

Horsing around no laughing matter for Heavenly Hooves

By Wyndi Veigel

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Outside of Farmersville on a country ranch lives dreams, hopes and plans as the Heavenly Hooves Ranch Therapeutic and Recreational Riding Center comes into existence.

For owner and operator Lynn Turner, the ranch is a long-awaited dream finally coming into reality.

"This has been on my heart for 13 years and this is what I wanted to do," says Turner, who grew up with horses that offered comfort to her during her teenage years. "We are so excited about who all God has and is putting in our lives and to see this program become a reality to help others."

Though she grew up with a great childhood, Turner remembers the difficulties that adolescence offers to everyone and the comfort that the horses afforded her simply by being there and letting her cry against their manes without judgment.

Heavenly Hooves started as a dream of Turner's but without the support of her husband Rusty and the encouragement of their children Jessica and Matthew, Turner said it would not be possible.

"It is considered a family dream now and not just mine. God has laid it on their hearts as well and all of our church support from Higher Trails Cowboy Church, other local churches even as far as Mt. Pleasant, and all of our church family and friends have

jumped in to support us and this cause," she said.

The mission of the ranch will be to enhance the quality of life of individuals with cognitive, emotional or behavioral challenges by providing interactive experiences with horses in a safe environment, which builds confidence, improves social skills and coping skills, promotes emotional healing, and help clients make positive changes in their lives.

The ranch, located on 59 acres near County Road 701, already houses a variety of animals including horses, donkeys, goats, pot bellied pigs, as well as miniature breeds of horses, donkeys and cattle.

All programs and sessions

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Lynn Turner pets two of her miniature horses Stormy and June Bug. Lynn and her family are the owners of Heavenly Hooves.

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Lynn Turner, owner of Heavenly Hooves Ranch

Horses provide comfort to those in need

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for individuals with a medical or psychological diagnosis, and approval from their physicians, will be free to the client and their family. However, there will be a commitment such as volunteer hours for the ranch required.

"It doesn't have to be financial, but we do want people to have some kind of commitment to the program," Turner said. Donations, petting zoo contributions, grants, and even a recreational riding program, will help offset finances for the program so individuals can come to the ranch to ride or utilize the ranch facilities.

Though the ranch will start out offering their services to adults and kids with emotional and psychological is-

suess, eventually Lynn said she would like to start a program for troubled youth and veterans.

During a typical session, the child would arrive at the ranch with their parent or guardian and a volunteer would get the horse and lead it to an area where it is tied.

The child will then come over and begin grooming the horse, and depending on their level of skills and physical capabilities, will get certain pieces of tack.

For example, for a child in a wheelchair, the saddle may sit in their lap.

After a horse is saddled up, the horse will be led to the mounting area so the rider can mount with assistance, then they are led to the riding arena. During sessions, there are

three volunteers that help, a lead walker and two side walkers, positioned on each side of the horse.

After riding, the child and horse will return to the mounting area to dismount and then they will help to remove the tack and groom the horse. There will also be several sessions at the beginning of the program without riding.

"We want them to do as much as they can on their own and be involved in every aspect," Lynn said.

A difference in programs may be utilized depending on the problem that the child deals with. For example, a study is being conducted at UT Southwestern that has shown massive improvements for kids with autism in riding in round pens and doing figure



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A whole menagerie of animals live on Heavenly Hooves Ranch including miniature horses, donkeys, cattle and goats.

8's, which aids in building up the left side of the brain, Lynn said.

Though the ranch is already a Licensed Spirit Horse Center, they are still working on obtaining their non-profit 501(c)3 status. They also currently have a certified equine-assisted healthcare instructor.

The organization will be hosting their first fundraiser

from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, March 29 to help defray some of the costs associated with running this type of program. The fundraiser will be held at the Onion Shed in downtown Farmersville.

"We just want to introduce ourselves to the community," Lynn said.

During the fundraiser there will be an auction, live bands,

a petting zoo and a chuck wagon chili competition. Chili sales will start at 11 a.m. with popular voting ending at 1:30 p.m.

The ranch is expected to open officially this summer. Those interested in volunteering or any of the services offered, visit www.heavenlyhoovesranch.com or call Lynn at 214-995-0567.