

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

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June 24, 2013

To Whom It May Concern,

As Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs, I have a vested interest in the health and wellbeing of our State's veterans and their families. In light of that, I am writing to encourage your support of Equus Medendi – Equine Facilitated Learning and Therapy, in San Bernardino County, which has proved to be an effective treatment program for mental health disorders in combat veterans.

Since the early 1980s, equine therapy has been recognized as an effective, noninvasive treatment for children who have sensory and motor issues such as those associated with cerebral palsy, and Down syndrome. More recently, equine therapy has gained both attention and acceptance around the country as an effective means of treating individuals with various mental health diagnoses including anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

San Bernardino County Veterans Affairs, Loma Linda VA Health Care System and Disabled American Veterans Chapter 12, are enthusiastic in their support of Equus Medendi. With so many veterans returning from the current conflicts suffering from PTSD and/or anxiety, both of which are often complicated by traumatic brain injury, the timing for the development of this new treatment modality could not be better.

In equine facilitated learning and therapy, a therapist works closely with a horse handler to integrate equine activities (other than riding) within the larger framework of traditional treatment. Horses elicit a range of emotions and behaviors in humans, which can be used as a catalyst for personal awareness, growth, and a better understanding of one's condition.

Reports from veterans who have completed this program are promising:

"This is the only place where I feel calm and collected. I'm actually at peace with myself and the world." *Marty T., Vietnam Veteran*

"I feel like a completely different person. This has been absolutely the best thing I've experienced with regards to my PTSD." *Steven S., OIF/OEF Veteran*

Many have seen life changing results and have gained new hope for recovery. Positive results have also been reported in veterans' relationships with their spouses and children who participate in the program.

Traditional medical practices may not be adequate to treat the complex mental health conditions afflicting today's veterans. By being open-minded and willing to advance complementary treatment modalities like Equine Facilitated Therapy we will further advance our ability to help heal those who have suffered as a result of serving our country. Please join me in supporting this overwhelmingly worthwhile program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter J. Gravett".

PETER J. GRAVETT
Major General (Retired)
Secretary

HONORING CALIFORNIA'S VETERANS