



HORSES AND HEROES PROGRAMS FOR VETERANS

CTR is committed to changing lives for the better and that includes our veterans who have served in any of the armed services. We pay special attention to the rehabilitative needs of veterans with emphasis on physical, psychological and social healing. Through a variety of horse-related therapies (therapeutic riding, ground based activities, hippotherapy and equine assisted learning) veterans are able to increase their strength, balance, coordination, flexibility, confidence, trust and communication skills. Participants may be at any stage in their healing process and may be working on physical, emotional, social cognitive and/or behavioral issues. PTSD, traumatic brain injury, physical injury, loss of limb, social/emotional scarring and/or paralysis can be addressed through CTR's program for veterans.



Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) – is a ground-based program that does not require any prior horse or riding experience. The focus is entirely on the development of interaction skills and personal growth. All activities are customized to address the individual needs of the veteran participants.

How does this work? Following an initial consultation, individual needs and goals are assessed and a plan is developed. Several 2 to 3 hour EAL sessions may be scheduled.

What Should I expect? During an EAL activity – a small group of veterans gather at our farm for an interactive program. Introductions are made, goals are outlined and the ground-based, non-riding activity begins. Horses are an integral part and CTR staff assures the safety of all participants. All activities and discussions are facilitated by an experienced team, comprised of a mental health professional and equine specialist. Every participant leaves having received individual and group feedback and a plan for next steps.

Why horses? Horses have acute senses and intuition and they give real-time feedback, making them invaluable partners for helping participants identify beliefs, values, feelings and behaviors.

What outcomes are realistic? Participants learn about themselves and others with whom they interact. Self-awareness, personal challenge and growth are all expected. The EAL experience has been called “inspiring and powerful.” Participants build skills helpful for re-engagement, problem solving, communication, coping and healing.



Therapeutic Riding (TR)- provides basic horsemanship skills and horseback riding lessons. The focus is on therapeutic recreation with an emphasis on fostering emotional and physical skill development in a safe and nonjudgmental environment.



How does it work? Following an initial evaluation to discuss physical skill level and personal lesson goals, a series of two, three or four weeks of riding lessons are scheduled.

What should I expect? Lessons are conducted by a certified therapeutic riding instructor or instructor in training at our farm. Additional staff and/or volunteers assist as needed to ensure a safe and optimal riding experience. Lesson activities focus on building strength and riding skill development.

How is it beneficial? TR has been proven to benefit both the physical and emotional development of participants. In addition, riding fosters a sense of camaraderie at the farm and acceptance.

What outcomes are realistic? TR enables veterans to learn riding skills and horse related responsibilities which fosters muscle relaxation and/or strength building as well as balance improvement. TR also provides mental/emotional benefit to the rider by building confidence and self-esteem. The bond between the nonjudgmental horse and their rider helps veterans rebuild trust and establish a bond of friendship.



Want to learn more? Contact Cathy Schmidt at cathy.schmidt@ctrchanginglives.org to schedule an initial meeting and plan your experience with **HORSES AND HEROES**. We will work with you to set up a program designed to meet your needs. There is no cost to veterans who want to participate.

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