

# What do you mean we don't get to ride them?

By Sara Sherman

“When do we get to ride them?” This is inevitably the question I am asked when working with youth of any background.

And my answer: “I don't know if we will ride them!”

Then I typically hear: “Ahhh that sucks,” “What are we gonna do then?,” “That's stupid, what else are horses for?”

I love this . . . I see it as an opportunity for the horses and me to make an impression and shift some perspective. I see opportunity for a journey in partnership; a journey within to discover a new sense of self-worth, respect, responsibility, communication and most of all, trust.

My name is Sara Sherman. I am the founder of Discovery Horse and I partner with my four-legged colleagues to help people of all shapes and sizes discover their Inner AWESOME. I am an Equine Guided Coach. I offer personal growth retreats; team building workshops, individual and couples sessions, and I work with kids. Kids who don't know they even have an Inner AWE-

some but hold onto some shred of hope that there is one.

Recently the horses and I worked with nine youth from a local residential facility for kids who can't live at home for one reason or another. Many of these kids have never known trust or experienced unconditional love. Many of them don't know what it means to have someone stick by them through thick and thin, mistake after mistake. These kids haven't experienced their own self-worth nor have they seen their own intrinsic value in the eyes of another. This group of kids came out to the barn for seven weeks, three hours at a time, and they were required to be there. In the beginning they came because they “had” to. In the end they didn't want to leave.

As the kids walked into the barn on the first day, scarves over their noses due to the “stink,” rolling their eyes and giving me fake names, I knew I had my work cut out for me. We set up our group agreements, introduced ourselves and I told them a little bit about what we would be doing . . . minus riding!

There are so many stories I would love to share with you about this experience. I want you, the reader, to see how dramatically the lives of these kids were touched by their expe-

rience with the horses. I want to tell you about the girl who wouldn't even sign the paperwork to stand in the arena because she was so sad her friend had been discharged and left her alone. Later that day she met Star, a beautiful quarter horse mare; this girl told me Star took her sadness away and changed her life. I want to tell you about the young man who tested every boundary I had and wouldn't smile, except when he was leading “his” horse. Or how another girl who tried everything to get herself kicked out, only to find she truly belonged in this unique and unconditional “herd.”

Right now I will tell you the story of “Vivian.” Vivian is small in physical stature. When Vivian came to Discovery Horse she was shy and quiet, her way of not making waves and drawing attention. Vivian had walked through the first 13 years of her life balancing between being small so no one noticed her, and being large



and abrasive to defend herself when she felt her world spinning out of control.

Vivian was one of the few who admitted to being excited about this new program offered by the facility they called home. She got some strange looks from others for that excitement, and I secretly admired her courage to share. Vivian really struggled with her peers. When engaging with the horses in various activities, my staff and I would often hear her say, “I can't do this, I am a failure, I'm stupid.” During one exercise, kids were instructed

to give verbal directions to a partner who was leading a horse. This proved to be a challenging exercise. When her directions weren't clear, her partner and the horse would stop and look clueless. Vivian was the center of attention and sitting in a leadership position . . . not a comfortable or familiar place. Vivian didn't like speaking loud, she didn't like making mistakes, and she told me very clearly she would just rather not talk than take the chance of others being frustrated with her.

The kids did get to ride the horses on the last day. It was a gift the horses offered. All too often we take advantage of the gifts others have to offer us, horse and human alike. The kids learned that there is a lot to developing healthy relationships grounded in trust and that a true authentic relationship comes with hard work and is truly a two-way street. The ride the kids got wasn't typical. They sat bareback and held onto their horse's mane while

being led, and surrounded by people who were there to support them. They were encouraged to close their eyes and sincerely feel that trust, unconditional love and to receive what they truly longed for.

Vivian rode a sweet quarter horse gelding named Titan, part of the Spirit Horse Center herd that I include when working there. Titan took such sweet care of his precious cargo. He walked slowly and confidently all the while surrounding Vivian with his heart. When they came to a stop I stood next to Vivian as she leaned forward and hugged Titan and cried. Her tears were cleansing and beautiful. As the tears fell so did the wall around her heart and the fear that she wasn't loveable or worthy of being carried. In those places grew a web of strength and confidence and an acknowledgement of her own Inner Awesome.

Continued on next page

# Youth Find Their Inner Awesome

way. I have intentionally left out the “how” in this article because I wanted you, the reader, to know the “why.” I leave you with a few words written by these kids on their last day with us at Discovery Horse. My wish is that your heart smiles and you strive to look a little deeper, a little more closely, at the gifts these giant beings so freely offer us. My wish is that through the discovery of their own Inner Awesome these kids inspire you to find your own!

“That not to be scared and believe in myself even when I think my mom doesn't.”

“I found my Awesome.”

“I need to stop doubting myself because every time I do I always achieve my bad thoughts.”

I Am: “Proud.” “A Leader.” “An amazing person that I am proud to be. Very strong”

As we were saying our goodbyes and sharing the gifts we received, Vivian announced she wanted to make a speech. Yes, a speech. She stood on the tall mounting block in front of her peers, the facility staff, the Discovery Horse staff and the horses. This shy, quiet girl had found her voice, and she literally wanted to share it with the world. AWESOME!

If you are reading this article, chances are you know horses in some capacity. Chances are you have been touched by their unconditional love and have learned a thing or two about yourself along the

to bring awareness and healing to individuals and organizations by helping them realize the story that's keeping them stuck and shifting it so they can realize their chosen purpose and fulfill their potential. Sara and her horses have been successfully guiding individuals and organizations through transformational change through individual Equine Guided Coaching sessions, empowerment workshops, team building retreats and motivational speaking. Sara and her herd specialize in youth empowerment and women entrepreneurs. Sara also offers her coaching services on the phone and in person for people not quite ready to walk with a horse. This work is NOT about what is wrong with you . . . it is about finding all the good and powerful parts and making them huge. If you are ready to discover and expand your Inner AWESOME we are waiting to

To Shine, the horse: “It takes a lot for me to learn to trust someone but with you it was different! I put all my trust towards you and you never once did anything to break it :) I have had tons and tons of my promises broken and when I saw you I felt that you promised me that you wouldn't leave me or hurt my heart and you never once broke that promise. Keeping promises means the world to me. Forever Love: Jane”

Sara Sherman is an Equine Guided Coach certified in the Equine Gestalt Coaching Method (TM). Sara works with and without horses



Photos by Bourne Photography

Above: Lance and a participant sharing a moment.

Left: Sara Sherman and Lance.

Page 14: Looking within.



Cowboy Up Ride Against Cancer  
 AUGUST 15 & 16, 2014  
 10 a.m. Rain or Shine  
 Get the Details Here!  
 or at the website:  
[www.cowboyupride.com](http://www.cowboyupride.com)

August 15th 2014: Trail Ride from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Extreme Race 6 p.m. Join us for some Extreme Fun at the 10th Annual Cowboy Up Ride Against Cancer Extreme Races in McLeod ND. Prizes will be awarded. Teams will be formed on site so come on out & join the fun. All proceeds will benefit the Roger Maris Cancer Center. Email [lori.zabel@yahoo.com](mailto:lori.zabel@yahoo.com) with any questions.

August 16th 2014, 10 a.m.  
 10th Annual Cowboy Up Ride Against Cancer at McLeod, ND

Need an ad? We can custom-build one for you! No charge on VEN ads. Contact Ley for rates on all other ads at: [thevenews@gmail.com](mailto:thevenews@gmail.com), 320-209-8523.

Mind Body & Spirit GIFTS & BOOKS  
 Downtown St. Cloud  
[mindbodyspirit-online.com](http://mindbodyspirit-online.com)  
 320.203.9630  
 stones & crystals • books & music • jewelry  
 Native American items • soaps & candles  
 original artwork • herbs, oils & incense • unique gifts  
 intuitive/psychic readings • classes & workshops  
 guest speakers • body & energy work

DISCOVER YOUR INNER AWESOME  
 WITH EQUINE GUIDED LIFE COACHING

RAISING AWARENESS | SHIFTING PERSPECTIVE | EMBRACING CHOICE

Retreats, Individual Sessions, Youth Empowerment & Team Building

SARA SHERMAN • 218-232-2495 • [SARA@DISCOVERYHORSE.COM](mailto:SARA@DISCOVERYHORSE.COM) • [DISCOVERYHORSE.COM](http://DISCOVERYHORSE.COM)