

Exploring horse and human therapy

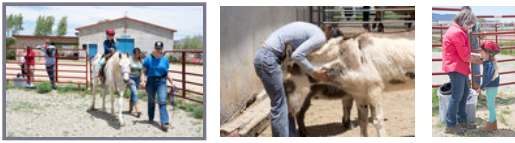
Equine Spirit Sanctuary hosts annual open house to demonstrate programs



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Staci Matlock/The Taos News

Scout Gontram, 4, takes a ride on Klassy Kat, one of the therapy horses at Equine Spirit Sanctuary in Taos during the nonprofit's Open House on Saturday (May 25). The sanctuary helps neglected and abused horses and also provides equine-assisted therapy for people.



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By Staci Matlock
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Dozens of people stopped by the nonprofit Equine Spirit Sanctuary on Saturday (May 25) to visit with donkeys and find out more about the equine-assisted therapy programs offered by the organization.

The nonprofit, under executive director Ruth Bourgeois, takes in neglected and abused horses. Some are nursed back to health, trained and adopted to good homes. Others are kept as program horses to help with equine-assisted therapy, working with children and adults.

"We can learn valuable life skills through working with horses, getting to know horses and interacting with horses," said Bourgeois on the nonprofit's website. "Participants learn safe horse handling with grooming and leading exercises. Riding may also be part of this program, when appropriate, but the focus is on more on personal growth and life skills. Activities are designed to improve self-esteem and self-awareness, combining body awareness exercises with motor planning and verbal communication, in a safe and supportive setting."

ESS also offers periodic workshops in hoof care and horse therapy. A June workshop on the Masterson method for equine therapy is full, but if enough people express interest, Bourgeois said another workshop can be arranged.

Volunteers are always welcome and needed. Training is provided.

Find out more at equinespiritsanctuary.org or call (575) 758-1212.