

Equestrian Angel

An Equestrian Encounter is the Best Medicine

By Jennifer Roché, R.N., BSN

Throughout history it was the horse that assisted mankind to achieve success. Side by side, horse and man won wars, defended empires, and explored new frontiers. Their strong spirit, dependable loyalty and gentle nature made horses a powerful ally then as well as now. This is the premise upon which Ken Roché founded the Equestrian Angel Therapeutic Outreach Program. Growing up Ken had a natural love for horses and as a nurse he always desired to help people. Today he is blessed to be able to combine these two passions into a powerful program that is having a positive impact improving the quality of life for individuals within our community.

When people think of horse therapy, images of riding centers come to mind, but riding a horse, while beneficial, is not their only therapeutic value. Throughout history it has been proven that interactions between humans and horses can be mentally, physically, psychologically, and spiritually beneficial. It is this special interaction that the Equestrian Angels strive to create with every individual that they visit.

Equestrian Angel Therapeutic Outreach Program is dedicated to sharing the unique experience of equine interactions with individuals in need throughout our community. With his miniature horses, Roché visits nursing homes, special needs schools, inner-city schools, community hospitals, prisons, hospice patients, Alzheimer's patients, handicapped children and adults, group homes and more, all the while encouraging memories, bringing joy, and eliciting a smile or a simple gesture of understanding from those he visits.

According to Roché, the therapeutic interactions are wide ranging and ever present. His miniature horses have demonstrated an innate ability to sense what an individual needs and then become the bridge guiding the individual towards achieving their goal. Whether it is bringing a touching smile to a dying patient, or guiding an Alzheimer patient back to reality if just for a moment, "the miracles, they just keep coming", says Roché.



The program strives to work with professionals of all kinds: social workers and psychologists, physical, occupational and speech therapists, teachers and more. "With horses, the potential for success is limitless", says Roché. The horses can be used in physical therapy for assistance in range of motion exercises, help people with emotional or behavioral issues and can be used as a tool for teachers to reach out to autistic children and to create an exciting learning plan that children can become enthusiastic about.

For three years now, the Equestrian Angel has demonstrated that equine assisted therapy and visitation can be both accessible and practical. They bring their unique therapy into activity rooms, class rooms, intensive care units (ICU) and more, to assist and work closely and personally with professionals and those entrusted to their care.



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If you know someone who would benefit from our services or you are interested in getting involved with supporting our efforts, visit our web page at www.equestrianangel.org or contact Ken Roché at 504-452-1081 or email him at ken@equestrianangel.org.