

A HORSE FOR A TEACHER? WHY OF COURSE!

Empowering personal and professional development

By: Kim Shook
Bella Terra



Ask anyone who has spent considerable time with horses and they'll tell you horses are amazing teachers. However, until recently, it hasn't been common to utilize horses for learning experiences. Who would have thought a horse can teach us about our communication style, our approach to teamwork, how we solve problems and achieve goals, and whether we are assertive enough to have our needs met? Utilizing horses for personal and professional development is rapidly growing around the world because of the powerful results. It is the unique abilities of horses that make them powerful teachers. Horses have an amazing ability to not only discern what we are showing externally but also to sense what we are thinking and feeling as soon as we have these thoughts. Quite simply, the horse tells us through its unbiased feedback when we are being clear, congruent, and effective and when we are not. Then this feedback can be applied to better understand our strengths and areas for growth.

The Equine Adventure Program at Bella Terra was built as a result of my own life changing with a horse during a program at Miraval Resort and Spa, in Tucson, AZ, back in 2000. Just 15 minutes into the experience, I had an epiphany. Suddenly I clearly understood the source of what was holding me back from feeling fulfilled in life, the core of my struggles with confidence and life purpose. Soon, I took my husband, Todd Shook, to Miraval to experience this amazing horse-human learning connection. These experiences were so powerful that they fueled our desire to establish a world class equine experiential learning program in southwest Michigan with miniature horses. This "path of passion" has been an incredibly rewarding journey for us to make a positive impact and touch the lives of others through this learning experience. In 2005, we became a nonprofit organization to serve those facing life challenges by developing new skills, tools, and perspectives to manage their challenges. Now we are looking forward to the next step in our journey, teaching others how to build their own equine-based learning programs across the country.

You can learn more about the Bella Terra equine learning programs for youth, adult personal growth, and for teams, an amazing team building and leadership development experience, on our website at www.bellaterrainc.org. It is the authentic horse-human connection that sparks experiences that could not come about any other way and results in an empowering learning experience. For many, the result will stay with them for a lifetime. For some, the experience will dramatically alter how they perceive themselves and/or events in their lives.

"There is nothing better for the inside of a person than the outside of a horse." ~ Winston Churchill

"Listen to their whispers and they will guide you through your journey" ~ Jodie Mitchell

"He knows when you're happy. He knows when you're comfortable. He knows when you're confident.

And he ALWAYS knows when you have carrots." ~ Unknown