



## **Windhaven Therapeutic Riding** **2018 → The year in review**

AND

## **Some things to expect in 2019**

By Rodger Morrison, WHTR Governing Board Chairman

2017 came to a close with the Christmas Party in December. Some great conversation and pictures, good food and a time to say THANKS to all the wonderful WHTR volunteers. We also had a significant donor step forward with a donation that made many of the events and activities detailed below in 2018 possible.

January 2018 began the second year of operation for WHTR and was marked by multiple snowfalls here at 850 feet elevation. We had snow piled 7+ feet high along the driveway and many of the snows were on Friday night or Saturday which made planning for classes challenging. The snow also made the parking of vehicles difficult due to limited space.

At the beginning of 2018, WHTR was still using PATH guidelines and we also had folks certified with CHA. But changes were coming as WHTR evolved to be on the cutting edge of the program best suited to help Veterans with PTSD and TBI. Marilee and Denice went to Texas to the home of Natural Lifemanship and completed an intensive course. WHTR finally had a solid, scientific based EAL (Equine Assisted Learning) program that we can use into the foreseeable future.

In February the weather began to cooperate and we were able to start classes. Because of our outstanding Volunteers and our equine partners, we were able to do three classes each Saturday during most of 2018 with four to seven Veterans in each class. Please visit the WHTR Facebook page for pictures and individual testimonies from Veterans about the positive effects of WHTR using the Natural Lifemanship EAL format.

March saw us at the Horse Expo with a couple of demonstrations by our Veterans of NL techniques with both Volunteers and Veterans manning the booth. This is a great time to coordinate with other folks in the equine community.

April was a difficult month for one of our equine partners – Rascal. He was injured by another horse who was on loan to WHTR for the winter months. His severe leg injury had us wondering if Rascal would survive. With daily care for almost four months, using her many years of experience as an ER Nurse, Denice was able to save Rascal for helping future Veterans. The downside was that Rascal was on the “injured reserve list” for almost four months. The horse causing the injury to Rascal was returned to his home in Oregon shortly after the injury.

As the year progressed, more Volunteers (Olivia, Mary, Diane, Linda, Pamela, Roseann, Graci, Chris, Jen, Karin and Rodger) stepped up to the challenge of getting through the various levels of NL certification. WHTR only exists because of the outstanding efforts and dedication of our 100% volunteer cadre. Many are at some point in this NL certification effort but the first to achieve full certification in November 2018 was Marilee Donovan, RN, PhD – Director of Education for WHTR (also Board Secretary and Former Board Treasurer).

For WHTR, May and June were filled with classes and a growing satisfaction that the NL form of EAL (Equine Assisted Learning) was really having a great effect on the lives of our Veterans and as many Volunteers will admit, on them as well.

For the Morrison-Larson family, May, June and July were months filled with preparations for the Wedding of Elijah and Lexi at Windhaven Farm. If we were not working on activities related to Veterans, we were working on projects related to the wedding. This included the building of a 24,000 gallon pond as a backdrop to the wedding. Lots of this work could not have been accomplished without the daily efforts of my two grandsons, Braden and Dylan to whom I shall be forever grateful.

August saw the wedding ceremony and reception at Windhaven Farm and the continuation of the WHTR classes. As a reward for their progress, a number of WHTR Veterans were able to spend a full weekend and a number of follow up days in July and August with the Clark County Mounted Archers – many of whom are Veterans. Memories that will be with them always. The progression of our Veterans from the EAL system of learning to participating in more challenging equine activities like the Mounted Archery is a great option for many of the future WHTR graduates. We will continue to search out quality programs for our graduates.

July and August are the months for the gathering and storing of the fresh cut grass hay for the coming winter. Three major donors (two in Oregon and one in WA) contacted WHTR. Combined, we moved over 1,000 bales of hay to storage. Most of it to Windhaven Farm and some in storage at a volunteer's barn until it is needed in January 2019. This is the most donated hay we have received and the donors indicated that if we can find the labor to load in the field in 2019, we will again be the beneficiaries of their 2019 crop. These donations saved WHTR over \$6000 in feed costs. Our equine partners will be well fed and prepared for the cold and wet months ahead.

September saw Rodger Morrison heading to the Wild Horse Sanctuary, East of Redding, CA for a four day intensive training with NL founder Tim Jobe and his son Tanner. Along with NL representatives from five states, we had the opportunity to work with wild mustangs fresh off the range using NL techniques. Way too much to write here but catch me with a cup of coffee and I will tell you the story and share some pictures. September also saw Rodger retire as an Insurance Agent after almost 20 years so that he can concentrate on working with WHTR .... helping fellow Veterans with PTSD and TBI.

October was a great month as many of the WHTR Veterans made major progress in their EAL. A number of Veterans advanced to equine partners with required new skills to be learned by that Veteran. This provided new opportunities that helped the Veteran grow in their ability to handle the challenges they face. October also saw a new addition to the WHTR Governing Board with Josh Dennis as the new Treasurer. Josh (a Marine Combat Veteran with multiple tours in Afghanistan) is a commercial banker with Columbia Bank, is on the Governing Board for the Clark County Veterans Center and he is solidly dedicated to helping fellow Veterans – especially those with PTSD and TBI. A second significant event occurred in October with the discovery that SHADOW is with foal. The expected delivery date is 1 April 2019 --- give or take a few weeks. Shadow with a foal will be a significant event for many of our current and future Veterans. Also in October, WHTR was honored by the Nonprofit Network of SW Washington with a Nonprofit EXCELLENCE AWARD as a Grassroots Organization having a significant impact on the community. As with all awards, this one was only possible because of the selfless giving of time, energy and innovation by the wonderful cadre of volunteers at WHTR.

November was highlighted by our first participation in the Vancouver Veterans Day Parade. We faced a number of challenges and most were overcome. A great deal was learned about parades in general when you are riding your equine partner and we will be much better prepared for the 2019 Veterans Day Parade. Due to the dedicated efforts of Volunteer Diane Lewis, RN, in conjunction with Providence Health Systems – WHTR was the recipient of a new cardiac defibrillator. This defibrillator, stored at WHTR, will be available to the local community as well as our Veterans and Volunteers in case of a cardiac event. Also in November, as a special recognition reward for outstanding service and dedication as a Volunteer for the last three years, Graci Dissen began and completed her lessons at Windhaven Farm on how to ground drive Dream Spinner Southern Belle with 25 foot lines in the WHF arena. This was followed by her first experience of cart driving “Belle” at Command Performance with owner Tim Wigren - a true friend and supporter of WHTR. Becoming a cart driver has been a dream of Gracie's for a long time. Mission accomplished!

December was graduation month for two of the Veterans (Kurt and Karin). A short awards ceremony was held at the 2018 Christmas Party where another former graduate Bo Russel demonstrated his ground driving ability (with 25 foot lines) with his equine partner – Dream Spinner Southern Belle. Veterans Classes were completed mid-month. For the remainder of December, volunteers are assisting with the exercising and general daily maintenance of our equine partners until our new series of classes begins in February 2019.

## **SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2019.....**

January.....Daily exercising of the horses and barn chores plus a couple of Saturdays for the training of Volunteers in Natural Lifemanship techniques. Preparation for beginning of new classes in February.

February.....New classes start

March.....2019 Horse Expo and a major fundraiser for WHTR sponsored by Moulton Falls Winery and Cider House.

April.....Expected delivery of Shadow's new foal

May.....In conjunction with the Long Beach Saddle Club and a national organization (Equine Trail Sports) the first of two Buckle Series Rides at Long Beach on 17 – 19 May.

June.....The second series of new Veterans Classes begin

July.....4<sup>th</sup> of July BBQ and Barn Watch till 0100 Hours at WHTR to keep our equine partners calm during what has become a very intense evening of legal and illegal fireworks in close proximity to WHTR

August.....2<sup>nd</sup> session of Veterans Classes ends, preparation for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final session of classes for 2019. Preparations begin for a four day Intensive Training at WHTR in NL as it relates to Veterans with PTSD and TBI. We expect this training to be attended by four to six other similar programs from around the US who use NL EAL as their training platform. The second Buckle Series ride at Long Beach

September...Four Day NL training and the beginning of the third and final 12 week training session for 2019

October.....Veterans Classes continue

November....Veterans Day Parade

December....End of 2019 Christmas Party and Graduation Ceremony.

**ITS ABOUT HELPING A VETERAN SMILE AGAIN!!!!!!!!!!**