



Summer 2020 Newsletter

Medicine Horse: A Ranch? A Farm? A Classroom? Who We Are

You may have seen our horses grazing in the pastures, sunflowers blooming in our garden, and wondered, what is Medicine Horse Center? Here at Medicine Horse, we are focused on supporting the social, emotional, and mental health of individuals through interactions with our horses and the natural world, to foster wellness in our community.

At Medicine Horse Center, our 6 horses are essential to helping clients discover themselves. As herd animals, horses are highly perceptive to emotions and energy, and respond quickly and honestly to others in their environment. Our equine assisted therapy programs are more than petting a horse — they are about the skills and awareness of interaction. Our horses help our clients understand the impact of their emotions and actions, and practice skills to build trusting, compassionate relationships with the horses. Through these interactions, clients develop an understanding of others, improve self esteem, and gain confidence, skills that can be transferred to other parts of their lives.



Meet Our Team



Lynne Howarth
Executive Director



Karen Finch
Licensed Professional
Counselor



Lesya Krasnikova
Development Director



Zoe Coleman
Equine Specialist



Jolie Brisbin
SCC Intern

2020 Update

What a year so far!

Throughout the winter and early spring, the Medicine Horse team ran a variety of social emotional learning and equine assisted therapy programming for groups of middle school students from Mancos, Dolores, and Cortez. Each session, our licensed counselor guided students as they discussed obstacles they were confronting in their lives, and coping skills they could use to manage their responses. As the students connected with the horses, it was beautiful to watch each student practice the skills they were learning, and find more confidence and trust in themselves beside these huge, powerful animals.

When schools closed in early spring, Medicine Horse worked to stay connected to our youth during this stressful time by continuing our programming virtually with daily social emotional educational videos. Check out the video series R U AWARE later in this newsletter. Karen, our dedicated therapist, also led numerous leadership programs to help educate those working with youth about effective and compassionate ways to interact with children who have experienced trauma.

We have slowly begun offering in-person programs for youth this summer, and trainings for San Juan Mountain Association, Southwest Conservation Corps, the Pinon Project, and others, and the horses are thrilled to have these new faces and endless attention. As our garden grows, Montezuma School to Farm Project and Southwest Conservation Corps have donated their time to help us with the never ending weeds and other enhancement projects in preparation for fall programming. Find out more information below!



20 Years of Service in 2020



This year, 2020, Medicine Horse is excited to celebrate 20 years of service! We are grateful to our community for their dedication and generosity over the years. In honor of our 20th anniversary, we are running the "20/20" campaign. Individuals can give a one-time donation or ongoing monthly donation of 20 dollars to support our youth programming.

Donate at www.medicinehorsecenter.org and click the "donate" button.

Thank you!

R U AWARE Video Series



When schools closed in March, our team stayed connected to our clients and community through our video series titled **R U AWARE**. These daily educational videos combined the familiar faces of our horses and staff with short social emotional learning lessons on skills for managing stress, health, and staying grounded in uncertain times. We are grateful to all the teachers and parents who shared these videos with youth, helping us all maintain a sense of safety and connection.

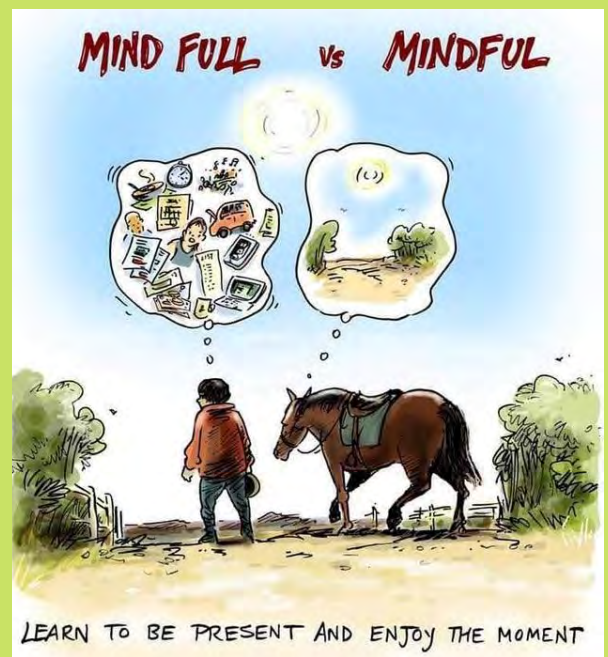
Check out the series on Youtube or Facebook under Medicine Horse Center, or visit

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4pT1j75TvJc>



R U AWARE will soon be available for purchase as a 24-video series for \$50. Look for the update on our website in the upcoming weeks!

Which R U today?





OUTDOOR SUMMER ADVENTURES AT THE MEDICINE HORSE GARDEN

The horses are grazing, the gardens are blooming, and summer is here at Medicine Horse Center!



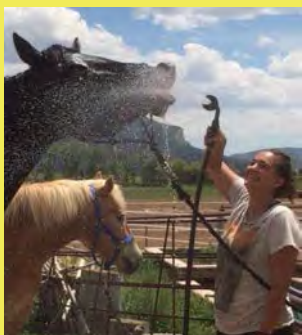
**We are excited to offer
adjusted summer programming!**

Thursdays 9:00am-1:00pm

Cost: \$55/day

Ages 7 to 10

Snacks provided



Every Thursday, we will offer a day of outdoor adventures and activities. From painting and pottery to nature walks and time with the horses, it will be a day full of learning, exploring, and enjoying time outside together!

Dates and Themes

July 23: Adventure Arts

July 30: A Day on the Ranch

Aug 6: Outdoor Explorer

Aug 13: Garden Sprouts

**Applications available online at
www.medicinehorsecenter.org/forms**

Return forms to info@medicinehorsecenter.org

or call us at 970-422-2081

COVID-19 Response



We are phasing in our services at Medicine Horse throughout the summer months. Currently we are in Phase 2 of reopening. To ensure the safety of our community, the Center is still closed to the general public. Clients will be introduced back to the Center by appointment only. All participants in our programming are required to wear masks and practice physical distancing, take temperatures, wash their hands and sanitize surfaces regularly. All our programs are held in outdoor spaces.

We will continue to update these regulations as the summer progresses, and are hopeful to run all our social emotional programs this fall.

The Healing Garden



2020 is not only our 20th year of providing programming, but also the 1 anniversary of our Healing Garden. This space, once barren and unused, has evolved and grown into an interactive, therapeutic space for our clients. We are excited to share the beauty of the flowers, the interactive smells and textures of the plants, and the shade of the trees, and the peace of the natural world with our clients as we start programming.

Truly a community project, the garden was developed and built through the collaboration of AmeriCorps service members and volunteers from local organizations. Once the space was laid out, many community members, local gardeners, and donors helped fill the space with perennial flowers, native plants, and seeds that have blossomed this summer.

With the help and vision of our SCC intern Jolie, we recently added a water feature that provides the calming sound of running water throughout the space.



Now during the Covid-19 pandemic, the garden space has provided a safe place to conduct professional training for MIC partners and local service organizations like The Pinon Project. The Healing Garden space is ideal for interactive outdoor programming offered to the community this summer.



Partnering with a Horse to Understand Trauma in Children

by Karen Finch, LPC



What do youth who have experienced trauma and horses have in common? A nervous system capable of immediate responses to protect oneself from real or perceived danger. This system, known as fight, flight or freeze, (the stress response), ensures survival. This commonality has been helping professionals attending workshops at Medicine Horse Center develop skills to work with youth in ways that respect and acknowledge their diverse needs .

Learning about the brain and how it responds to trauma and toxic stress shifts how professionals view, and respond, to challenging behaviors in youth. The horses provide participants a chance to connect with another living being whose world is all about survival. Just by entering their space, a horse's nervous system kicks in as the horse tries to perceive or anticipate a threat, just as a child who experiences trauma in their lives may become hypervigilant. For a horse, this heightened alert is normal and they are able to calm themselves when reassured. For a child this hypervigilance can be very hard to turn off and may result in coping behaviors that interfere with their social and academic success.



Another commonality is the existence of mirror neurons in both horses and humans. These specialized brain cells aid in empathizing with the emotions in other living things. Horses excel at perceiving our feelings and intentions, and respond authentically. Creating a genuine connection with a horse, staying grounded when challenged, and using strategies that help the horse feel safe provide participants the chance to practice new skills and knowledge to create confidence and success working with children. Solidifying a trauma-informed approach to working with children and youth is vital in creating a safe and respectful environment for those who have been exposed to toxic stress and trauma. It turns out that it is also a wonderful approach for all young people, and horses are uniquely qualified to help us all learn that.

Medicine Horse Center offers virtual trainings on Trauma-Informed Care and Behavior Management Strategies, as well as on-site workshops. Contact us for more information.

Our clients getting in touch with themselves, the horses, and each other.



Herd Spotlight: BRONCO



Bronco is our miniature shetland pony who is full of playful energy and love. As a small pony, Bronco helps people gain confidence around horses and eagerly seeks out scratches and tummy rubs. He helps clients build confidence when he trots over to say hello with a friendly whinny, or makes them smile with his silly antics. Despite his mischievous sneaking under fences and chewing on shoes, Bronco has an enormous heart that he willingly opens to those he meets.

Bronco reminds everyone that in stressful times, it is important to shake off stress and roll out worry.



From the Perspective of an Intern at the Medicine Horse Center

by Jolie Brisbin



At the beginning of June, I began my internship at the Medicine Horse Center. My focus is on expanding the therapy garden here at the center and helping to carry out the vision of making the garden space as therapeutic as possible for every visitor and client. Just within the first month I feel like I've learned a considerable amount about gardening, everything from how to rehabilitate soil and conserve water to how to prune a tomato plant and make kale smoothies. In addition, I've also been able to help with horse care, facility maintenance, social media management, community outreach, and more. It makes me very happy to have this opportunity.

The past two years I have worked on the youth crews with Southwest Conservation Corps (SCC). This year, thanks to the partnership between the Medicine Horse Center and SCC, I was able to apply for this individual placement position. I think that for myself and other youth in Montezuma county, finding a job oftentimes proves to be a daunting task, so I am very thankful that these organizations are here to increase the opportunities that youth have. When I think of community partnerships making our community stronger, I think of a day a few weeks ago when the Medicine Horse Center hosted a workshop for SCC crew leaders. It was very cool to me because not long ago, I worked under two amazing crew leaders on my youth crew and now I was getting to see them again but this time I was the one setting up and running the snack station so they would have brain fuel during their training! It was after working for both organizations that I realized that both organizations help each other and both organizations help the community and youth like me. I feel that the work experience and knowledge I have already gained at this job has helped me grow as a person and I feel more confident now that I have the skills I need to be successful at the careers I want to pursue in my future and in all the life ventures that lie ahead of me.



THANK YOU
to the **Montezuma School to Farm Americorps** and **Southwest Conservation Corps Team** for working in the gardens, weeding the paddocks, and spending time with our horses!



THANK YOU

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