

The kindest treatment of the horse is gained through knowledge.

A changed perspective on horses' comfort



Rocky enjoying being the guinea pig for Jamie's massage demonstrations.

On Friday, April 11, we had Jaime Downey out to the farm for a clinic on therapeutic massage for horses. It was fantastic and we all learned a lot!

It got me to thinking about how many things have changed in this industry over the years.

Back when I was a child, the idea of giving horses a massage would have been a source of great mirth. Even paying attention to the horse's mental state, in some circles, would also have seemed unimportant.

When I had the chance to go abroad to study, the place I

chose (by dumb luck!) seemed to take this kind of thing much more seriously than the "back yard" establishments I had frequented as a child learning to ride. I was taught by people who had represented their country at the Olympics and yet had never lost respect for their equine partners. It was an amazing experience that I've never forgotten. Coming home after my studies, I sometimes felt like a bit of an outlier regarding the care of horses, but I had newfound confidence because of what I'd had the opportunity to learn abroad.

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CALENDAR of EVENTS



JUMP SCHOOL

Friday, May 16

HARROGATE HUNTER HORSE SHOW SCHEDULE

Sunday, May 4

Sunday, June 8

Sunday, October 5

AWAY HORSE SHOW SCHEDULE

Sunday, May 25

(Stonewood Equestrian)

Sunday, June 22

(Stonewood Equestrian)

Sunday, September 21

(Stonewood Equestrian)

All students are welcome to come out and cheer on the Harrogate Team.

TRIVIA QUESTION:

The horse is able to sleep standing up. What is the name of the 'system' that allows him to nod off and yet not fall down?

The answer will be in next month's issue of The Mane Bit.

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Things have continued to improve, thankfully. I remember back in the mid 1980's we invited Joachim Schleese out to our school at Gormley to give a clinic. In his broken English (he had only recently arrived from Germany), he explained the importance of a correctly fitted saddle. (This was back in the day when people often chose a saddle that was comfortable for them and then every horse they rode was expected to be ridden in that saddle.) The details he provided about the gear we use as well as the detrimental effects poorly chosen equipment had on horse's performance was eye opening for everyone at the clinic. He compared it to making everyone walk miles



Jamie giving theory instructions on Equine Massage.

in someone else's ill-fitting shoes and that analogy really made sense to everyone.

Over time, research keeps giving us new insights into how to keep horses happy and comfortable, and I think that's a very good thing.

For me, it always comes back to the role the horse has in our lives nowadays. He no longer helps us plow our fields or transport us and our goods. And thankfully he no longer

carries us into war. We are so lucky to live in a part of the world where we get to spend time with horses for the sake of recreation, not for life-or-death circumstances.

Somehow, in my mind at least, that sets the bar higher in terms of their care. The best part is that for 40 years I've been blessed to be surrounded by people who believe that too. Maybe we're all outliers in this regard but I am happy to note that we are definitely in the majority now!

So, here's to therapeutic massages, and all the other things we get to learn as we continue our four-decade quest to make horses' lives better.

A special message for all our hard working Tiny Trotters...

There are five levels that Tiny Trotters need to pass before graduating to the regular lesson program. On June 21, we're going to have a special session where the students can go through their paces and show us how much they've learned.

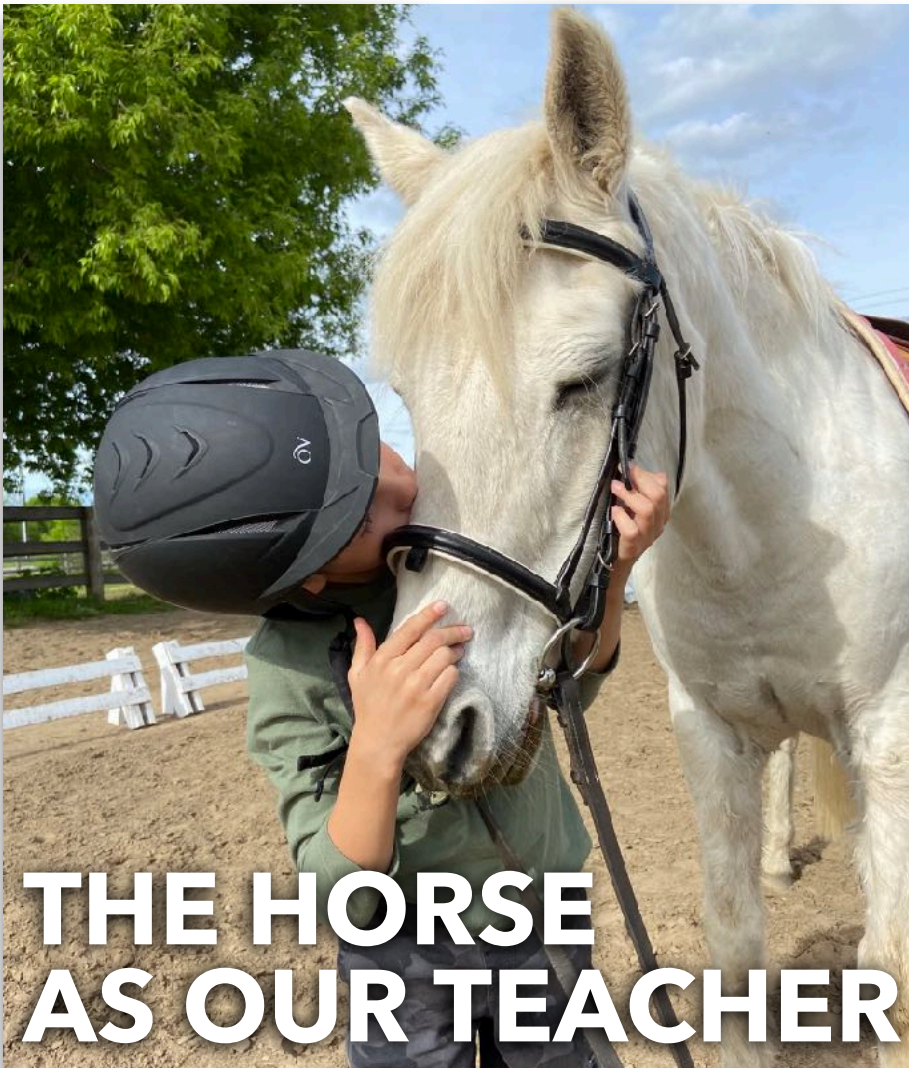
This will be followed by a graduation ceremony where the students will receive a certificate showing the level they have achieved.

Parents are welcome to attend.



Happy
Easter





THE HORSE AS OUR TEACHER

For the past 40 years, we've had an entire range of students join us at Harrogate Hills. Some were over achievers at school and at life, while at the opposite end, some were struggling, even with the process of making friends. Some were unable to focus in school and some were being bullied daily.

But what they virtually all had in common was an affinity for horses and that, we found, was what caused the magic to take place.

This came as a bit of a surprise to me when I first started this business. I would be left a bit speechless when parents would reach out to say how much the horses were helping their child. Even more astonishing was when teachers would contact me, asking what we had done to effect the changes they were seeing in their students. I never had much of a coherent answer, except to say it might have less to do with Harrogate and more to do with the horses themselves.

Research in this field is growing and the benefits that horses provide is constantly being confirmed.

Over the years I have thought about this a lot and have decided that it is because the horse rewards all the characteristics we seek to instil in young people. Empathy, self-discipline, patience, kindness and putting the needs of someone else ahead of themselves, are all traits that the horse responds to in an emphatic and positive way.

The immediate feedback the horse provides is part of what I think makes the difference.

Watching the transformations over the years has been wonderful, and it was with that intention that we decided to offer our first Equine-Assisted Learning Camp this summer.

During the five full days the students spend with us and the horses, it is our goal to compress the gifts the horse offers into thirty hours.

The riding lesson takes place in the morning because gaining understanding of the horse as a rider is essential to the process.

In the afternoon, through tested exercises, the students

will learn more about themselves and make that connection to the horses that is so beneficial to all of us.

Each exercise has a different outcome in mind, but one of the overall objectives of the EAL program is to have participants recognize their own thought patterns – the helpful ones and the not so

helpful ones. The exercises are designed to get participants asking questions about themselves, and the horses offer the self-reflection that we all need. No matter the level a student is riding at, after having gone through these exercises ourselves, we feel strongly that everyone has something to gain from this program.

This is a specialty camp so spaces are limited. Campers get a unique opportunity to spend even more one-on-one time with the horses.

For more details you can check out our website at harrogatehills.com/augustspecialtycamps/

TRIVIA GUIDELINES:

- Place your answer in the box found in the lounge and include your name and contact information.
- There will be a random draw from the correctly submitted answers and one person will win a prize.
- The winner will be announced in the following month's Newsletter.

The answer to March's Trivia Question is:

Q: In the trot, the rider either 'sits' to the trot or rises. Why do we sometimes call rising trot the "POSTING" trot?

A: Back in the days of the Pony Express in the US, mail was delivered by riders on horseback who quickly realized that doing a rising trot was easier for both the horse and the rider.

We were pleased that so many people knew the correct answer! We drew a name from a hat of correct guesses. This month's winner of a \$25 gift card from Greenhawk is **Meredith Sztur**.

Hunter clinic



On March 30, Leslie McCormick came to HHRS and gave a clinic. Leslie, a licensed EC coach, owns and operates Red Ribbon Stables in Niagara. Having been involved in all levels of hunter and jumper competition, including many successes at the Royal Winter Fair, she brought a lot of knowledge and experience to share with our students. A great time was had by all. Thanks, Leslie



Stoney, trailered back to St Catherines with Leslie and Sarah Mark and will spend a couple of months continuing his education there. Thank you, Sarah!

If you know someone who might be interested in taking riding lessons but really don't know where to start, please share this with them for a free, no obligation opportunity to try it out.



Stay tuned for unique and exciting adventures with horses, as we present new learning opportunities in our monthly newsletter that take you beyond your regular weekly lessons.



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