

Newsletter

2nd Quarter * 2021



Restoring hope. Transforming lives.



Message shared by Jackie...

"I go to Nature to be soothed and healed, and to have my senses put in order."

J.Burroughs



Veterans Harness the Power of Nature

"I slept like a baby. Usually, I'm up and down at night."

Nature's Healing Power

The head line of a Feb.2021 Wall Street Journal article read: "For Better Health During the Pandemic, Is Two Hours Outdoors the New 10,000 Steps?" The article goes on to say that "the benefits of nature have been clear to scientists for some time but the pandemic has made the matter more urgent." Being in nature is "strongly linked to lower blood pressure, heart rate and stress hormones, and decreased anxiety depression, and fatigue." Nature Deficit Disorder - a newer diagnosis especially in children is based on the belief that spending less

time outdoors results in a wide range of developmental and behavioral issues. Though it has not yet made its way into mainline psychology, organizations like United Way of NW Michigan have made this growing concern a priority.

Peace Ranch harnesses an evidence based therapy model using an experiential approach in a natural environment. Once again we find ourselves at the leading edge of current thought and mental health practice and honored to serve.

As Spring gives way to Summer, we're reminded once again of the healing power of nature, bringing peace to all who come to the ranch. This was certainly the case in May, when Peace Ranch hosted five combat veterans through Kent County Veteran's Affairs for an experiential equine assisted retreat. Throughout the experience, veterans were immersed in the natural setting of Peace Ranch. The setting, combined with a variety of individual and team activities with the horses, helped veterans safely explore aspects of combat trauma. Strategies for recovery used the acronym '**RESET**':

- Recognize** body tension.
- Explore** safety.
- Stretch** don't SNAP!
- Evaluate** what worked.
- Teach** myself & others.

A pre and post-test was self-administered by veterans. The results were significant. On a ten-point scale, veterans reported improvement in the following areas: tension by 3 points, focus by 5 points, anxiety by 4 points.

For more information, please contact Jan@peaceranchtc.org, call 231.499.4736, or visit our website www.peaceranchtc.org.

From the Horse's Mouth

Blossom the donkey here. Some days I just marvel at all that that goes on at the ranch. If you could look



through my eyes at all the happenings every day you would be amazed. People, young and old come, sometimes they seem sad and afraid. The ranch staff is quiet as they assist us in doing our job. You might wonder what we do.

We help you laugh, we stand by when you need to cry. We are strong when you feel weak and we reflect your energy with no judgement. We help you to connect with your body (which I understand is now called mindfulness) we help you find yourself and become confident in connecting with others. And we love our job. Many of us came in sad and afraid because of what we had been through so we know what it's like.

Please consider being a sponsor, so we can help others.

Our Mission is to provide Equine Assisted Psychotherapy and Learning to all in need.

Our Vision is to create a PEACE-ful experiential center, a therapeutic community dedicated to cultivate growth and learning to rehabilitate those who are ill or suffering that they may turn or return to productive living.



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Volunteer News

Our Volunteer Team is growing and we have New Leadership! Penny Szczechowski and Phyllis Girrback are working together to help volunteers get connected more quickly and efficiently to meet the practical needs at Peace Ranch. Many thanks to all the folks who have filled out the new online Volunteer Application to share their special talents, availability and the best way to connect and get things going.

Here are some current needs:

- A couple of people willing to clean the buildings 2x monthly.
- A couple people willing to commit to mowing and

weed whacking weekly (say that 3xs fast)

- Folks who love garden work
- Skilled tradesmen/women willing to be on a call list for needs like: electrical, plumbing, mechanical, equipment service, and heavy jobs (like unloading hay).
- Someone skilled in databases and data entry.
- A few folks willing to help with mailings, making nesting balls, and other group projects.

"To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow" Audrey Hepburn



Peace Ranch offers abundant opportunities for clients to restore their 'belief in tomorrow' (and themselves), through the natural world. Nature, an integral part of programming at the Ranch, works in subtle ways to bring calm to a traumatized, overwrought and reactive nervous system.

The horses, gardens, chickens, kittens, toads and even rocks have lessons to teach about hope and resiliency. Recently, a client uncovered the brilliant beauty inside a dirty rock and explained '**Peace Ranch helps you find your sparkle.**' There are so many lessons in nature. Many times, clients find hope in the parallel stories of the Peace Ranch horses. The horses arrive afraid, resigned, disheveled, distrustful and labeled 'bad' – just like our clients. But the horses provide a visible path to healing – learning to trust, make

friends and heal maladaptive/protective behaviors. These natural examples support clients as they explore and heal the terror of their past.

Here are some things we are looking forward to this summer at the ranch:

- Women veterans retreat June 26 & 27.
- Resiliency groups for front line mental health staff.
- Development of additional Peace Ranch teams – Northern Michigan is experiencing a significant increase in crisis mental health needs.
- Regional trauma training for Eagala professionals September 11.
- Continuing to deliver cutting-edge intervention for traumatized children and adults.