



ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY AND VETERAN PROGRAM FOR THERAPEUTIC HORSEBACK RIDING WAS LAUNCHED SEPTEMBER 11, 2009

The pilot program designed to serve both active duty military and veterans who have been diagnosed with physical and/or mental challenges has been launched. As a non-profit organization and an accredited NARHA premier center that provides therapeutic horseback riding for individuals with special needs, Spirit Therapies is extremely excited about expanding its services and having the opportunity to give back to the men and women who have served our country. As you know, in just the last 5 years thousands of military personnel have returned from overseas with physical and emotional wounds. The Horses Healing Heroes program of horseback riding therapy will facilitate the physical rehabilitation of active and former military members in several ways. The physical benefits associated with the horses' body warmth and three-dimensional gait that closely simulates the movement of the human pelvis has been shown to increase circulation, relax tight muscles, strengthen weak muscles, increase mobility in the pelvis and trunk, develop balance and coordination, and improve posture. Horse-assisted therapies also contribute to emotional and social readjustment by increasing self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-confidence, along with a sense of mastery. In addition, group interactive activities promote socialization and lead to measurable improvements in communication, memory, and attention span.

To lay the groundwork for this new program, Spirit's instructional staff, Laurie Willmott and Meghann Peterson, recently participated in an experiential workshop with the Arizona School for the Deaf and Blind, and attended a comprehensive workshop hosted by Therapeutic Riding of Tucson (TROT), which already has an established Heroes on Horseback program. Spirit's staff acquired valuable knowledge about program development, implementation, and fundraising through interacting with other therapy professionals from TROT and Tucson's Veterans Hospital as well as military members and veterans at these events.

We invite you to be a part of this healing opportunity to serve our military and veterans. To support a hero, volunteer, or obtain additional information, please contact Laurie Willmott, Executive Director, at (702) 219-1728. Also, please visit our web site at www.SpiritTherapies.org for more details.

