



KITUWAH

EQUESTRIAN PROGRAM

Our Mission

To provide innovative equine assisted therapies and equestrian programs to the people of Far Western North Carolina.

OVERVIEW

This program was created to offer sincerely needed alternative therapies and activities for people of all ages, and abilities in Far Western NC communities focusing on the Qualla Boundary, Swain Co., and Jackson Co. This program is designed to preserve and implement ancient Kituwah values and concepts while serving not only Kituwah people, but surrounding communities of people as well. We will offer nationally accredited equine assisted therapies, horsemanship classes and training, host clinics, establish the first US Pony Club for our area, and the first competitive Equestrian team in far Western North Carolina. (Non-collegiate)

Goals

- To practice in a tangible way the Ancient Kituwah concept of the relationship between self, animal, earth, and the spiritual being interdependent.
- To re-discover and nurture a uniquely Kituwah horse culture.
- To establish and implement the first US Pony Club (“Where it all Begins”) in far Western North Carolina.
- To re-introduce and nurture the Cherokee/Choctaw breed of horse into our community.
- To offer robust equine assisted therapy programs certified through PATH International (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International) and EAGALA (Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association) that can be used to treat or assist for the following purposes but not limited to: substance abuse prevention, substance abuse recovery, PTSD, victims of domestic violence, children and adults with autism, veterans,

restorative justice, people living with physical challenges, hippo therapy, emotional discovery and well-being, at-risk youth, grief counseling, assertiveness training, behavioral therapy, and beyond.

- To give a home and a job to appropriate horses that need to be rescued or reassigned.
- To cultivate the first competitive rider at Tryon International Equestrian Center hailing from Far WNC.
- To Influence a network of interdependent businesses, trades, and professionals related to the equestrian industry.
- To network with regional organizations to establish land reserves for Equestrian use only in an ongoing effort to preserve lands in Far WNC.
- **To help people connect to themselves through the gentle processes of working with horses to establish mutual trust.**

Helping people connect to themselves will help people connect to others. If successful, this gives birth to a more self-assured and empathetic community. Working with horses can heal old wounds. It stirs your soul from the bottom up with a graceful, gentle, and powerful release using non-verbal intuitive communication skills, by requiring nothing less than complete honesty and clear intent.

This way of being is one of the core principles of ancient Kituwah social culture. It has been buried under centuries of rapid change and survivalism. Consequently, the absence of this way of living has left us struggling for self-expression, cultural expression, cultural identity, spiritual connection with the natural world, and self love. These systemic results have been widely observed. Kituwah people as well as the people of Far WNC are burdened by historic grief and trauma.

We want to breakdown the barrier of privilege associated with equestrian activities and offer the people of our area access to a proven alternative therapy and activity that uses nonverbal communication, empathy, and clear intent. In order to achieve these three skills, the participant must become consciously aware of their emotional state and figure out how to align their emotions with their horse, to gain the trust of their horse, and then to be the leader in the relationship. To become conscious of one's emotions can be a very emotional task indeed. To harness your emotions or to transform your emotions from one state to the other, in order to achieve leadership with an animal much more powerful, much more responsive, and much more physically capable than you are, is transformative. Working with horses provides a unique opportunity for growth, healing, and self-awareness all at once.

-Natalie Smith Executive Director K.E.P

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