly with Desmond (Des), perhaps the cheekiest and most playful of all the Wilderwood horses. She would seek Des out and stand with him in the roundyard or paddock, and Des would playfully nudge her and let himself be scratched behind the ears.

In the second and third semesters, we enacted the plan developed with Amelia in the first semester, which involved steps to reach her stated goal of being accepted into culinary school. Because Wilderwood actively works with community members as an integral part of its program, we assembled a team of mentors to work one-on-one with Amelia. She received tutoring in Math and English from one mentor, instructional baking sessions with two experienced community bakers, and culinary tutoring from two recent graduates of the same program to which she wanted to apply. Throughout this time, we integrated the horses, especially Des, with Amelia's attendance at Wilderwood.

Just prior to the start of the second semester, Amelia's parents met with us and expressed how happy they were about the progress their







## Grant Metrics

Participants Served:  
1, Family Members: 5,  
Community Mentors: 5,  
Instructors: 2, Teaching  
Assistants: 1, Horses: 5,  
**Total:19**

## 2021 Program Conclusion

Amelia not only graduated from Wilderwood, she raised her Math score by two levels and her Reading/English score by one level. This was sufficient for her to be accepted into the Culinary

daughter was making. Amelia's father, in particular, emphasized how pleased he was with the program and that he was looking forward to seeing her complete it. As Amelia had just graduated high school, the family took a vacation to celebrate, with the plan for her to begin semester two at Wilderwood on their return. Tragically, however, Amelia's father lost his life in an accident during that vacation. The loss delayed Amelia's return to Wilderwood and we were not sure if she would even be back at all. Amelia, however, did return to fulfil her father's wish that she complete the program, and she graduated at Wilderwood's Open Day on October 30 with her peers.

For our graduation metrics, we aimed for 75 percent of participants to demonstrate measurable improvement and achievement in pre/post testing, passing grade in coursework activities, and achievement of at least two goals set at the start of semester relating to job or career advancement, education, or personal satisfaction and esteem. We are proud to announce that 100 percent of our participants met or exceeded these goals. Amelia was one of them.

Arts program. But, there's a twist to this story. Often, when we do something completely different or out of our comfort zone, we challenge ourselves to succeed and discover things we never imagined possible. This is true for many of our graduates, as it was for Amelia. Just after being accepted into the culinary program, Amelia changed her mind about her major. Her placement scores were good enough for her to apply to – and be accepted into – an





Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Education program. As of writing this report, Amelia has started her studies, is doing well, and is excited about her future. She has more confidence in her abilities and the motivation to succeed.

Scholarship funding from the Latham Foundation made it possible for this young woman to successfully complete a program that opened doors she had not even thought possible – and though it was not intended, provide a community of strength and support for her during a time of tragedy and loss. Here is a thank you letter Amelia wrote to the Board of the Latham Foundation during her first semester at Wilderwood.

## Program Media Coverage

Wilderwood received multiple media coverage and

several awards for its documentary film, *Hautism and Wilderwood*, during the period covering the grant:

“Hautism: A Curriculum Connecting Horses and People with ASD.” *Strides! Magazine of Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) International*, Summer 2020.

“Equine Therapy for Autistic Adults.” *Valencia County News Bulletin* July 2020.

“Our Community Cares.” *New Mexico Department of Health Newsletter*. April 2021.

“New Local Panel Podcast Gives Voice to Autism.” *Valencia County News Bulletin*, April 2021.

Mindfield Film Festival: Best Documentary Finalist, 2021

Autfest Film Festival: Official Selection, 2021

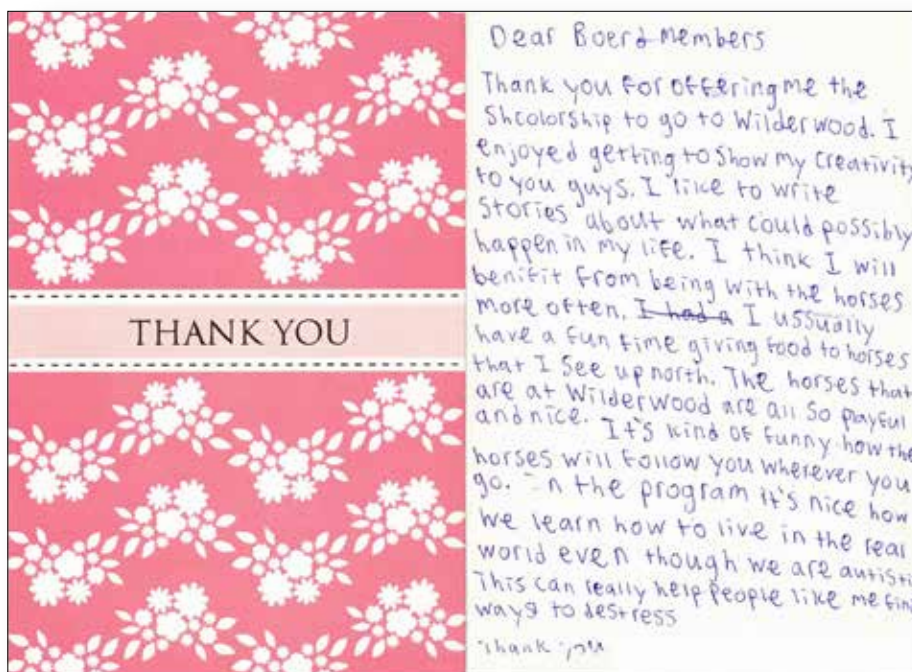
Best Shorts Film Festival: Winner, Best Short Documentary, 2021

Beyond the Curve International Film Festival: Finalist, Best Documentary, 2021

EQUUS Film Festival: Winner, Adult Therapy Documentary, 2021

## What We Learned

Creating a new and innovative program from scratch challenged





us and many times took us out of our comfort zone. Moreover, discovering things we had not imagined possible was not something reserved for our participants. With input from all involved with Wilderwood, we decided that going forward the program would be offered in a compressed, immersive format rather than spread out over three semesters. This means that we can serve more participants with more “entry” points to the program throughout the year, as well as participants from across the United States.


Wilderwood has also developed a program for autistic children and youth, modified from the adult program. Offered over

eight-week sessions, the program will open to its first cohort of nine children in March 2022. Wilderwood will also be offering Wilderdoodles – a summer camp for autistic youth in June 2022.

The exponential growth and success of Wilderwood continues to amaze and delight us. At the heart of it, and what inspires us, is the support and encouragement we receive from others: our autistic participants, their families, the community volunteers and mentors, and the foundations and granting organizations – like the Latham Foundation – who took a chance on us with a new venture. Thank you for believing in us, and believing in what, together,

### *Biographical Paragraph*

Dr. Rebecca Evanko is the autistic co-founder and Executive Director of Wilderwood Equine Therapy and Rescue. A horsewoman with a penchant for endurance riding, Dr. Evanko is a former university faculty member, Academic Dean, business owner, and writer. She holds an M.A. in Rhetoric and Composition, and a Ph.D in Cognitive Linguistics. Dr. Evanko is a Board Certified Cognitive Specialist and is currently studying for a second M.A. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling.

Preferred contact information by email: [office@wilderwood-equinetherapy.org](mailto:office@wilderwood-equinetherapy.org) 



Photography by Cheyenne Chavez



*Hero's Bridge, a small nonprofit that serves veterans aged 65 and older, developed six distinct programs to meet veteran needs:*

**Battle Buddy:** Bridging younger and older veterans in a special model of care that decreases social isolation and increases advocacy.

**Honor Guard:** Bridging our veterans to better mental health by facilitating a healthy processing of their time in service.

**Home Front:** Bridging our older heroes to healthy and safe housing conditions.

**Tele Hero:** Reaching our heroes faster, better, and smarter.

**Resource Scouts:** Addressing social determinates of health by bridging veterans to earned benefits and important community resources.

**Finally, Paw Patrol:** Using animals as healers to significantly reduce pain, anxiety, depression, and a variety of other issues for our veterans.

# The Community Comes Together to Execute Operation Cupcake

## Paw Patrol Program in Action

In March 2021, U.S. Army Vietnam veteran Ray Dodson casually mentioned to the Hero's Bridge Battle Buddy coordinator, Janelle Huffman, that he would like to adopt a cat for companionship at his home as he lived alone.

His statement was not passed over, but rather passed along to Hero's Bridge Paw Patrol coordinator, Kayla Johnson. As manager of the Paw Patrol program, Johnson understands the value a pet brings to an individual. Having a companion improves one's quality of life and combats loneliness and a sense of isolation, something our veterans have experienced a lot of over the past two years. Johnson contacted the Fauquier, Virginia SPCA and asked them about cats available for adoption and stated Hero's Bridge was interested in

adopting one for Dodson. Devon Settle, Fauquier SPCA executive director, with a heart for both veterans and animals, responded that Hero's Bridge would not be covering the adoption costs, as the SPCA would be happy to cover the adoption costs themselves so Dodson could have a companion. She then set about identifying the right cat for this veteran.



**Ray Dodson meeting Cupcake for the first time**

*Continued on next page*



Huffman arranged to drive Dodson to the SPCA to meet the available cats, and he eventually settled on Cupcake, a tan domestic shorthaired cat.

## Cheshire Cat Cupcake

A few weeks after welcoming Cupcake to his home, Huffman received a distressed call from Dodson informing her that he had left the house to pick up a few items for Cupcake, who was sleeping on his bed at the time, and when he returned, she was nowhere to be found.

Huffman de-escalated the situation and reassured him that cats are exceptional hiders and sometimes did so in plain sight. She offered to visit the following day to help him find her. It wasn't necessary though, because an hour later, Huffman received another call from Dodson. Cupcake had been found sleeping in an empty trash can.

## Kitty Kits

Hero's Bridge understands that pet ownership is a luxury that isn't always financially sound. To help offset pet needs, Hero's Bridge relies on the work of our volunteers who scour the community for donated pet supplies. Early this year, Johnson met with area

clinics to introduce herself. At Community Critter Care in Catlett, Virginia she was told about one volunteer who works with a wide array of rescues and

Cupcake. The more she shared her personality, the more he realized Cupcake wasn't a fitting name. Dodson renamed her Bobcat.



*Kayla Johnson bringing a Kitty Kit to Ray Dodson for Cupcake*

animal welfare organizations in any capacity that she can. She was delighted to be introduced to Hero's Bridge.

Armed with supplies, Johnson put together Kitty Kits, full of food, litter, and toys for Cupcake, to further ease Dodson's mind and allow him to simply enjoy the companionship of his new friend.

## One Year Check Up


It has been nearly one year that Dodson opened his home to

He is very happy with his decision to adopt Bobcat. She is wonderful company for him, and he spoils her rotten.

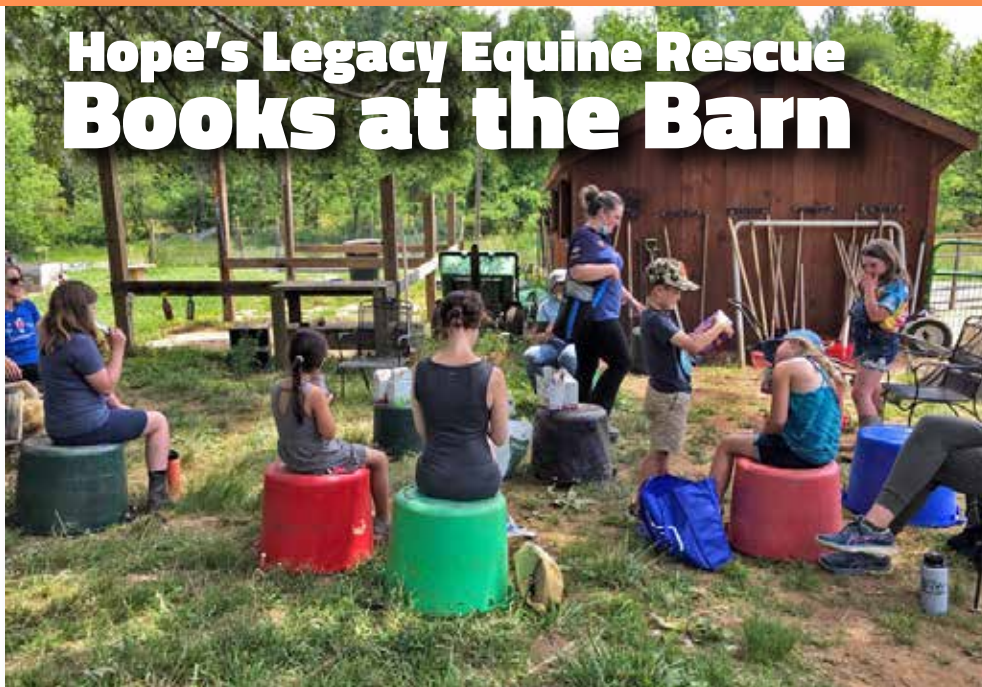
Hero's Bridge is grateful for the support of organizations within our community that help us to seamlessly execute our mission. Organizations such as the Latham Foundation permit Hero's Bridge to expand our programs to an increasing number of veterans within our region.

Hero's Bridge® is dedicated to serving elderly veterans, age 65 and older. We bridge our veterans to a better quality of life through our age specific and innovative programs. These services are available to our heroes wherever they call home, at no expense to them or their families. [www.herosbridge.org](http://www.herosbridge.org).

## Author Bio

*Aimée O'Grady serves as the Outreach Coordinator for Hero's Bridge to help raise awareness about aging veterans' unique needs. She can be reached at [outreach@herosbridge.org](mailto:outreach@herosbridge.org).* 

## Hope's Legacy Equine Rescue Books at the Barn



Hope's Legacy Equine Rescue was founded in 2008. Since then we have taken in over 400 horses, ponies, mules and donkeys. Located in central Virginia, we are an all-breed rescue working to save equines from a variety of situations including, but not limited to: abuse, abandonment, neglect, slaughter or whose owners can no longer care for them. We are dedicated to working with our future generation, teaching them responsible equine care.

Books at the Barn is a free reading program for 6 to 14-year-olds at Hope's Legacy's Castle Rock Farm.

Participants have fun learning about animal rescue; learning about horses and donkeys and how to care for them; and then reading to our animals. Our program is open to the general public, but we also promote it through Big Brothers Big Sisters and foster family organizations in the area. Our sessions are lead by a volunteer who is a retired child

psychologist, and our Program Coordinator, hired in 2021.

In 2019, 10 children participated in Books at the Barn, with most of the children coming through Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Blue Ridge. For 2020, our plan was to expand Books at The Barn to include 72 children and 72 adults, with visits spaced out over 6 months. Groups were kept small, 6 children and 6 adults, for a series of 3 visits in one month. But on March 16, 2020, Virginia locked down due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Hope's Legacy decided to close our facility to outside visitors, for the safety of our volunteers who feed and work with our residents daily. We remained closed until July 15th.

The pandemic had a direct impact on our Books at the Barn Program. We revised the program to very small groups and then delayed the start of the program to Fall 2020, thinking the wave of positive COVID tests would decrease. Unfortunately, no participants signed up for the program and we had to cancel Books at the Barn for all of 2020.

In 2021 we made further revisions to our program, including condensing the visits from 3 consecutive weeks to one longer visit per month. We obtained donated radio and print advertising for the program, to make a wider audience aware of the program. We continued to invite Big Brothers Big Sisters and other family organizations to the program, and we kept the groups small so

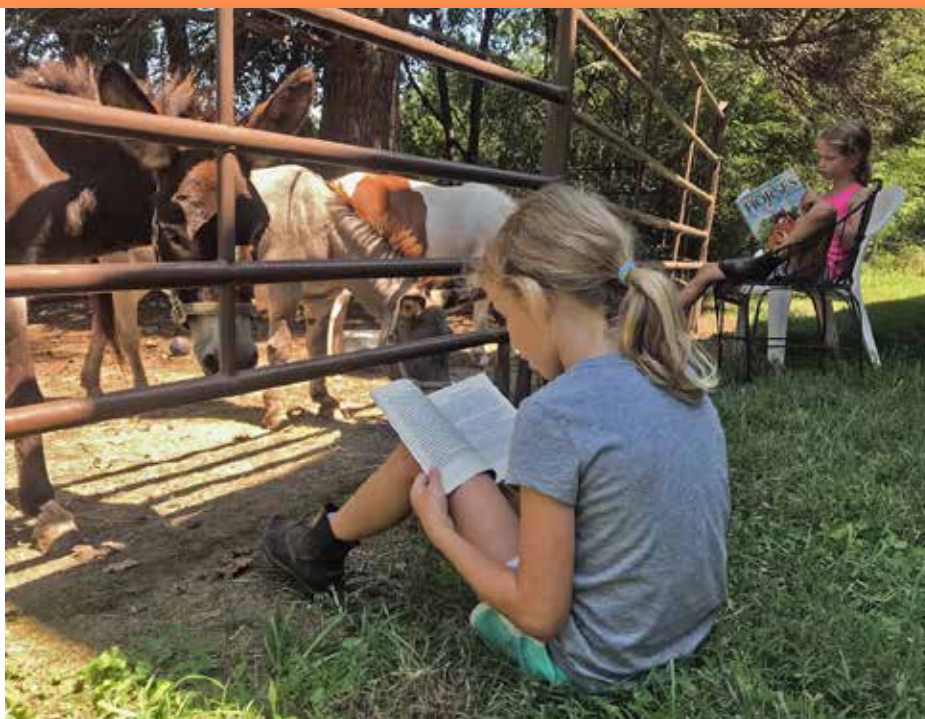


children could receive personalized attention during their visits. And we hired a part time Program Coordinator who can devote her full energies to outreach programs like Books at the Barn.



The results for this year are very encouraging. We had 55 children participate with their parents/guardians/Bigs. The key, we felt, was the print and radio advertising we received from a local radio group and a weekly newspaper, making more people aware of our program. We initially limited the groups to 6 children and 6 adults, but with overwhelming response from the public, we expanded the groups to 12 children with 12 adults and were still able to give each child individual attention. We added a 7th session, in November, to help accommodate demand. One family who attended were experienced horse people and adopted one of our miniature horses they met at Books at the Barn! And several parents/guardians used the visit as a teaching experience with their children, asking them to support the horses through donations.

Our biggest success may have been with a group from The Stars Program, which is a local group home for at-risk teenage girls. Their administrator contacted us when she saw Books at the Barn



advertised and asked if we would consider hosting a group of girls for a special session. We hosted 6 girls on a beautiful June day. Some were reluctant at first to really engage and participate, but as we allowed them some quiet time just to sit by the animals, they started to tell a little bit about their lives and how much it meant to them to be with the equines at Hope's Legacy. It was very touching to see these girls relate to animals who had been through similar life experiences. Their administrator

contacted us afterwards and told us how much the visit meant to these young women. We will contact them again in 2022 to see if we can host another group next summer.

We believe Books at the Barn equally benefits the animals. Our horses

and donkeys need to be exposed to different non-threatening humans to make them more comfortable with a variety of people. We see that the horses especially respond to the children.



Our Program Coordinator is already actively planning Books at the Barn for 2022. The plan is to host one Saturday each month April through October, with 10-12 children per group. We will continue to invite special groups of children to participate with their parents/guardians or Bigs. 🐾



## Humane Education Enhances Juvenile Offenders' Motivation

Students educated in the juvenile justice system face acute challenges such as lack of motivation and negative attitudes toward school. Schools in the system are expected to provide rigorous, Common Core-standards-aligned instruction. Humane education lessons that nurture kindness and empathy towards humans, animals, and the environment has been shown to motivate students and encourage their pro-social sentiments. A study involving a randomized control trial of 192 12- and 13-year-old students from New Jersey asked students to complete five standards-aligned

reading passages with text-based questions. The experimental-group assessments contained humane education themes; the control-group assessments had non-animal related high interest topics. The passages were equated in reading level, word count, etc. Analyses of the results showed that not only did students who received humane education passages do better overall, but also did much better on questions

addressing specific Common Core Reading for Information standards. The authors call the study a starting point for applying and researching the effectiveness of humane education on the juvenile justice population, specifically, because they are expected to learn standards-aligned curricula and are in particular need of academic motivation and pro-social encouragement.



– O'Connor, J., & Samuels, W.E. (2021, Oct. 8). Humane education's effect on middle school student motivation and standards-based reading assessment. *Social Sciences*, 10(10), 376. [doi.org/10.3390/socsci10100376](https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10100376)

## Kristin Burki Named to National Link Coalition Steering Committee

The National Link Coalition is pleased to announce the appointment of Kristin Burki, M.S., A.P.S.W., Director of the [\*National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life \(NCALL\)\*](#), to serve on our Steering Committee. NCALL is a project of End Domestic Abuse



**Kristin Burki** Wisconsin and focuses on abuse in later life and elder abuse, particularly their Links with domestic violence and sexual assault. NCALL's Abuse in Later Life National Resource Center offers technical assistance, training and consultation, plus an extensive resource list. Since 2002, NCALL has provided technical assistance and training to the Office on Violence Against Women's Abuse in Later Life grantees to address elder abuse, neglect and exploitation, including domestic violence, sexual assault and stalk-

ing, involving victims who are 50 years of age or older. NCALL promotes victim-defined advocacy and services for older survivors, fosters coordinated community response teams, advocates for elder justice, engages in policy development, and partners with other organizations to promote respect and dignity across the lifespan.

Burki has 20 years of experience in the gender-based violence movement, including as a member of an AmeriCorps team of advocates and community educators in Oregon; director of Services at Domestic Abuse Intervention Services in Madison, Wis.; and as Prevention and Early Intervention Section Manager for the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families.

Since 2018, Burki has also been faculty at the Sandra Rosenbaum School of Social Work at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where she teaches a graduate course focused on integrating so-

cial work theory with practice.

Burki replaces Hugh Tebault III, President of the Latham Foundation, who had served tirelessly on the Steering Committee since our inception in 2008. The National Link Coalition earnestly thanks Tebault and the Latham Foundation for their many years of instrumental support and collaboration in addressing the Link between animal abuse and human violence. Latham's work to advance awareness among the public and professional audiences has included publishing videos, innumerable *Latham Letter* articles, the *Latham and The Link* history, and three editions of the landmark *Breaking the Cycles of Violence*.



**Hugh Tebault III**





# Mini Horse, Mighty Hope

## How a Herd of Miniature Horses Provides Comfort and Healing

By Debbie Garcia-Bengochea and Peggy Frezon

*Lessons from recent disasters on accounting for the safety of animals and humans alike*

### Back Jacket:

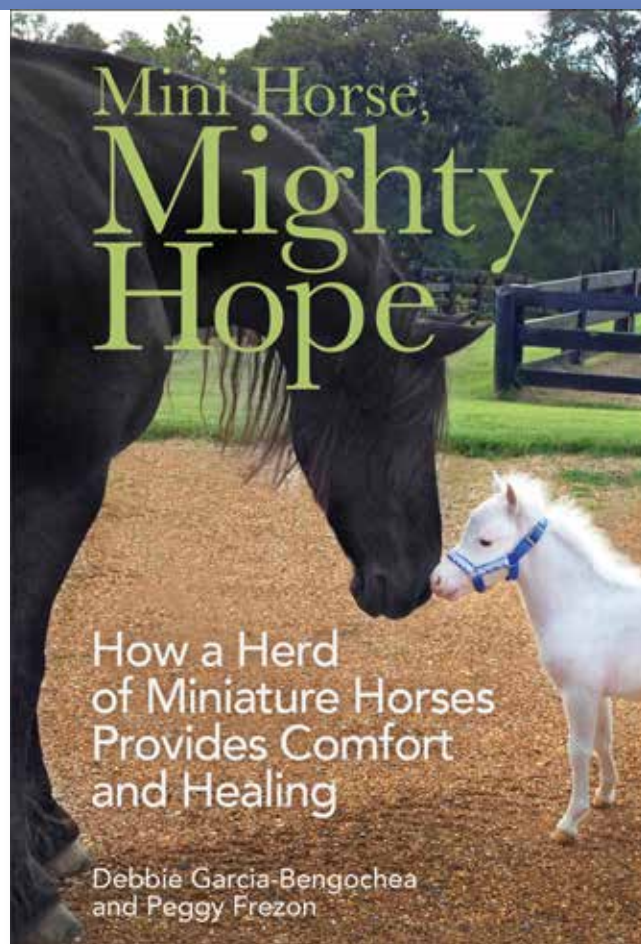
*Illness, trauma, and trials touch us all. Into the uncertainty and pain trots a herd of tiny horses with big personalities, bringing a smile, a laugh, a chance to heal.*

*Mini Horse, Mighty Hope* introduces you to Gentle Carousel Miniature Therapy Horses, one of the largest equine therapy programs in the world. You'll experience moments of comfort, hope, healing, and even miracles as you follow these spirited mini horses on visits to children's and veterans' hospitals, victims of natural disasters, survivors of and first responders to mass shootings, and more. Along the way, you'll also get to know the founder of Gentle Carousel as she shares how the love of these marvelous little creatures has helped her navigate her own struggles and challenges.

If you love stories that highlight the special connection between humans and animals, you'll love this tender and encouraging collection.


Debbie Garcia-Bengochea is a best selling author and award-winning commercial artist and photographer, as well as cofounder with her husband, Jorge, of Gentle Carousel Miniature Therapy Horses. The charity's miniature horses interact with an estimated 25,000 people all over the country each year, including survivors, first responders, and more. One of their horses was named one of history's ten most heroic animals by Time magazine and declared the Most Heroic pet in America by AARP. Debbie and Jorge live in Florida.

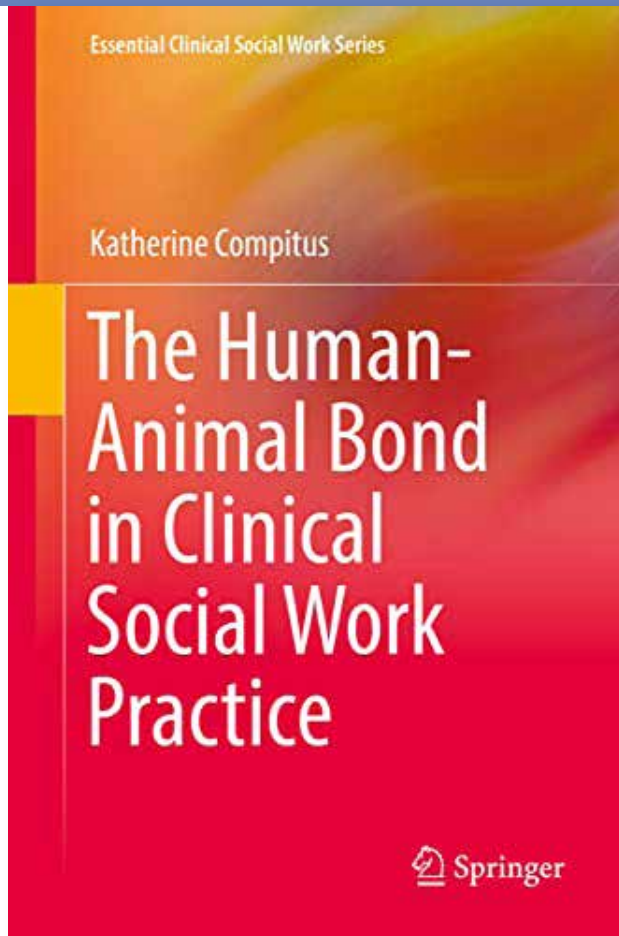
Peggy Frezon is a contributing editor of All Creatures magazine



and the author of books about the human-animal bond. A regular contributor to Guideposts magazine, Peggy also contributes to the annual All God's Creatures Daily Devotions for Animal Lovers, and her stories can be found in dozens of Chicken Soup for the Soul books. Peggy and her husband rescue senior golden retrievers and volunteer doing therapy dog work.

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## Link, Human-Animal Bond Presented in a Book for Social Workers

# The Human-Animal Bond in Clinical Social Work Practice

by Katherine Compitus

A new textbook describes both the positive and negative aspects of human-animal relationships, including several Link issues, as they pertain to the traditionally exclusively human-focused field of social work. Katherine Compitus, DSW, LCSW, MSEd, MA, has recently published *The Human-Animal Bond in Clinical Social Work Practice* (2021; Springer).

The book begins with an introduction that attempts to answer why human animal interactions are so often overlooked in social work practice. The book includes a history of the human-animal bond; the biopsychosocial

model for understanding why the bond is so powerful; ways to incorporate animal assisted therapy into social work practice; veterinary social work; animal-assisted crisis intervention; and current research and future directions. The chapters include such topics as domestic violence, homelessness, and animal hoarding

Compitus is the cofounder and chair of Surrey Hills Sanctuary, a nonprofit that provides veterinary social work services to trauma and abuse survivors in New York State. She is also a lecturer in the graduate social work schools at Columbia, Fordham and New York Universities.



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