



# Harmony Acres Equestrian Center

## October 2023 Update

### Animal-Assisted Psychotherapy

*by Kristin Moore, MSW*



#### Why Animal-Assisted Psychotherapy?

If anyone has spent time at Harmony Acres, it is not hard to tell it is a healing environment. Whether you are being greeted in the office by our three-legged cat, Siggy, trying to win the heart of an alpaca, or grooming one of the horses, our animals provide something a lot of human spaces cannot: belonging.

Research has shown the significance of the human-animal bond, and Animal-Assisted Psychotherapy (AAP) is all about embracing that bond and working towards designated goals with a mental health professional.

Interacting with animals provides many of those “feel good” chemicals in our brain, and on top of that, it creates an environment free of judgment and expectations while giving clients the opportunity to practice skills and confidence in a way traditional psychotherapy might not be able to as efficiently.

Our animals approach clients authentically with a desire for connection; in return, they ask the humans they are working with to do the same. Working together as a team, the animal, therapist, and client are able to process trauma, create healing, and establish skills to aid the client in their future endeavors— not to mention developing a relationship with a lifelong animal friend!



*Harmony Acres is on track to benefit more than 60 individuals through 700 +hours of AAP in 2023.*

# Remembering Barbara Price

*Christy Douglass*



Barbara Price was a dedicated Harmony Acres Volunteer and supporter, and a life-long animal-lover who passed away on September 14 after battling cancer for approximately a year.

Barbara was drawn to Harmony Acres from the time we had our small beginnings at our first facility in Fruita and was a dedicated weekly volunteer for the past 9 years.

Barbara was always a person who seemed to just show up when we needed something, especially for the animals, as she loved supporting the animal care and often brought in extra supplies such as blankets or treats. Barbara had a special bond with our elderly donkey Pansy, spending time each week with her to make sure she felt loved and cared for, taking her for

walks, grooming her, and helping support her extra financial needs.

Barbara was also a very dedicated friend to others. We personally observed her dedication to her friend Janice Rose who was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. Barbara kept close contact with Janice while she was in assisted living and brought her out to therapeutic riding sessions at Harmony Acres each and every week, which was Janice's favorite time of the week.

After Barbara's beloved horse Scarlett passed away, she spent even more time at Harmony Acres, both with Pansy and a special little Arabian mare named Mosquie. She also dedicated her extra finances to supporting animal welfare organizations including Harmony Acres and others.

I personally always looked forward to seeing Barbara each week, enjoying the bright energy she brought, her dedicated love of animals, her supportive comments, and long discussions on philosophical issues!

Barbara will be extremely missed at Harmony Acres, both by us and the animals - we look forward to carrying on her passion for caring for animals and others at our facility. We are grateful for our ability to remember her impact here with all of you.

## Thank you, RJ Clark Family Foundation!

The RJ Clark Family Foundation awarded Harmony Acres \$15,000 to support our programming. This very generous gift will support our children's programming, providing more than 150 hours of animal-assisted therapy! Thank you!!





# Veterans' Programming: *Fulfilling Lifelong Dreams!*

## *Christy Douglass*

Stanley Magnuson is a Veteran who has found many benefits from the Veteran's program at Harmony Acres. Stanley was enlisted in active-duty military service from 1976 to 1981. Following his service he pursued his education and engaged in both teaching and pastoral work. The last 10 years of his career he worked in the criminal justice department in Texas where he was able to make a positive influence on the lives of many inmates.

After retiring in 2013, Stanley moved to Grand Junction for the beautiful scenery and our well-known VA Medical Center. He heard about Harmony Acres through the Recreational Therapy Department at the VA and was very interested in attending the program - he had always dreamed of having a ranch and owning horses!

In his first Recreational Therapy group session, Stanley made an immediate bond with a large Andalusian horse named Patrick. Stanley states that he immediately became intrigued by how much you can bond with a horse and how sensitive they are. He found the experience with Patrick very encouraging and relaxing, deciding to pursue individual riding once the group ended.

Stanley began riding with instructor Deb Crooks, first in the indoor arena and then on the outdoor obstacle course, continuing to deepen his riding ability and his relationship with Patrick. Eventually, he advanced to riding out on the trails where he says he enjoys the beautiful surroundings and gains a sense of peace and tranquility while with his horse. Stanley has now advanced his skills to ride a more high-spirited Arabian named Mimi and enjoys the feeling of adventure and extra energy she brings. He says working with the horses gives him "a sense of belonging and accomplishment" and is the fulfillment of a life-long dream to experience a relationship with horses and the outdoors.

Harmony Acres is excited to announce that they are a chosen recipient of the VA Adaptive Sports Grant for October 2023-September 2024 grant cycle. Through this grant funding and other sources, Harmony Acres plans to serve more than 70 Veterans through riding and equine therapy programs in the upcoming year.

*As requested by the Sports Grant administration we make the following disclaimer: This article was funded in part by a grant from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The opinions, findings, and conclusions stated herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States of Veterans Affairs.*



## Harmony Acres Most Wanted



On August 26th, Harmony Acres hosted its Most Wanted event at the Grand Junction Convention Center. It was an evening full of laughter, shenanigans, and good times! The event raised more than \$65,000 which will be directly applied to our Animal-Assisted Psychotherapy and Therapeutic Riding programs. A big thank you to everyone who joined us!





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