

I am writing in support for the Star Rider Horse Therapy program generously sponsored by Linda and Ray Martin for the developmentally challenged, injured, or afflicted in this area that utilize their facility for recreational and functional sport. As a co-sponsor of this wonderful program the city of Marina should be proud of the accomplishments this program has afforded the many disabled students of Monterey County. This program provides equestrian therapy that takes advantage of the psychological and physiological effect of riding horses to improve the condition of our disabled and injured children of Monterey County.

The horse is a means for social and therapeutic exchanges between the child and the animal. In this therapy the horse acts as a living therapeutically equipment. In this therapy movement characteristics of the horse is used as a physiotherapeutic tool. This movement provides many children the opportunity to be challenged through physical and sensory processes and provides input unavailable elsewhere. The result is best demonstrated by the children who have begun to utilize postural control to sit upright, balance themselves during movement, and to use both arms for coordinated movements not demonstrated elsewhere. It has provided children restricted to wheelchairs to experience movement opportunities to increase stability and responsively to the demands of their physical environment. The movement of the horse has a calming effect on autistic and sensory challenged children. Equestrian gymnastics coupled with physiotherapeutic rides engage the cooperation between the horse and child which has been demonstrated to provide verbal, physical, psychological, and social values that can be used to further the development of the child.

The program is administered by professionals dedicated to the children and the adults of Monterey County with special needs. They are well trained, educated, and compassionate in their efforts to provide opportunities to advance those most in need in this county. Ray and Linda Martin have a wealth of experience with the special needs population and provides a safe and secure environment for growth and development. It affords those with special needs a physical, developmental, and social outlet to develop and experience life in a more meaningful and fulfilling way.

To experience the change in the physical, developmental, and most importantly social aspect of children attending the therapeutic horse riding program during the past three years has been a wonderful experience. I fully support the continued evolution of this program and congratulate the Martin's and the City of Marina in the quest to provide meaningful opportunities for those less fortunate in our society. The County of Monterey and the City of Marina is fortunate to have this program available and I fully support this facility, especially the professionals that volunteer their time and love to help those less fortunate in our society.

-Norman Larson