

My Volunteer Story at Stockhand's

By: Angela George

I first found out about Stockhand's via Nationwide's Volunteer Network. I honestly wasn't looking for anything in particular, but I was curious to see what was on the Network. So I just started searching. I found out that you can tailor your search by the different your areas of interest, so naturally, I choose animals.

I came across a listing for Stockhand's Horses for Healing. The heading was simple: "Like Horses? Want to help those with special needs? Become a volunteer at our barn." I clicked the sign up button to e-mail them and get more information. Lucky for me, there was a volunteer training class coming up on a Saturday morning. I drove to Delaware and the rest is history. I fell in love almost instantly. Kids, horses, what's not to love?



Stockhand's Horses for Healing is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization providing service to veterans, adults & children

with developmental, physical & emotional disabilities through equine facilitated therapies.

Tim and Lisa are the Co-Founders of Stockhand's and their passion for what they do is clear as soon as you meet them.



Delaware All Horse Parade 2016

Volunteer Network Spotlight

Stockhand's Horses for Healing



Tim and Lisa, Co-Founders

"Our goal is to provide a positive, non-judgmental environment for riders and their families. And to encourage the development of human-animal relationships."

The volunteer training included Lisa giving us a tour of the barn and introduction to the horses (and one mule, Clare). Then Tim, the other Co-Founder showed us how to saddle a horse and then showed us how we "hold" the kids during riding lessons. Lisa gave us the schedule and told us when they needed the most help. I signed up for Thursday evenings and Sundays right away.



Student Lessons

Audrey's Story

My first night was also Audrey's first night. Audrey is three years old and has Cerebral Palsy, she is also non-verbal and was absolutely petrified of the horse the first time she got on. The instructor, Cassandra got on the horse first, then held little Audrey close to her. Both Cassandra and Audrey were riding bareback with nothing but a horse blanket and strap for balance. The goal was to allow Audrey to feel as much of the horse as possible so she could understand the movement. Audrey was not sure of the horse at first, but over the past four months, I have seen Audrey go from being scared to death of being on a horse, to giggling with joy and laughter every time she gets on the horse.

She still rides bareback and the little legs that were so tense and would barely extend on her first ride now rest easily along the sides of the horse. The little girl who barely made a sound is now laughing and telling us when she wants more. Cassandra, who is a certified PATH instructor (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship), is also teaching Audrey sign language to help her communicate. This past Thursday was Audrey's fourth birthday and I can honestly say the short amount of time I have spent watching this beautiful little child grow and learn and strengthen her muscles has truly changed my life.

In addition to the lessons for children, Stockhand's also provides therapeutic

lessons for adults and veterans. Throughout the week, you will see students of all ages working with the horses and learning to ride. But most importantly, you see the human-animal connection. Some adults in the addiction group may be battling their own demons and they are still learning to love themselves, but when they have an animal to care for, their spirit changes.



Addiction and Recovery Group

This year, a group of our kids and veterans were lucky enough to show their horses at the All American Quarter Horse Congress. They have special divisions for Equestrians with Disabilities and our students relished every minute of displaying their skills.



Tommy at Quarter Horse Congress

Joy, laughter, and a strong sense of accomplishment are what I see reflected every day I spend at Stockhand's Horses for Healing. I am truly thankful that Nationwide's Volunteer Network led me to a place that has the power to truly change lives. It has certainly changed my life for the better.
