

THE HEALING HERD

Spring Issue 2026

A newsletter made for participants, volunteers, and friends of Horses Help SWI

Welcome Letter

Howdy!

Horses Help SWI is excited to introduce our new H.E.L.P. Framework – a guiding foundation designed to bring clear and achievable goals to every session, whether in groups or individual programming.

Over the years, we've often been asked one simple question: "How do horses help?"

While we've always witnessed the impact firsthand, we wanted a way to better articulate the power of the horse-human connection and what makes Horses Help SWI unique within the Equine Assisted Services industry.

After months of collaboration, reflection, and teamwork, we developed H.E.L.P.:

H – Harmony
E – Empathy
L – Life Skills
P – Presence

These four principles are now intentionally woven into every program, session, and interaction at HHSWI.

This spring and summer, we're excited to continue bringing H.E.L.P. to life through programs like Mini Moments, Horse Powered Reading, Horse Camp, Painted Pony events, and our Summer Music Series.

As Horses Help SWI continues to grow, we remain committed to evolving alongside the needs of our community. We are always grateful for new ideas, partnerships, and the continued support that makes this work possible.

Thank you for being part of our mission of healing, connection, and growth through the power of horses.

Best,

Andrea Dunn, Lead Instructor & HHSWI Ambassador

How Horses HELP

At Horses Help SWI, everything we do is guided by four core principles: H.E.L.P. – Harmony, Empathy, Life Skills, and Presence

harmony

We focus on building connections between horse and human, and within ourselves.

Through groundwork, riding, and observation, participants learn how to communicate clearly, regulate their energy, and move in sync with another being. Harmony isn't about control, it's about partnership.

empathy

Horses respond to what we feel, not just what we do.

Participants develop emotional awareness by learning to recognize and respond to the needs of their horse. This often opens the door to deeper understanding of themselves and others.

life skills

The lessons learned at the barn don't stay at the barn.

From responsibility and confidence to communication and problem-solving, participants build skills they can carry into everyday life at home, in school, and in their communities.

presence

Horses live in the moment and they invite us to do the same.

Working with horses encourages mindfulness, focus, and grounding. Participants learn to slow down, tune in, and fully engage with what's happening right now.

The H.E.L.P framework shapes every session, interaction, and every experience at Horses Help SWI.

It allows us to meet participants where they are while creating meaningful opportunities for growth, connection, and healing.

Mini Moments

Mini Moments brings the magic of our miniature horses beyond the ranch through onsite and offsite equine-assisted visits with beloved herd members like Romeo, Peanut, Jewels, and BlackJack. These sessions focus on connection, co-regulation, and meaningful interaction between horses and humans, creating impactful experiences for schools, community programs, nursing homes, and assisted living facilities.



This program is proudly supported in part by the Christine Dunn Memorial Fund, helping Horses Help SWI continue expanding opportunities for healing, connection, and community outreach through our mini herd.



Painted Pony

Painted Pony is Horses Help SWI's newest creative community experience, combining art, connection, and the calming presence of our horses in a unique ranch setting. Inspired by the classic paint-and-sip concept, this program is designed to offer a relaxing and sensory-friendly space for creativity, self-expression, and time spent with our herd.



After hosting our first practice event this spring, we're excited to continue developing Painted Pony and look forward to opening future public and private events to the community soon!

Spring at the Barn

Hey y'all — spring has arrived at Horses Help SWI! Warmer weather means green pastures, sunshine-filled naps, and more time outside for our equine partners. It also means bug season is here. To help keep our horses comfortable, we use fly sprays, fly masks, and fly traps throughout the season. If you're looking for a way to support the herd, these items are always appreciated donations!

This spring has already been full of exciting moments, including participating in the Council Bluffs parade with mini horses Blackjack and Jewels alongside our amazing staff and volunteers. We're also looking forward to summer camps, live music events, and more opportunities for connection at the ranch.

Behind the scenes, our Horse Team continues working closely with each equine partner to ensure they feel confident, comfortable, and prepared for their important roles in our programs. Through their work, our horses help demonstrate Harmony, Empathy, Life Skills, and Presence every day.

Thank you for your continued support!
Ashley Berwick, Barn Manager



Volunteer Spotlight



JANET E.

After retiring in 2024 and moving to the Council Bluffs area, Janet E was looking for a meaningful way to give back. After passing Horses Help SWI daily, she signed up for a side walker training—and nearly a year later, she’s become a valued part of the herd.

With a 30-year background working in child and youth programs, volunteering here has allowed her to stay connected to what she loves most: youth and horses. While she enjoys learning new skills like liberty work and building relationships with the horses (especially Santi, her self-proclaimed favorite), it’s the clients who make the biggest impact.



“Watching their growth with the horses and the therapy programming is pretty awesome to be a part of.”

One of her favorite memories includes a young client insisting she “run from the lava” to the parking lot—solving the problem by handing her an imaginary “battery pack” so she could keep up.

For Janet, volunteering is both meaningful and rewarding. Janet’s advice to new volunteers is simple: no two days are the same, and that’s what makes it fun.



**Recognizing Our Supporters:
The HH SWI Donor Wall**

Kori Nelson, Executive Director

We have been planning the design and implementation of a dedicated area at the ranch where we can thank our supporters for their contributions to Horses Help SWI. After careful consideration, we decided to create a "Donor Wall" that will highlight a variety of levels of supporters, each representing a unique impact at Horses Help SWI.

Nonprofits rely on a diverse group of supporters to help further their missions. Every dollar received enables us to develop and deliver programs for both individual and group clients. Our offerings include adaptive riding sessions, equine assisted learning programs, mental health sessions, and group activities for guests from special education classes, nursing homes, and other local nonprofits all with the goal of helping our neighbors learn, heal and grow! We depend on the generosity of donors to keep these sessions affordable. Since medical insurance generally does not cover equine assisted services, families must pay for these experiences out of pocket. Thanks to our supporters—individuals, businesses, and local foundations—we can keep fees affordable.

Please look for this exciting new addition soon to be installed at the property. We invite you to join us in expressing gratitude to the amazing supporters of Horses Help SWI! If you would like to become a sponsor, please visit Kori to discuss a range of unique opportunities to help.

Horse Powered Reading Program

Horse Powered Reading combines literacy, confidence-building, and hands-on equine experiences to create meaningful learning opportunities for children and youth. Led by Kori Nelson, this program uses the horse-human connection to support engagement, communication, emotional growth, and a love of learning both in and out of the classroom.

As Horses Help SWI continues to grow this program, we are currently looking for educators interested in joining our team and helping expand literacy-focused programming in our community. If you are an educator interested in getting involved, please contact Kori for more information.

HHSWI Summer Concert Series

Join us this summer for live music at the ranch! Our Summer Music Series brings the community together through family-friendly outdoor concerts featuring talented local Nebraska and Iowa musicians. These donation-based events support the care of our horses, facility, and growing programs while creating a welcoming space for connection, relaxation, and fun.



DUNN & MOORE

What's Ahead

- Tue 6/9 & Thu 6/11 | 9A-1P | Horse Connections Camp**
- Sun 6/14 | 1-3P | HHSWI Summer Concert Series**
- Sun 6/21 | 1-3P | New Volunteer Orientation**
- Tue 6/23 & Thu 6/25 | 9A-1P | Horse Connections Camp**
- Sun 7/12 | 1-3P | HHSWI Summer Concert Series**
- Tue 7/14 & Thu 7/16 | 9A-1P | Horse Connections Camp**
- Sun 7/19 | 1-3P | New Volunteer Orientation**
- Tue 7/28 & Thu 7/30 | 9A-1P Horse Connections Camp**
- Sun 8/9 | 1-3P | HHSWI Summer Concert Series**
- Sun 8/23 | 1-3P | New Volunteer Orientation**