

# Healing, Horses and Humans

Outside of Pipe Creek and down Bump Gate Road, aptly named for the bumps that riddle it, there is a 120-acre ranch where a lot of healing is occurring.

It is the site of Triple H Equithera-  
py Center, a charitable organization whose mission is to “provide ... nationally accredited equine assisted activities and therapy in a safe Hill Country environment.” They have been doing just that for the past 15 years.

As Triple H describes, equithera-  
py is a partnership between horse and human to heal, to correct and to improve. Equithera-  
py programs are based on three presumptions—in short, that we all have similar basic needs; that we are all unique individuals shaped by heredity and environ-  
ment; and finally, that a horse survives in harmony with nature by being completely aware of its environment and responding appropriately to it. Such programs bring together attributes of the horse and abilities of the rider.

Triple H offers six equine-assisted therapy programs in all. Participants in the various programs include war veterans, at-risk youth, mental health patients and individuals who need

help with emotional growth and psy-  
chological well-being.

They offer programs like Horses for Heroes, which addresses the physical, mental and emotional trauma of war veterans, and From Fear to Respon-  
sibility, which incorporates equine-facilitated mental health curriculum for troubled and abused children.

Each horse at the center is carefully selected for its qualities. It is then brought together with its rider in activities that meet the physical, men-  
tal, emotional and social needs of the

rider—and helps the person become whole.

The things that happen at Triple H touch everyone involved, not just those the program is designed for. Vol-  
unteers, staff and participants become like family. It takes a lot of volunteers a lot of time to make operations at Triple H possible. In 2009, they put over 6,600 hours into the center.

Volunteering is not a glamorous job: around here it involves anything from office work or horse-handling to cleaning out stalls or helping with feeding. You tell them what you are able to do and they will put you to work. Everyone gives in their own way. It seems they keep giving because of what it gives to them.

Bobbie McCord has been volunteer-  
ing for about a year and says, “I get more out of it than the kids, I think. It has ended up being therapy for me.”

Some of the volunteers come from



Taking care of 19 horses requires a lot of behind-the-scenes work from volunteers. Organization is key, with saddles and tack labeled so that volunteers know what horse and which children they can be used for. Early-morning volunteers help groom and tack horses while the barn staff measures and mixes food and supplements for each horse.



Clockwise from left: Instructor Kyla Nelson has been working at the center for 4 years and packs a lot of knowledge in her little frame. Participants in the program are accompanied by side-walkers, volunteers who provide an ever-present safety net during their riding sessions. Volunteer Bobbie McCord gets her own therapy out of preparing Bo for his day. Meet two in the Triple H cast of characters: Sarah and Daisy, affectionately known as 'the big girls.'



the center's at-risk youth program. Many of these individuals have never experienced the unconditional love that they get from the horses. For them, it is truly a place of healing.

Staff tell the story of one volunteer who first came to Triple H as part of a mandate from an at-risk youth program. Since then, he has been released from the program. However, he continues to show up every Saturday at 8 a.m. to volunteer.

As are most charitable organizations, Triple H is limited by space, money and horses available. Upkeep of the animals is a huge expense for the center. For people who can't give time, there are donor opportunities, from donations of \$75 to sponsor farrier (horseshoeing) care for one horse for a month, to \$2,500 to provide care for a therapy horse for the entire year.

Still, the center has grown quite a bit since its founding in 1995. In the last three years alone, it has tripled in size. This fall they welcomed their largest session of riders to date.

Executive Director Richard Doshier



oversees the business aspects of the center. He put it best when he said, "When I started, I didn't know anything about horses and I still don't. But I do know something just happens out there that heals."

To learn more about Triple H, the programs available or how you can help the center, visit [www.triplehequitherapy.org](http://www.triplehequitherapy.org) or call (830) 510-9515.

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