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Dear ESS Friends,

Every year about this time I am determined to send out an update on what's happening at ESS. Usually I am too busy to get it done. But here is your 2018 mid-year update!

While we have our normal day to day work of horse care and special programs, life at ESS is anything but routine. This year has been no different.

The mild winter months made it possible to do a bit of extra equine-assisted therapy sessions with a group from Tri County. It was nice to have those visits with adults with special needs who felt welcomed and valued here. Our horses gave them lots to think about as they spent time grooming them and doing leading exercises.

The spring and summer months have been especially challenging this year, due to the severe drought. The group of home-schooled kids who had class at ESS once a week spent a lot of time building a beautiful bridge over the acequia, which has been almost completely dry this year for the first time. But it is a lovely addition to our new garden / break area that now has a sitting area with two picnic tables, a bench, chairs and old horse water tubs filled with flowers. This was funded by a grant from the Taos Garden Club.

Smoke from fires and hot, hot days have made it challenging for our therapeutic riding program. Sadly, our number one program horse and super star, Dustee, passed away in April. He had lived a wonderful 29 years, which is pretty good for a horse, but we had hoped for many more. It just wasn't to be. Everyone misses Dustee, including his horse family. But it seems like they especially understand. The other lesson horses have stepped up, being even more steady and reliable in both the riding and the equine-assisted therapy sessions.

I have been training one of our rescues (Lady, pictured here with a girl who just started taking lessons here this summer), working her into the program as a new lesson horse. She has amazed me with her calmness and great attitude. Taking extra time to train our therapy horses makes our programs very safe and successful, but sometimes these horses amaze even me. It's very rewarding to see the connection that these horses have with our special needs kids and adults, too.



Clinics and conferences are always inspiring and important to keep fresh and up to date on industry standards and practices. In May I was excited to be able to attend the Region 10 PATH, Intl. Conference, where I spent three days with nearly 90 other therapeutic riding instructors and clinicians. The talks were informative and I learned a lot. What was especially rewarding was to meet so many like-minded, caring professionals and to see how far ESS has evolved over the years and to get

new insights on how we can continue to grow. We have come a long, long way! It was gratifying to see, and humbling as well as I realized how we could only do all that we do with the support and friendship of so many. Friends and sponsors like you!

Last month we hosted a clinic with Dr. Tomas Teskey, a veterinarian who teaches holistic horse care and herd management. It was a great clinic and an inspiration to learn from this compassionate and caring horseman. As with all the clinics we do here, we use what we learn to improve our operations and to pass what we've learned on to anyone interested. As a follow-up to this clinic, local hoof trimmer Mark Eden is coming to ESS on Saturdays, which began June 30 and through July, to assist with our horses' hoof care and to teach anyone interested about the barefoot trim.

Another follow-up to Dr. Teskey's clinic is to work on building a track system on our property which will enable our horses to get more exercise as they move about the property rather than being confined to small turnouts. Our management practices at ESS are excellent in many regards. However, it's become increasingly clear that just providing proper diet and nutrition and overall good health and hoof care is not quite enough to totally meet the horses' needs. They need to move. That is a big project and will require some long term planning, but we've got a start on it and look forward to someday seeing the benefits of the track system with fitter, trimmer horses.

Our biggest challenge right now is figuring out how to feed all of our horses and donkeys. There is a huge shortage of hay due to the drought and prices have continued to rise. We've been paying more and getting less for our money. But the horses still have to eat. My regular supplier from Colorado has 500 bales of excellent grass hay that he will sell us at a very reasonable price (\$10 per bale delivered) and set aside for ESS, but we need to pay for it up front in order to reserve it. We feed anywhere from 150 to 180 bales per month, depending on the size of the bales, but this purchase will be a huge help for the coming months' hay supply. The supplier also has 500 bales of a grass/alfalfa mix that he will sell us at the same price, and he will keep that in reserve for ESS also if we pay for the first 500 bales up front. Then we will pay for the others upon delivery. I've also tentatively contracted with another grower who will sell us hay for \$11 to \$12 a bale delivered, so even though hay is much harder to come by and more expensive than what we are used to paying, it is a blessing to find these good guys who are willing to work with us and help us continue to provide the best feed and care for our horses as possible.

Your support, with a donation for hay, would be greatly appreciated as we deal with the hay shortage and help us to avoid a crisis in this challenging time.

We hope that you will stop by and see how Equine Spirit Sanctuary is growing and meet our equine family. As always, we welcome your visit. And our horses, donkey, mini's and pony all would greatly appreciate having a sponsor. Please pass the word on to anyone you know who may be interested in the work that we do here. Our facebook page has lots of photos and is regularly updated with news. Be sure to check out our website also – revised and new this spring!

Best wishes from all of us at Equine Spirit Sanctuary,

Ruth Bourgeois
Exec. Director

