





Special Spirit, Inc. is an all-inclusive PATH certified Therapeutic Center whose staff are PATH and EAGALA certified

OUR MISSION

Special Spirit is an equine therapeutic center where children and adults become empowered through horse-related activities.

OUR VISION

Special Spirit's vision is to make equine therapeutic activities accessible to all.

OUR CORE VALUES

Integrity

Access for all, irrespective of financial or physical challenges

Safety -- emotional and physical

Client-driven service



*Special Spirit is a **501(c)3 Non-Profit Organization Tax ID# 26-2504871**



EQUINE ASSISTED
PSYCHOTHERAPY
and PERSONAL
DEVELOPMENT

THERAPEUTIC
HORSEBACK
RIDING

TRADITIONAL
MENTAL HEALTH
SERVICES

Our Specialty Programs are Designed for

Children and Adults
with Physical or
Developmental
Disabilities

Military Veterans
and their Families

Personal Growth and
Relationship
Enhancement for
Individuals, Couples,
and Families

Foster Youth

Depression, Anxiety,
Post-Traumatic Stress,
Grief, and Loss

Drug and Alcohol
Recovery



Why Horses and What is Equine Assisted Learning?

Equine Assisted Learning partners horses and humans in specifically designed ground activities to foster emotional growth and personal development. EAL provides a unique experiential learning environment to develop and enhance life skills. Participants learn about themselves while participating in specifically designed activities with horses that require the application of certain skills, such as problem solving, assertiveness, and relationship skills. EAL emphasizes the impact of non-verbal communication by using the relationship between humans and horses. Horses are prey animals and due to their natural instincts, they respond honestly to how a person presents himself, both physically and emotionally, and provide immediate feedback. They react to the environment and energy through non-verbal communication, creating an opportunity for us to understand what we are *actually* communicating, instead of what we *think* we're communicating. Horses are very effective in creating a rich learning environment. Their heightened sensitivity, instant feedback and ability to mirror our emotions create opportunities to increase our awareness, congruency and effective use of non-verbal skills. Another reason that horses are used in EAL is that their mere presence, size and power make us aware and can bring an array of emotions to the surface, oftentimes creating an opportunity for individuals to overcome fear and process frustration. Completing a task despite these fears and emotions builds confidence and provides metaphors for working with other challenging and intimidating situations. Horses are social animals and, like humans, have distinct personalities, moods and behaviors. The activities are designed to provide opportunities for the participants to explore how they move through life, how they react and respond to challenges and how they are perceived by others. Horses are non-judgmental and don't lie. If a participant is not congruent with her feelings and actions, the horse will call her out, seeing below the surface presentation and reacting to her authentic emotions. Participants process their feelings in the moment with facilitators while doing the activity, and will take the experience home to reflect on their patterns of behavior and new skills learned. The horses frequently teach us that when we change our approach we can achieve a different outcome. EAL is facilitated by a certified equine specialist and a licensed clinical therapist. EAL has been proven effective in developing and enhancing life skills, such as assertiveness, boundary recognition, communication, confidence, creative thinking, problem solving and effective social interaction.





Special Spirit Equine Therapy Center

is proud to announce

Equine Synergy Programs

SYNERGY is the coming together of a dedicated group of avid horse enthusiasts who understand the profound healing effect that horses have on humans.

We are a team of PATH certified instructors, EAGALA certified licensed Mental Health and Equine Specialists who have created a **comprehensive Equine Therapy Center**, which offers the following programs:

- **Programs for Children and Adults with Special Needs:**
 - Therapeutic horseback riding
 - Camps
 - Arts and crafts
 - Ceramics
 - Life-skill training
- **Substance Recovery Equine Programs:**
 - Equine Assisted Psychotherapy and Personal Development groups
- **Programs for Foster Youth:**
 - Equine Assisted Psychotherapy and Personal Development sessions
 - Therapeutic horseback riding
- **Military Equine Programs:**
 - Equine Assisted Psychotherapy and Personal Development for Military Veterans and their family members
 - Therapeutic horseback riding
 - Retreats
 - Opportunities to volunteer with children enrolled in the Special Needs Programs
- **Individual, Couples, and Family Therapy via Equine Assisted Psychotherapy**
- **Corporate Retreats and Team Building via Equine Assisted Learning**
- **Continuing Education Units for Helping Professionals:**
 - Healing from Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma
 - Resilience Building and Mindfulness
- **Volunteer Opportunities for Youth and Adults**



Therapeutic Horsemanship & Riding

The Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.) describes Therapeutic Horseback Riding as “an equine-assisted activity for the purpose of contributing positively to the cognitive, physical, emotional and social well-being of individuals with special needs. Therapeutic riding provides benefits in the areas of health, education, sport and recreation & leisure. Throughout the world, there are thousands of individuals with special needs who experience the rewarding benefits of horseback riding. Horseback riding rhythmically moves the rider's body in a manner similar to a human gait, riders with physical disabilities often show improvement in flexibility, balance and muscle strength. In addition to the therapeutic benefits, horseback riding also provides recreational opportunities for individuals with disabilities to enjoy the outdoors.”

At **Special Spirit**, PATH certified professional staff and volunteers work closely with riders to ensure safe riding sessions. A new rider is generally assisted by two side walkers who walk alongside the horse, as well as a horse leader. Riding classes are taught by an instructor who has a strong equine background, as well as an understanding of various physical and emotional challenges.





Substance Recovery Equine Program

Special Spirit has been providing Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) to the substance recovery community since 2011. While individual treatment is available, most services are delivered through groups of five to fifteen participants. Each group is an hour to an hour and a half long. Each participant gets to interact one on one with a horse and gain clarity and insight on their behaviors. Treatment goal is generally to build the skills and insight needed to maintain sobriety, and clinical notes are provided by Special Spirit for those participants who are in an inpatient treatment center. Staff will coordinate care with treatment center or other providers as needed and necessary.

Among many covered skills and topics, through EAP, clients learn about trust, control, self-care, respect, effective communication, relationships, honesty, teamwork, mindfulness, and the difference between assertiveness and aggressiveness.



Equine Assisted Psychotherapy works with individuals in recovery because:

- You cannot lie to a horse (a behavior many addicts are expert at)
- Horses reflects the feelings the participants are experiencing, helping participants understand what they are feeling (a skill many addicts struggle with)
- Holistic – engages participants physically, emotionally, and spiritually
- Builds self-esteem and confidence
- Builds self-worth
- Teach to problem solve in the moment
- Horses are non-judgmental and radically accepting of the person they interact with
- Soothing – lower stress levels



Foster Youth Program

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, during the month of September, 2014, there were **415,129 children in Foster Care in the United States.** *

A large percentage of children in foster care have mental health diagnoses as a result of having been physically abused, sexually abused, neglected, or victims of domestic violence. Children who have had traumatic experiences are equally, if not more likely than adults to develop PTSD as they have not yet learned coping strategies to deal with trauma. Children in foster care also present with depression, anxiety, aggressive behaviors, and difficulty forming healthy attachments with adults.

Traditional, clinic setting, "Talk Therapy", while welcomed by some children in foster care, can also be scary and anxiety provoking. Many of these children were removed from their parents because they trusted and confided in adults about having been a victim of neglect or abuse.

How Do Horses Help Foster Youth?

At Special Spirit, **Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP)** is facilitated by Licensed Mental Health practitioners, and an Equine Specialists both certified in the EAGALA model. Horses are incorporated into sessions with foster youth by designing specific activities and challenges related to their therapeutic goals providing a venue outside the traditional confines of a clinic office.

In the wild, horses are prey animals, and are therefore highly sensitive and attuned to their environment. Similarly, many of the children in the foster care system have been affected by human predatory behaviors. Unlike humans who learn to mask their responses to others, horses will pick up on non-verbal cues such as body language, heart rate, respiration, and even facial expression and will react in the moment giving us powerful feedback about ourselves.

EAP and Therapeutic Horseback Riding have been proven to be highly effective in helping foster youth gain confidence, identify risk and protective factors, gain assertiveness and confidence, enhance problem-solving skills, and develop effective social interactions.



SOURCE: Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) FY 2014 data2



MILITARY EQUINE PROGRAMS

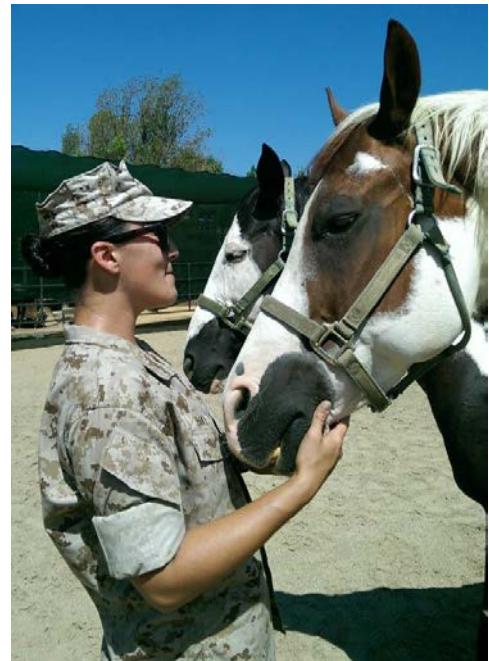
Special Spirit is proud to offer Equine Assisted Psychotherapy, Equine Assisted Learning, and Therapeutic Riding sessions **free of charge** for Military Veterans and their families.

Many Military families face significant challenges as they strive to maintain family stability in the face of transition, change, and uncertainty. Parents, children, siblings, and spouses all cope with these challenges in different ways. Research shows that using horses to facilitate personal growth and development, strengthens coping and communication skills leading to greater resilience, and a more satisfying family life.



Equine Assisted Psychotherapy works because:

- Outdoors with animals vs in clinic setting
- Engage the whole person – physically, emotionally, spiritually and cognitively
- Decreased stereotype
- Experiential
- Builds self-esteem and confidence



Therapeutic Riding works because:

- Increase balance and physical strength
- Provides sensory integration
- Enhance core strength
- Develop a bond with an animal
- Foster confidence and self-esteem
- Special Spirit's Equine Assisted Psychotherapy providers consist of Licensed Mental Health Practitioners and Equine Specialists certified through EAGALA.