

RED Arena's reading leads to \$25k grant

Gary Zupancic
Staff Reporter

Reading directly led to RED Arena receiving a generous \$25,000 donation.

RED Arena, a Dripping Springs nonprofit that serves children and adults in physical, occupational and speech therapy with the use of horses, announced a new reading program for children called "REDy to Read."

In its press release, RED Arena stated, "Children can get discouraged if they make a mistake while reading out loud, but not if it's to a horse. Children of all ages and abilities can sign up for a time to read to one of our friendly horses. Children will build self-confidence and reading skills at the same time... A horse listens and offers no criticism back to the reader and offers encouragement just by listening. (It helps) them in a non-judgmental way when mistakes are made."

It was this program that

caught the eye of the Harry L. Willet Foundation, a private non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. The foundation while reading the Century News, came across the article about the REDy to Read program at the Red Arena.

"They said that they read the press release and thought it was a great idea to have kids to read to a horse and the family trust wanted it to be offered for free to everyone. I can't believe it," Jennifer Young said.

"(The donation) is just for the REDy to Red program. We can get two more people to be trained and it offered up more spots for the program. We were charging \$12.50 an hour and now it is free," Young said.

"This gives us a buffer to do school visits... (it's) more cost effective to take the horses and staff to them. Walnut Springs Elementary and some pre-schools get visits from the program. But now the op-



SUBMITTED PHOTO

A student read to a horse

opportunities to visit schools will increase," Young said.

But the whole opportunity almost didn't happen. "You get a call out of the blue and hey, we're gone to give you \$25,000... (but)

See RED, Page 8

RED...

(From Page 1)

Monday and Tuesdays are very busy and no one checked the office phone, where the foundation had left messages," Young said. On Wednesday the Willet Foundation somehow got a hold of the telephone number for the barn and got a hold of Young and told her they were about ready to give up on the organization, but was glad they finally got a hold of them to donate to the RED Arena. "That was really exciting," Young said.

Since 2008, Jennifer Young, a therapist by trade, formed RED Arena and has been helping those in need in the surrounding area by offering equine therapy. The use of horses can be

a great tool to help with those who in need of therapy for ADD/ADHD

- Autism, Cancer
- Cerebral Palsy
- Down Syndrome
- Eye Disorders
- Head Injury,
- Learning Disabilities
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Speech Disorders
- Stroke

•Traumatic Brain Injuries

•Mental and physical disabilities

•Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP), a form of counseling that incorporates horses within a therapeutic environment supporting emotional growth and healing.

Licensed therapists and

equine professionals work with clients and horses to address treatment goals. •Job training for those with disabilities, teaching horse care, such as grooming, feeding and taking physical care of horses. •Reading improvement through the "REDy to Read to a Horse" program for children and adults.

For more information on RED Arena or the free REDy to Read program, please contact:

RED Arena
1601 Bell Springs Road
Dripping Springs, TX
78620

Phone: 512.807.6505
Email: info@REDarena.org



Beyond disabilities at the RED Arena

Gary Zupancic
Staff Reporter

Helping those who are battling disease or overcoming other physical and mental deficiencies in one way or another is the RED Arena's purpose. Helping though, in a method different from hospitals or physical training facilities. Equine assisted physical therapy or therapy with horses is used to help the patients.

Originally formed by Jennifer Young, a physical therapist in 2008, with her horse and volunteers to help six children with their physical therapy. The equine assisted training not only succeeded, but grew, with wonderful facilities and gentle horses. It helps patients gain confidence and self esteem on the back of a horse. Their interactions with therapists and volunteers are strengthened along with the minds and bodies, all with a horse's help.

The 501(c) non-profit has many therapies in use under the supervision of licensed therapists. One therapy is Physical and Occupational Therapy where the patient, placed on the back of the horse, through the motion of the horse, can improve their balance, posture range of motion, mobility, and motor skills. This can

autism or adults with a stroke.

"Adults with a stroke can balance on a horse...We've even seen dramatic change in those with cerebral palsy," founder Jennifer Young said.

Assisted Equine Counseling is also a therapy used. Where the clients learn about themselves through horse-related activities and interactions and can better understand their emotions.

According to their website, the benefits can help with: ADD/ADHD, Autism, Cancer, Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome, Eye Disorders, Head Injury, Learning Disabilities, Multiple Sclerosis, Speech Disorders, Stroke, Traumatic Brain Injuries and other mental and physical disabilities.

The RED Arena has a lot of trails at the facilities but they're not just for walking or riding. They're themed with cartoon characters or dinosaurs and have stations for dropping big colored balls down pipes and other exercises to help with motor skills on the back of a horse.

"There's one therapy rider with a horse handler, a side walker and a volunteer. That's three adults to one rider. It's pretty labor intensive for one hour with the rider," Young said.

have a "mental health area" where the area is quiet and calm. The area is for kids who have "traumatized, abused, removed and placed with foster parents, families going through bad times," Young said about the child's treatment at RED Arena.

They also offer job training for those with disabilities, teaching horse care, such as grooming, feeding and taking physical care of horses.

"They learn a skillset to take to any job. We help them with their resume and with practice interviews to help them to relax in the real situation," Young said. People coming through the program have been hired.

One other program is open to the community, "read to a horse," where children or adults can read to a horse without any criticism from the listener.

Helping those with disabilities through the use of horses is a great way to assist those that need the help in a unique way.

For more information please contact:

RED Arena
1601 Bell Springs Road
Dripping Springs, TX 78620

Phone: 512.807.6505
Email: info@RED-



GARY ZUPANCIC

RED Arena is home to equine therapy.



SUBMITTED PHOTO



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Hays Free Press News-Dispatch

156
Shares

HOME

NEWS ▾

SPORTS ▾

OPINIONS ▾

OBITUARIES

SERVICE ADS

PHOTOS

CURRENT ISSUE ▾

CONTACT US ▾

Welcome to the new Hays Free Press/News-Dispatch website! — Read More

151 YOU ARE AT: Home » Community » Free horse therapy program builds confidence in readers

Free horse therapy program builds confidence in readers

Q 1

BY MOSES LEOS III ON MARCH 22, 2017

COMMUNITY



Austin Ear, Nose & Throat Clinic
PEDIATRIC AND ADULT CARE • (512) 268-5282

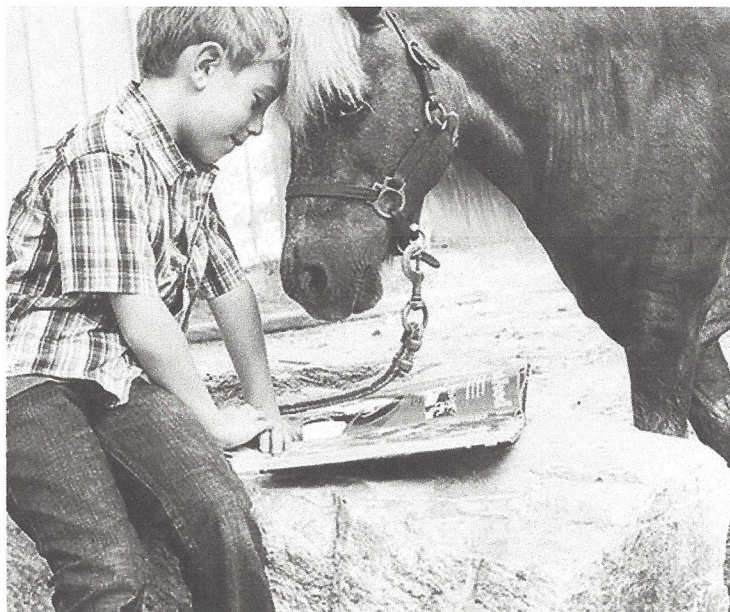
As someone who has worked around horses for many years, Julie Froidcoeur has seen how therapeutic the animals can be for people.

Through RED Arena, a Dripping Springs-based 501-C 3 nonprofit organization, a type of horse-based therapy, or hippotherapy, can now help those who aim to boost their reading confidence.

RED-y To Read is an Equine Facilitated Learning program that began roughly three weeks ago at the organization's 20-acre facility on Bell Springs Road in Dripping Springs.

Froidcoeur said a recent foundation grant allows residents participate in RED-y To Read for free.

The program, which is open to all ages, allows individuals to openly read aloud to one of nine full-sized horses or two miniature horses that are a part of the program.



The RED-y to Read Program at RED Arena in Dripping Springs allows readers of all ages and skill levels to read to horses or minihorses for free as a form of hippotherapy, or horse-based therapy. (courtesy photo)

One of the primary benefits for readers is the ability to build confidence in their abilities without the prospect of being criticized or corrected.

Parents who try to correct younger readers can sometimes discourage them, Froidcoeur said. She added the horses don't criticize, correct or judge, but just listen.

Karen Bailey, RED Arena farm manager and volunteer coordinator, said when the idea of the reading program sprouted, the first goal was to share the arena's resources with others.

156
Shares

RED Arena, which was founded in 2008, serves approximately 110 to 130 people per week who hail from all parts of Central Texas, including Kyle, Buda, Wimberley and Dripping Springs. The facility is a therapeutic riding center that offers hippotherapy to those with learning needs and those with a physical disability.

Participants in the program range in age from four- to 21-years-old. Froidcoeur said the focus is to have the program open to all reading abilities.

The program encourages readers to bring their own books that are at their own reading level. The facility also has books for them to read as well.

"There's older students and young adults who are having reading trouble as well," Froidcoeur said. "It's not just for kids."

Participants who engage in the RED-y To Read program are allowed to read to the animal for an hour. Certified horse trainers observe the animal during the session to ensure the comfort and safety of all.

Many who read to the horses are excited at the opportunity to do so, Froidcoeur said. Children who may not be excited about reading are interested in reading to the animal.

"They are motivated to read to the horse," Froidcoeur said. "Most kids love horses. They get excited about reading to them."

The idea to bring the program to RED Arena began after Froidcoeur learned of other successful reading-to-animal programs.

She said that, in the past, programs offered the chance for readers to improve their skills by reading to dogs, such as the "Read to Chopper" program held weekly at the Wimberley Village Library.

RED Arena began a pilot program in January to see if it could get off the ground. Soon thereafter, the popularity of the program "exploded," Froidcoeur said.

"The kids that have come so far have loved it. Folks that are invited or give it a chance are thrilled with the opportunity," Bailey said. "The parents are receptive to it and the kids are thrilled."

The chance to potentially grow the program is also there, both Froidcoeur and Bailey said.

While RED Arena is not looking for horses now, the opportunity to add more to the reading program could be an idea for the future.

RED Arena is also in the midst of a capital campaign. The growth plan could include looking for a larger plot of land to house a bigger facility with a covered area.

The growth could also extend to expanding RED Arena's program to help injured and disabled veterans.

“Most importantly, we wanted to empower those kids and adults who perhaps don't feel comfortable reading in front of a group ... they can read in front of a horse.” — KAREN BAILEY, RED ARENA FARM MANAGER AND VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR