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**“Deepening Our Emotional Intelligence through Groundwork with
Horses: An Integrated Emotional Competency Skills Model”**

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I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand.
~ Confucius, 450 BC



There is an intimate and necessary relation between the process of actual experience and education. ~ John Dewey, 1938



Why Horses?

Horse as a Metaphor:

Equine Assisted Experiential Therapy offers a unique opportunity for the therapeutic use of metaphors. Horses elicit a range of emotions and behaviors in humans, which can be used as a catalyst for personal awareness and growth (Zugich et al., 2002). Horses also offer a variety of opportunities for projection and transference. A horse walking away, ignoring, being distracted by other horses, sleeping, wanting to eat at the wrong time, biting, urinating, and neighing are common horse behaviors to which clients respond. Clients can also often relate to a horse's natural hypervigilance and impulse to escape when the horse feels frightened or threatened (Vidrine et al., 2002). A client's interpretation of a horse's movements, behaviors, and reactions determines the meaning of the metaphor and, as such, provides a portal for the resolution of unfinished business by bringing forth—and addressing—transference reactions in the here-and-now of therapy. Horses can also give accurate and unbiased feedback, mirroring both the physical and emotional states of the participant during exercises, providing clients with an opportunity to raise their awareness and to practice congruence between their feelings and behaviors (Zugich et al.). In addition, whereas it may be fairly easy to dismiss a transference reaction to a therapist or group member as a legitimate reaction to the target's shortcomings or inappropriate actions, it is much more difficult to attribute a transference reaction to the shortcomings, inappropriate behaviors, or premeditated offenses of a horse. As such, transference reactions in equine therapy can often be addressed without some of the confounding interpersonal factors present in more traditional therapies.



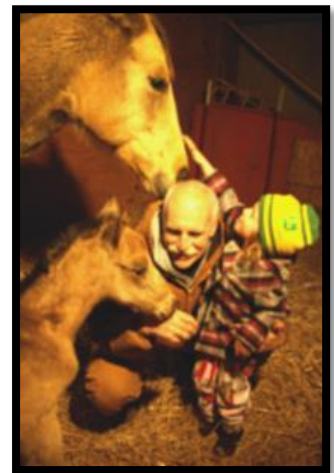
Horse as a horse:

A horse's survival depends on living in the present moment, making accurate assessments, and responding immediately to the environment. Their senses are created and finely tuned for awareness of what is going on around them in all directions. They are large and powerful animals, however their keen senses detect even the tiniest insect on their body. Different from humans, horses respond to what is actually happening. When interacting with humans horses respond to what we are **actually** communicating – not what we think we are communicating.

They appear to know our intention – often before we do. The horse recognizes the slightest tension in our bodies. They effectively read every non-verbal message communicated. This is true whether or not we are aware of what we are communicating. Horses immediately sense when a person is acting anxiously, confidently, aggressively, passively, fearfully, lovingly or honestly. They also pick up on inconsistencies between our actions and our emotions, and always respond **honestly** to what we communicate. Through such genuine nature of their behavior they lend critical **insight into and information about our communication, our emotions, our actions, and our behaviors**. Interacting with horses provides the *opportunity to gain fresh, honest awareness of our authentic self*. Horses have no agenda. They are not impressed by our former accomplishments, nor critical of our past failures. Nor do they care about our power, position, title, degree, or salary. They appear to read our authentic emotional self. **Through their authentic and genuine nature they provide us with the chance to learn what is profoundly difficult to learn from our human relationships**. Horses respond honestly to our human actions which provides us a unique opportunity to develop ourselves and our relationships as we notice the impact we have on the horses. Because of their honesty and immediate feedback horses can be **effective teaching partners**. Horses quickly educate people about how effective their actions are, how consistent they are in communicating, and how clearly they define their goals. Non-authentic and incongruent communication does not work with horses. Both verbal and, even more importantly, non-verbal communications, (body language and facial expressions) are keenly evaluated for **authenticity** by horses. **It is our intent to provide a safe, (emotionally and physically) and confidential environment where persons always have choices in experientially exploring new learning.**

So...why Horses?

1. Horses don't lie and can't over think your real emotions, so they recognize incongruence between behavior and emotion, telling the true story.
2. Their sensitivity to non-verbal stimulus gives them an amazing ability to read people and reflect these emotional states so they immediately offer unconditional, observable, physical feedback to the emotions and moods of the humans around them.
3. As social animals, they provide valuable insight into individual or group dynamics and roles. Successful interaction with horses requires **being present in the moment, communicating clearly and consistently, and having thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that are congruent**.



Experiential Learning Model

Experiential learning is defined as the process of learning through experience. More specifically, learning through reflection of doing. Experiential learning requires an “intent to learn” as well as an “active phase of learning.” The role of emotion and feelings in learning from experience has been recognized as an important part of experiential learning. What is vital in experiential learning then, is that the participant is encouraged to directly involve themselves in the activity and then reflect on their experience using analytic skills in order to gain a better understanding of the new knowledge.

The following is a list of experiential learning principles as noted from the (Association for Experiential Education, 2011, para 4):

- Experiential learning occurs when carefully chosen experiences are supported by reflection, critical analysis and synthesis.
- Experiences are structured to require the student/client to take initiative, make decisions and be accountable for results.

- Throughout the experiential learning process, the student/client is actively engaged in posing questions, investigating, experimenting, being curious, problem solving, assuming responsibility, being creative and constructing meaning.
- Students/clients are engaged intellectually, emotionally, socially, soulfully and/or physically. This involvement produces a perception that the learning task is authentic.
- The results of the learning are personal and form the basis for future experience and learning, generalizability.
- Relationships are developed and nurtured: student to self, student to others and student to the world at large.
- The instructor/therapist/facilitator and student/client may experience success, failure, adventure, risk-taking and uncertainty, because the outcomes of the experience cannot totally be predicted.
- Opportunities are nurtured for students and instructors to explore and examine their own values.
- The therapist's/facilitator/instructor's primary roles include setting suitable experiences, posing problems, setting boundaries, supporting students, insuring physical and emotional safety, and facilitating the learning process.
- The instructor recognizes and encourages spontaneous opportunities for learning.
- Instructors strive to be aware of their biases, judgments and pre-conceptions, and how these influence the student.
- The design of the learning experience includes the possibility to learn from natural consequences, mistakes and successes.
- Although didactic learning of content and concepts is important, learning from an experiential process is at the heart of genuine integration.
- In experiential learning, the facilitator/instructor guides rather than directs the learning process where the interest of clients/students is naturally drawn to their own insights and problem resolutions, (learning).

The Effectiveness of Equine-Assisted Experiential Therapy

Participants of equine assisted experiential therapy frequently show significant and stable reductions in overall psychological distress and enhancements in psychological well-being from pretest to posttest and follow-up measures. They reported fewer psychological symptoms and reductions in the intensity of their psychological distress. They reported being:

- a) more oriented in the present;
- b) better able to live more fully in the here-and-now;
- c) less burdened by regrets, guilt, and resentments;
- d) less focused on fears related to the future;
- e) more independent; and
- f) more self-supportive.

Evidenced Based

Since 1999, an evidence-base for equine assisted activities and therapies (EAAT) has been developing that focuses on the use of equines (generally horses) for adjunct treatment in a variety of human health and behavioral health conditions. (Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association [EAGALA], 2013; Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, International [PATH,Intl.] 2013. (The Practitioner Scholar: Journal of Counseling and Professional Psychology)

In addition, an international database containing results of over several hundred research studies on equine-assisted activities (EAA) continues to expand. There is a growth in international media that reflects the scientific exploration of a growing number of behavioral and social scientists who are

interested in the treatment of human, social and behavioral health matters, as well as general health conditions asking, “Why horses? What is it about horses and why do they have such an impact in treatment?” Currently there are increased efforts in research being pursued by non-profit groups such as the Horse and Human Research Foundation [HHRF], 2013, Chagrin, Ohio, who are looking at the influence the inclusion of equine has on the treatment of a variety of behavioral health conditions.

Various **acronyms** are associated with the inclusion of equine partners in health and behavioral health related services. Examples include

- **EAAT**: equine assisted activities and therapy
- **EAA**: equine assisted activities
- **EAP**: equine assisted psychotherapy
- **EAET**: equine assisted experiential therapy
- **EBEP**: Equine-Facilitated Body and Emotion-Oriented Psychotherapy

Manual Based Models:

Due to the research compiled by therapists in the behavioral health field (Johansen/Siv Grethe/Wang/Elisabeth/Binder/Per-Einar/Malt/Fredrik) the integration of horses into therapy when conventional therapy has proven unsuccessful, is becoming ideal for clients.

“The horse’s high sensitivity and responsiveness to human body language is used as an aid for the patient to improve awareness of his or her emotions, bodily responses, and communication. Gradually the client demonstrates more consistent behavior, improves nonverbal and verbal communication skills, becomes more self-confident and assertive with increased problem-solving skills, and functions better with fewer mentally distressing symptoms.”

Below are a couple examples of manual based curriculum for the application of equine services. Whether they are used in whole or in part, they can serve as a guide and valuable resource for practitioners when developing their own therapy manual/programs.

I have used similar materials in the development of our Little River Ranch, LLC programs. Having access to such materials has proven to be extremely helpful in exploring structure and program development to include: types of horses to utilize, how to present concerns and specific goals for a session, and the development of our overall focus.

Manual Specific Focus/Presenting Concerns

- Trauma (EAP)
- PTSD (EAP)
- Children and Adolescent Social Skills Building (both clinical and non-clinical populations) (EAP & EAL)
- Organizational and Team Develop Skills (EAL)
- Addiction
- Communication Skills
- Relationship and Boundary Skills

Manuals

- EAGALA, (Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association) (Kane , 2007; DiGiacomo,
- EAGALA & Ranch, 2012; Pendry & Roeter's: Child Social Competency Work, (2012); www.EAGALA.com
- HEAL, (Human and Equine Assisted Learning) (Shambo, 2013) www.humanequinealliance.com
- Liability Resources: HUB International: (Mark Fredricksen); (Phone (951) 765-62-10; Toll Free (800) 422-6210 Certification (EAGALA: Phone (801) 754-0400
- Equine Assisted Services are performed in a variety of disciplines, however two basic forms are generally incorporated; "**Riding**" or "**ground work**."

A word regarding formalizing/ "*manualizing*" the process; it appears *important to not lose the simplicity, practicality and common sense* of work working with humans and horses, as we do not want to diminish the *inherent psycho/social value of the horse and herd*; yet it is difficult to obtain the financial resources to support such work without a "evidence-based" foundation for such work.

Clinical Setting

- Residential treatment milieu, (substance Abuse and co-occurring mental health disorders)
- IOP day treatment groups
- Common out-patient populations, (individuals, couples, families and groups)
- Non-clinical populations, (relationship enhancement, team building, communications skills building, etc.)
- *Not appropriate for patients with thought disorders that include psychosis*

Introduction to Little River Ranch, LLC



- Our Equine Assisted Services Team
 - General structure and roles of each member
 - Equine Specialist, (one or two)
 - Mental Health Professional, (one or two)
 - Other, (staff from the referring facility, volunteers, etc)
- Applications
 - ***Adjunct treatment program*** services provided for residential client populations
 - Ex; Formally Milagro Women's Treatment Facility, (currently Vizown Recovery Center for Women) 24 bed facility offering 90 day treatment for multi-dimensional treatment of addiction, other co-occurring mental disorders and trauma related needs; located in Pink, Ok, (20 mile east of Norman/10 miles west of Tecumseh, Ok.
 - Provided a twelve week structured program focused on affect, (emotional) regulation skills development, incorporating milieu group and family engagement in the treatment.
 - ***Ex; Professional Development*** services providing licensed mental health and other human services professional, (teachers, nurses and other medical staff, organizational management personnel, etc.) continuing educational professional training.
 - Provided a private mental health facility and additional contracted licensed mental health professionals a day of developing team building skills; primarily using the emotional regulation, development of group cohesiveness and effective communication and problems solving strategies.
 - ***Ex; Special forces paratrooper squadron from New Mexico***, providing team building, development of trust and cohesiveness, and effective communication and problem solving skills. In addition, individual family services ie. working through communications regarding family relationship needs during a period of R & R pre-deployment. (changed some of the punctuation)

Focus for exercises: Emotional Competencies and Self-efficacy/Authentic Self

Emotional Competencies are defined for the purpose of this presentation as those developed in the works of Daniel Goleman's, (Emotional and Social Intelligence, 2005, Primal Leadership 20013), and derived from earlier works of two American psychologists Peter Salavey and John Mayer's 1990 "*emotional quotient*" and "*rational intelligence*."

Emotional (and Social) Intelligence: Daniel Goleman

Quadrant 1: SELF UNDERSTANDING

- IDENTIFYING FEELINGS
- EVALUATING MOOD FROM MOMENT TO MOMENT
- AWARENESS OF SELF-TALK
- INSIGHT INTO STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES
- *MINDFULNESS, (AWARENESS OF EMOTIONS & FEELINGS)*

Quadrant 2: **SELF-REGULATION & SELF-CONTROL**

- MANAGING FEELINGS
- POSITIVE EMOTIONS
- NEGATIVE EMOTIONS
- URGES, (fight/flight-avoidance)
- *MINDFULNESS, (APPLICATIONS OF EMOTIONAL REGULATION)*

Quadrant 3: **UNDERSTANDING OTHERS**

- EMPATHY
 - **Empathy**; the ability to care beyond one's own needs and wants and "tune-in" to the *experiences, needs and wants* of others (peers &/or family.)
 - Empathic children/teens/adults do better with their peers, as well as experience significantly less conflicts with peers; even with "difficult people."
 - People can be expected to be more self-centered, (self-oriented/self-conscious) the lower their self-esteem and emotional adjustment, (emotional intelligence: emotional awareness and emotional control). (*Daniel Goleman—Emotional Intelligence*)
 - Empathy is a strength and an asset toward surviving and thriving in any environment
- LISTENING SKILLS, (verbal & non-verbal)
- RECOGNIZING SUBTLE SOCIAL CUE

Quadrant 4: **MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS**

- COMMUNICATION
- INITIATING
- NEGOTIATING AND REGULATING CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I will learn.
~ Benjamin Franklin, 1750

Session Goals and Objectives:

- Provide participants the opportunity for an enhanced awareness of the value of *experiential learning* as an adjunct to traditional psychological treatment modalities.
- Provide a demonstration of an *integrated model of psycho-educational-didactic and experiential learning* through *equine assisted services*.

Session One: Exercise 1

Self Awareness through Initial Contact with Horses

Introduction and Assessment

Session Goal: Initial orientation to equine assisted services for residents/participants, establish rapport, and begin to focus on **Emotional Resonance. Intra-personal skills building: Initial self-assessment**, (Self-awareness, inside and outside body awareness).

The following Affective Domains are relevant to sessions I & II

<u>Affective Domain Relationship</u>	<u>Neural Circuit/Prime behavior</u>	<u>Connection with Horses</u>
1. Body Awareness	Fear /sense of safety Primed for escape /freeze	Self-awareness; baseline; meeting & acquainting; respect & trust; boundaries
2. Boundaries	Rage when trapped; Primed to fight	and self-protection; Emotional Resonance

Session Objective: Gain an enhanced awareness and capacity to assess new or novel situations, better understand one's affective blocks and barriers, learn through observation, and work through developing an increased awareness of their full range of emotions. Begin self-gauging with likert scale (1-10) the level/intensity of their emotions.

Note to EAL Team Members: During this session begin gathering information that may be helpful later in the processing sessions, (i.e.; who seemed eager to participate, who discussed/shared their experiences, participant non-verbal communications/body language.)

Session Overview:

- Welcome the members to the session.
- Quickly make introductions
 - Facilitation team members and their roles;
 - Client organization staff and their roles
- Discuss housekeeping information (where rest rooms are located, refreshments, etc.)
- Check in – each client introduces self and shares a thought, feeling, etc. about being here today
- Talk about the client's role and responsibilities
- Talk about the program flow – provide an overview
- Introduce Personal Reflections Journal and hand out one to each client with pen (if appropriate)

- Provide a quick overview of the equine assisted therapy approach and why we believe it will be helpful to achieve the therapeutic goals and objectives agreed upon
- Provide information about the various roles – observer, client, etc.
- Discuss the **construct of self-assessment through self-awareness.**
- Introduce the **concept of an emotional barometer and personal feelings measurement.**
- Process how the group members feel about this approach – discuss any concerns, anxiety as well as uncover any past horse experience
- Move to activity pasture and set up the first equine assisted exercise

Exercise/Method:

"Select and Halter" exercise – group members are asked to take a lead rope and a halter with them out into the round pen, select a horse from those in the round pen, halter the horse, and bring them back to the middle of the pasture/area where there is a set of poles that form a rectangle. Walk the horse into the rectangle and spend some time, (1 to 3 minutes) **"being with your horse of choice"**. Then return the horse back into the round pen and remove its halter. Begin to journal regarding the following:

1. What was your **emotional barometer readings #** during the initial "fire pit" orientation? (Physical: stomach, pulse); (Feelings: ex: anxious, excited, etc.).
2. What was your **emotional barometer readings #** as you enter the large arena? (Physical: stomach, pulse); (Feelings: ex: anxious, excited, etc.).
3. What was your **emotional barometer readings #** as you entered the round pen? (Physical: stomach, pulse); (Feelings: ex: anxious, excited, etc.).
4. What was your **emotional barometer readings #** as you initially made eye contact or physical contact with the horse? (Physical: stomach, pulse); (Feelings: ex: anxious, excited, etc.).
5. What was your **emotional barometer reading #** during your individual time with the horse in the pole rectangle? (Physical: stomach, pulse); (Feelings: ex: anxious, excited, etc.). How would you describe that moment of time regarding increase or reduction of comfort?

Processing this exercise would include questions such as:

- What was it like to step into the pasture for the first time?
- What was it like to be asked to do something that you didn't know how to do?
- What was it like to not be given step-by-step instructions?
- How does the concept of powerlessness and unmanageability appear in this activity?
- How did you work through those feelings?
- How about surrender?
- Where there any moments that you felt the need for or concern for physical or emotional boundaries? If so, when? What was going on?

Session 1: Exercise II

Self-Awareness and the Power of Mindfulness in Relationship Negotiation

Session Goal: Improve one's understanding of self in relationship systems and structures, and introduce appropriate steps toward negotiation of needs.

The following Affective Domains are relevant to sessions III & IV

Affective Domain

Neural Circuit/Prime behavior

Stage of Horses Relationship

Middle Stage: "Emotional Regulation"

3. Triggers-Defenses (Divided Self)	Panic/separation anxiety Primed for frantic attempts to fit in/to belong/ fear of rejection	Figuring out relational dynamics, muddling with friction & social discomfort, Noticing & dealing with disruptions in connections, Who is leading? Is the leader kind and fair? Balance of assertiveness & sensitivity; clear & congruent communication.
4. Initiative-Assertive (Yin-Yang)	Play-rough & tumble, dominance hierarchy, Who moves who?	

Session Objectives: Improve the clients' abilities to work in dyadic (human/horse) relationship and work together (human teams/horse) to support their success of sobriety. Individual and group members work to identify new skills and behaviors necessary in recovery through continued enhance self-awareness, self-regulation and connectedness, (beginning of negotiated relationships).

Session Overview:

- Provide housekeeping reminder
- Review previous session
- Check-in: ask clients to share a challenge or success that they had with the previous session (this involves no judgment or challenge on behalf of the facilitation team or client organization team)
- Ask each member to share from last session's assignment
- Share steps for this session
- Discuss what this step means to them and their relationships
- May inquire briefly about: Self-esteem, faith, hope, and relationships
- Introduce session activity

Method: Exercises

Exercise Two:

Open-ended Non-agenda Reflective (mindfulness skills) Session Exercise: One person in the round pen with two horses "at liberty," (loose without halters), working out their connection and mutual selection by themselves and one of the horses.

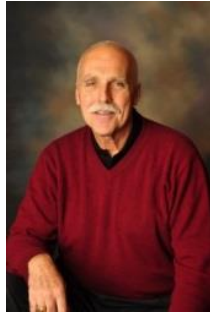
- The person will enter the round pen and stand in the inner circle of cones,
- While remaining in the inner circle the person will focus on their own emotional arousal level, (1-10), while also posturing themselves within the herd; encouraged to utilize mindfulness skills to assess self and equine partner's arousal levels;
- After a time of one (1) minutes the person will identify the horse with whom they *sense a connection* , at which time the other horse will be removed from the round pen,
- For a period of 2 minutes the person, without any additional equipment, will be encouraged,(with the remaining horse) to negotiate a sense of:
 - Connection/ relationship
 - Boundaries, (personal space bubble)
- Encouraged to utilize mindfulness skills to assess self and equine partner's arousal levels; and to initiate changes/shifts in such arousal levels,

Process questions may include:

- Emotional arousal level as you entered the cone circle, (1-10)?
- Emotional arousal level as you worked toward joining the herd, (1-10)?
- How did you feel about vulnerability and what internal statements/thoughts were going through your mind? (rejection? /belonging? /connection?)

- How you choose the particular horse and what is it about that horse that connected you to her?
- Is this similar or different to how you handle social/interpersonal relationships in real life?
- How did you feel during this exercise?
- Did you find it difficult? Easy?
- What was the process you used to problem solve this issue? Or other issues that came up?
- What did you learn about yourself during this exercise? About each other?
- How do the behaviors exhibited during this exercise relate to the ones exhibited in your real life?
- Did the feelings of hopelessness play into your behaviors, attitude, and results during this activity?
How does that relate or not relate to your recovery program?

Facilitators



Paul Tobin, Ph.D., an Oklahoma health services and organizational consulting psychologist, has provided professional mental health and organizational consulting services for over thirty-five years. He works daily with individuals, couples and families as well as organizations, (corporations, government agencies, law enforcement, universities and other educational systems) helping them in the application of *emotional regulation, effective personal and organizational management and leadership skills*. He is a co-owner and executive of a *private counseling and consulting practice*, (www.ccoffices.com). Dr. Tobin has also served in professional leadership roles that include: President of the Oklahoma Psychological Association,

Chair and member of the Oklahoma Board of Examiners of Psychologist, and former executive director of a community counseling and crisis management agency, Edmond Youth Council, Inc. His work includes training clinical and consulting psychologists in the areas of both mental health and organizational leadership abilities. Dr. Tobin is an active member of the Oklahoma Psychological Association; and the Division of Counseling Psychologists and Society of Consulting Psychologists of the American Psychological Association. Recently, he has begun to integrate his work with horses into *equine assisted learning* (EAL) services. He is fully certified through the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association, (EAGALA) as both a mental health and equine specialists. Through his work at *Little River ranch, LLC*, (www.lrrllc.com) he provides human relations and interpersonal skills EAL based training to various professional groups in mental health, business and educational fields. His current emphasis in such services focuses on professional development of both clinical and leadership skills through EAL/C services. In 2013 he and other members of the Little River Ranch, LLC began providing equine assisted learning services as a continued educational workshop for licensed mental health professionals, (licensed professional counselors, licensed clinical social workers and licensed drug and alcohol counselors).



Julie Tobin-Branham, MA is currently the owner/operator of Sequoyah Tree Consulting. Prior to her current position she has worked in the field of substance abuse and mental health for over eight years, providing both adult and adolescent treatment and administrative leadership in residential settings. Julie was previously the Executive Director of Milagro Ranch, (privately owned women's residential substance abuse and mental health treatment facility in Oklahoma). She was a member of the original team who designed, implemented, and led the program to its success as a leader in the field of integrated substance abuse, mental health, and trauma

informed treatment. Prior to her leadership role at Milagro she worked with Norman Alcohol and Drug Treatment Center in a variety of both treatment and administrative roles. Julie has worked in a variety of leadership roles for state and national offices, including the Norman Alcohol and Drug Treatment Center, (NADTC,) where she served in the roles of Performance Improvement Coordinator and Change Leader on a national level. She also represented NADTC nationally as their Niatx Change Leader, as well as a Change Agent for the Co-Sig grant with the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. In addition to her professional services at NADTC she served as a Performance Improvement Coordinator as well as Director of Triage Services for Children's Recovery Center in Norman, Oklahoma. She is a graduate of the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Leadership Academy. As a member of Little River Ranch, LLC Equine Services she has provided valuable support in both direct service delivery and creative program development. Julie has a master's degree in counseling psychology from the University of Central Oklahoma. As a member of our equine assisted learning team, Julie brings many years of both horsemanship and human relations skills experience.



Jared Branham is an Oklahoma Certified Paramedic and Master Firefighter for the Norman Fire Department. Prior to his entry into his current critical care employment role as a “first responder,” Jared has owned and managed several successful businesses. His knowledge and experience in both the equine and cattle ranching fields has made him a “sought after” consultant by many local ranching families and business owners. Currently, in addition to his firefighter career position he is the owner and chief executive of a privately owned roofing company in central Oklahoma. Jared is most consistently recognized in his work, both with animals and critical human care services, by his strength of character, discipline, and integrity. It is such traits that drive him in both in his professional and personal life. He has been an avid horseman for over 25 years. Jared is a vital part of our equine assisted learning team.