

On The Positive Side

Horses can be helpful in both therapy, education

By Ann Remick-Barlow / For the Sun-News

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Horses have long held prominent roles in the history of the Southwest and are a part of our heritage, used to transport goods, power farm equipment, and provide transportation, recreation, and companionship. Now the role of the horse has evolved to include therapeutic and educational interactions between humans and animals. By offering horses as teachers we can assist children and families to understand and problem-solve various life situations.

Helping Kids Be Kids Foundation, a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation established in 2004 to serve children and their families in Do-a Ana County, is organizing an event this month.

In this we celebrate the horse, both wild and domestic, as the symbol of our own freedoms and aspirations. It's a relationship like no other. "Helping Kids Be Kids Celebration of the Horse" at Spirit Ranch, will honor the contributions of the horses in our community. This event is designed to promote awareness and appreciation of our horses and their continuing contributions to the quality of our lives.

In addition to honoring the horse, this celebration will aid in providing scholarships and sponsorships for children and their families to participate in equine assisted therapeutic and learning programs. Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) utilizes therapeutic interventions which can be useful in overcoming various fears, grief/loss and other difficult emotions.

Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) is used for the development of life skills in areas such as leadership, relationship and team building, self-worth, communication, and social competence.

The day's events will include a parade of horses that participate in equine assisted programs. Many of our horses have been rescued and are being cared for at Spirit Ranch as part of this healing and life skills model. You will learn how horses are guides and teachers in this setting, as well as how the horses receive their own healing.

Demonstrations throughout the day will allow visitors to interact with the horses and some of the participants.

Ticket prices are \$15 each, or two for \$25 and include a home cooked barbecue. Live music will add to this outdoor experience of learning, appreciation and fun. Be sure to be there for the opening ceremony and the closing drum circle at the end. It's a day you won't want to miss!

Ann Remick-Barlow is the founder and Executive Director of the Helping Kids Be Kids Foundation, a nonprofit foundation dedicated to providing scholarships and sponsorships for children and their families to participate in equine assisted programs at Spirit Ranch.

If you go

What: Celebration of the Horse

When: Noon to 5 p.m., May 16

Where: Spirit Ranch, 2027 Westwind Road

Directions: Westwind is off North Valley Drive. Spirit Ranch is the fourth property on the right after the stop sign at the intersection of Westwind and Northwind.