



**Where
horses
help
heal**

THE KING'S REIN OUTREACH

BY JAMES ROBERTSON

IN 2013 the Michigan State University Extension office published a study on the benefits of equine therapy. The study explained how our brains are constantly communicating with our bodies, accessing our surroundings, making adjustments, and compensating. It goes on to explain that through injury or illness these assessments and compensation pathways can be damaged or changed, creating a disability. The Michigan State educators contended that equine therapy is a viable way to repair and strengthen those pathways.

The King's Rein, a non-profit in Larue, is an

excellent local example on how equine therapy is helping people restore their lives. The organization engages horses in order to help people restore their mental and emotional health, develop self-worth, confidence, trust, discipline, and compassion.

People who come to the King's Rein have experienced the healing and transforming power of love through acceptance and encouragement from the horses and staff.

Angela Short, whose blind daughter participates at the King's Rein explains, "She really struggled with feeling different than the other kids her age. This is a place where she can come and the playing field is more level. She doesn't have to see to ride, and she finally feels good about something. She's proud of herself."

Healing begins with the relationship between the participant and their horse. This relationship is a very important element in the healing process because it allows the participant to overcome their fears and develop trust.

"Horses are used in the therapy because a horse will react or respond to a person's behavior in much the same way that another human will," said Shannon DeCraene, President of the King's Rein. "Horses are very honest in their responses, which allows the participant to take responsibility for the relationship they build with the horse."





This helps the person understand how their thoughts, feelings, and behavior affect their personal relationships.

The Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International has provided equine therapy certification, education, and resources since 1969. Since that time a substantial amount of scientific evidence has emerged on the benefits of therapeutic riding for people who have disabilities.

“Horses are able to do this because they respond to the present, DeCraene said. “A horse responds honestly to what the participant is doing in the present, rather than what they did in the past or what they may do in the future.”

Being a non-profit, the organization is supported solely through individuals, businesses, and grants. The program is free of charge to individuals and organizations in need from the surrounding communities.

The ultimate goal of the outreach is about experiencing healing through relationship. The horses are used as a conduit to connect human-to-human and heart-to-heart.

Elements of the program include: equine safety and care, natural horsemanship principals and skills, ground work, riding, crafts and games, hiking trails, food and fellowship, and off-site field trips. The program is primarily offered to Henderson, Anderson, and Smith counties.

Studies continue on the use of horses in therapy, but one thing is certain: horses have a way of connecting with us on a spiritual level. When it comes to this awesome quality of horses, Sir Winston Churchill probably said it the best.

“There is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man.”

For more information please visit www.thekingsrein.org or call 903-714-0830. The Kings Rein is located at 13323 FM 2588 in Larue Texas.

