



## **A Hero Within...**

Why are the horses such a foundational part of our team? Horses are prey animals, designed to be exceptionally sensitive to the environment around them so that they can detect potential threats. A horse has the unique ability to sense energy levels, body language, and emotional state from up to thirty feet away. As herd animals, their survival depends on strong social connections and communication within their herd. This social instinct and sensitivity enable horses to genuinely tune in to the emotions and intentions of those around them, including humans. Horses also possess the remarkable ability to fully

embrace each moment, remaining focused on the present without dwelling on the past or worrying about the future. I'd like to think that if only we, as humans, could act as horses act, we might be in a better place.

Let us explore deeper into how horses truly change lives here at the Riding Institute for Disabled Equestrians.

We serve a diverse population of people who face personal challenges, each with their own unique background, experiences, needs, and aspirations. From veterans learning to cope with PTSD, to children on the autism spectrum. From individuals battling depression, anxiety, addiction, to those who experience physical challenges. Each person who walks through the gate brings their own unique story. But In return, our horses meet each person where they are, without judgment; offering a genuine form of acceptance, connection, and curiosity.

The horses help us to step out of our own minds and become present with them. From the smallest horse to the largest, each seeing the good in people, extending trust to the person's inner self. The self that may be broken, grieving, or lost. It's the moment when you feel a quiet, genuine connection - the moment you begin to believe in yourself, that things can get better, and that healing is possible. They provide us with a glimpse of goodness in this world. When you encounter that special horse for the first time and think, "I connect with this one because she's different and misunderstood like me", you are then able to find a safe space, where you can lower your defenses, feel secure, grounded, loved, and truly heard. Thus, cultivating a bond from our unspoken word that is built on trust and mutual respect, which brings us a sense of hope, peace, comfort, and belonging. Their gentle and selfless nature, yet powerful souls, leave us with amazement and awe. They are their own special hero within.

**If you would like to help and sponsor one of our horse heroes, which provides feed and care for the horses throughout the year, please contact Dee Stiers at 970-876-2987.**