



ANIMALS AS NATURAL THERAPY

www.AnimalsAsNaturalTherapy.org

✳ **Welcome to Animals as Natural Therapy** ✳ revised 9-06

✳ **We appreciate your interest in supporting this amazing work!** ✳

ANT's Mission Statement

Animals as Natural Therapy strengthens our community by developing healthy, resilient individuals through animal-assisted education and personal growth.

ANT's Vision Statement

We provide a safe nurturing environment where persons practice skills essential for meaningful and successful relationships based on mutual respect, communication, responsibility, and trust. The relationship skills developed with the farm animals carry over into the rest of their lives.

Animals as Natural Therapy's Philosophy

- Animals as Natural Therapy is a program based on the knowledge that animals can teach important life skills: **respect** for self and others, **trust-building**, and clear **communication**. Self-esteem grows rapidly as these vital life skills are successfully practiced. Metaphors relating to life at home develop as we reflect on episodes at the farm. Our entire community gets healthier as a result. For eight years Animals as Natural Therapy has been working with youth and adults, many of the youth considered "at risk" by social services agencies.
- We believe that every being deserves to feel physically and emotionally safe and should be honored and nurtured. Only in this safe environment can a person (or animal) really flourish and develop to their full potential.
- Clear and honest communication is necessary to accomplish successful bonding, teamwork, and healthy relationships.
- Through relationships with caring facilitators and animals, participants are nurtured and trusted, in turn learning to nurture and trust. This trust facilitates the creation of healthy relationships elsewhere.
- At Windy Acres Farm, carefully planned and guided activities help one learn the give and take of **Respect**. Respect must go both ways! One must give respect as well as ask for it from a 1000 pound horse. With our animal partners and human mentors one learns to "read" and understand another while discovering a lot

about ones own needs. Respectful nurturing relationships can replace potentially abusive ones.

- One learns the difficult task of developing **trust** between self and another and how this can transfer to home, school and job. One discovers what makes a good and trusted friend or leader and how our moods and behaviors affect others and their trust in us. One gets to be trusted as they learn to trust.
- One learns to **clearly communicate** what one wants and needs to be successful. Through the caring relationships with staff and animals at Animals as Natural Therapy people practice taking responsibility for their own actions, communicating their needs and building a team.

How Did Animals as Natural Therapy Get Started?

- This program started in 1999 at Windy Acres Farm in Bellingham, WA. with the vision of Sonja Wingard, Abby Soley and Gwen Hunter and the recommendation of Catholic Community Services working with at-risk youth.
- Sonja is the Executive Director of Animals as Natural Therapy and brings 30 years of experience working with people as a nurse, 4-H leader, mother and mentor who has extended this opportunity for healing people's hearts with this innovative program at her farm, Windy Acres.
- Windy Acres is a 100 year-old 5 acre farm, just on the outskirts of Bellingham with peace and seclusion near a city that is rapidly expanding.
- ANT is in its eighth year of operation and achieved its non-profit status in 2002.

The Four Cornerstones of ANT's Programs:

1. The Full Value Contract is discussed and agreed to:

- Keep self and others physically and emotionally safe
- Give and receive feedback
- Work together as a team

2. The intuitive contributions of our horses are honored

- Because horses are prey animals, they are keenly sensitive, intuitive, and vigilant allowing them to be exquisitely attuned to our emotions.
- Horses require complete honesty from their partners. They live in the now and invite us to do the same.

- By responding and reacting to our feelings, horses become our “mirrors” and assist us in a deeper understanding of self and others.
- Each horse is unique with their own issues: ie. Slow to trust, boundary testing, history of abuse, addictions etc.
- Horses are powerful and they instill a natural level of respect.
- Horses promote asking for and accepting help in a non-traditional healing environment.
- Horses and clients seem to choose each other.

3. ALLOWING the role of our Higher Power to be at work

We see the spirit of God at work in all elements of the program. Thus we must allow the horses and a higher power to guide the lessons and allow ah-hah moments and personal self discoveries to happen. We do not control the situations or the outcomes, only assure the safety of all.

4. Take time to find metaphors for life

A key component in these sessions is the process time. We invite our clients to journal about their experience and we facilitate a processing period where we discuss the:

- What?
What happened during the session?
- So What?
What did I think, feel, and do about it?
- Now What?
How will this affect my future choices?

About Safety

- An emotionally and physically safe environment is the only place one can safely challenge themselves to try out new behaviors and to solve problems differently.
- Many of these young women have never experienced this safety in their families or living situations.
- According to Maslow's hierarchy, one cannot reach the point of self-actualization until all the other, more urgent needs are being met.

Who Do We Serve? ages 0-90

Programs Offered

- Private/group sessions after school in fall, winter & spring
- Summer day camps (for 8-15 year olds) and mini Saturday camps in spring & fall (for 3 to 8 year olds)
- Family Farm Days in the spring & fall for women and kids living in shelters.
- Extended Care Facility Visits with adolescents and animals visiting elders year round.
- Recovery Programming for adult and teen women
- Service projects for youth
- College and high school Internships

The New Horizons Program

- **Our largest ongoing program**

The horizon is what is at the edge of the ocean or the mountains, beyond which we cannot yet see. Teenage girls in recovery from chemical dependencies are like pilgrims traversing a new land with new horizons ahead. There are a lot of unknowns. Many obstacles surround these girls, it can be scary, but there is great hope for what lies beyond.

Our New Horizon's program meets twice per week and is offered to teen girls who live in a residential treatment facility, Sea Mar Visions. We are seeking community support to continue to fund this valuable program.

Seven girls come twice a week to the farm to allow the animals to assist them in their healing. They work with the horses for 10 - 12 weeks and build their self-confidence, learn the results of clearer communication, learn to trust themselves, and learn to care for another's needs. They take the rabbits, llama, miniature horse and dogs to visit elderly in local nursing care facilities.

- Started in April 2002 continuing to present
- Over the course of the year 70 girls participate
- 2 sessions/week, totaling 5hours/week per student
- Ages range from 13-18 years old

New Horizons Daily Activities:

- Physical & Emotional Check in (Horses call us to an awareness of where we are emotionally, they require honesty!)
- Full Value Contract
- Discuss the focus for the day ie. Trust, communication, teambuilding etc.
- Greet your horse, groom- lots of time spent on the ground caring for our horses, bonding, etc.
- Exercise for the day
- Groom again – appreciation
- Journal
- Circle up- Process, What? So What? Now What?

Quotes and Insights from the New Horizon Participants.

- There's too much going on in my life, my life is always going so fast. Sucia is slow and takes things one step at a time. That helps me remember to slow down, be patient.
- Working with Chaco has shown me that I need to be more assertive and stand up for myself. I'm afraid to make the horse or other people upset, so I go along and just let everyone walk all over me.

- Chaco wants to be brave but he's afraid. Like Chaco I need to push myself. I need to get back on and get going, because when I do push myself I get a lot of confidence.
- The horse I was riding, Patriot, scared another rider and horse when he rushed up to them. That is what I let my friends do, I let them take charge of my life and I mess up. I can't afford to do that any more. I have to take control of my life and choices.
- Working with Sundance showed me that I'm too passive and that I need to be more assertive. The horse kept tossing her head at me, but then Sonja showed me how to raise my left hand and tell Sundance to keep out of my space. It worked! I need to do the same boundary-setting with people.
- Chaco is all take and no give – he just wants to be groomed and get treats, but not be ridden. That's like some guys.

2004 Summary of Statistics of Service

- 3800 hours on the farm touching the lives of
 - 240 Youth
 - 85 Adults
 - 350 Visitors
- 420 intergenerational hours of youth, animal, elder contact at Extended Care Facilities
- 130 hours ANT volunteers in the Community touching the lives of over 1000 folks with our animals and stories

Fee Schedule for 2006

- Day Camp \$225/week
- Kidz Dayz \$25/day
- Private lesson \$30/session
- Group lesson (2 or more) \$25/session
- Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy \$135/session

How You Can Help Financially

\$10 ~one month of tractor fuel

\$25 ~one youth farm session

\$75 ~ supports a horse for one month

\$100 ~five sessions for one child

\$225 ~one week of day camp for a child

\$400 ~funds a Family Farm Day for shelter families

\$1000~supports a horse in his therapy work for one year

Our Future:

- As the efficacy of this work becomes more widely known in our community, more and more families and counselors have requested involvement.
- Preventative measures are more cost effective than rehabilitation later on.

