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# Pegasus Press

*Helping at-risk youth soar to greater heights.*

## Understanding Tekoa's Equine Experiential Learning Program

When most people think of therapeutic riding, they envision children in wheelchairs, docile horses and a crowd of adult volunteers. While the benefits of such programs have been well documented, another segment of the population greatly benefits from work with horses.

At-risk teens with emotional and behavioral problems are the main focus of the program at Tekoa. The Tekoa Equine Experiential Learning Program addresses issues involving self-worth, positive assertiveness, self discipline, teamwork, responsiveness and nurturing. Tekoa's horses have been selected based upon their abilities to teach coping skills vital to a person's success in life.

At Tekoa, we challenge youth to think and act responsibly, even in the face of adversity. A young person with anger management problems may be paired with a difficult horse, which forces the youth to identify other coping mechanisms to be successful. An individual exhibiting signs of withdrawal may be given a horse that is gentle to foster communication and well being.

The Tekoa Equine Experiential Learning Program currently has eight horses. Four are thoroughbreds donated by the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation; two are on a free-lease program; two were purchased by Tekoa.

Young people entering the riding program work toward acquiring their "Tekoa Rider's Card." To earn this card, the youth must be comfortable handling the horses, demonstrate proper grooming and tacking, and pass a written test on emergency procedures, safety and barn policies. After earning Level 1, the Tekoa students decide if they want to continue on to Level 2, which requires more in-depth knowledge of horse health, equipment and riding skills.

We strive to continually challenge the Tekoa youth with various equine activities and new programs. With your support, the Tekoa Equine Experiential Learning Program continues to grow!



*Tekoa's Equine Experiential Learning Program addresses issues involving self-worth, assertiveness, discipline, teamwork, responsiveness and nurturing with at-risk youth.*

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# Tekoa Kids Want to Show Off Their Skills

The kids who are enrolled in the Tekoa Equine Experiential Learning Program have expressed an interest in participating in a local public horse show this summer. In order for the Tekoa youth to realize this request, they need the support of peers and sponsors.

Participating in a horse show takes a lot of hard work and dedication, and the kids will need to Practice! Practice! Practice! We are pleased that the Tekoa youth have expressed this interest because it allows them to set goals for themselves, stay focused and build team skills, confidence and responsibility.

If you would like to become a sponsor and help support the Tekoa youth in achieving their goals, you can give a monetary tax deductible donation to the Tekoa Equine Experiential Learning Program. Another way you can show your support is by donating show quality riding apparel such as hunt coats, shirts, riding pants, gloves and boots.



Photo by Magnifico Photography.

*Participation in horse shows builds team skills, responsibility and confidence for the Tekoa youth.*

Or you can watch the calendar of events to be part of the cheering squad!

Sponsors will receive a special invitation to the show in advance of the scheduled date, as well as photos of the

youth participating in the show. If you are interested in donating to the program, please contact Tiffany Smith at [tekoahorses@swva.net](mailto:tekoahorses@swva.net) or 540.392.9995.

## In Their Own Words...

“When I’m riding, I feel I have wings, and my best friend is flying with me.”

- Jessica, Age 16

“Riding a horse feels exciting and fun because you never know what’s going to happen next.”

- Selena, Age 13

“Riding feels really cool because you know that you and the horse are getting along.”

-Tonya, Age 13

## Tekoa Develops TRF Partnership

Currently the Tekoa Equine Experiential Program has four horses that have come from the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation (TRF).

TRF has been the nation’s largest nonprofit thoroughbred rescue organization since 1982. Every year, TRF saves hundreds of retired racehorses that have been earmarked for slaughterhouses and provides them homes for a happy retirement.

While the Tekoa staff was initially apprehensive about having these reputedly high-strung, high maintenance thoroughbreds added to the current crew of mellow horses, Money, Vigor, Carson and Fantasy

have worked out well. These highly sensitive horses have created a much needed diversity and new level of challenge seen in both the riding and therapeutic realm. They have been great teachers and companions to our kids in the program and we are grateful to have them as part of our treatment team.

For more information about the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation, visit [www.trf.inc.org](http://www.trf.inc.org).



# Tekoa Forms First Ever Drill Team

Tekoa will form its first drill team in the Spring of 2004. A drill team demonstrates team members' riding skills, as well as teamwork between the members and their horses. Drill teams perform many movements to music chosen by the team members. This can be a lengthy decision process involving input from all the members. The music should reflect the rhythm and movements of the horses on the team, as well as the personalities of the team and horses.

Through participating in the drill team, the Tekoa youth can learn to better communicate with their horse, strengthen the horse and rider partner-

ship, build confidence and learn about the true trials, tribulations and successes of teamwork.

The team will consist of four riders chosen based on their riding skills and abilities. The Tekoa drill team hopes to perform at events such as parades, shows and the annual Tekoa Classic. Drill team members will wear coordinated attire, such as matching polo shirts and pants, and the horses will wear matching polo wraps and saddle pads.

For information about how you can support Tekoa's drill team, see the article on page five or contact Tiffany Smith at [tekoahorses@swva.net](mailto:tekoahorses@swva.net).

# Volunteers Contribute to Tekoa's Success

In the Spring of 2003, Tekoa started a volunteer program to maintain a positive training regimen and improve the horses' overall fitness and well-being. The program has been a huge success!

Currently, there are ten active volunteers involved in the program and three inactive volunteers, who are too busy to volunteer on a regular basis, but have still offered to help during special events.

The volunteers involved in the program range from freshmen in college to graduate students, as well as students enrolled in the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine on Virginia Tech's campus. Likewise, their skill and experience levels range from taking the horses on trail rides to teaching them to jump small fences.

A unique aspect of the program is that volunteers are given an opportunity

to become mentors to Tekoa youth. A volunteer may choose to become a mentor after they have been in Tekoa's Equine Experiential Learning Program for a few months and have displayed a commitment to the program's mission and values. Mentors work with the Tekoa youth on a one-to-one basis teaching them riding and horse management skills. Currently there are two volunteers that will become mentors upon completion of required background checks.

The Tekoa staff would like to thank all of our volunteers. It is their hard work and dedication that make the Equine Experiential Learning Program a success. If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a volunteer, please email [tekoahorses@swva.net](mailto:tekoahorses@swva.net) to learn more!

# Horses Return to Willow Ridge Farms

Tekoa would like to give a special thanks to Willow Ridge Farms for providing a facility for some of Tekoa's horses and programs.

Willow Ridge Farms leased out space for the horses used by the boys in the Tekoa Equine Experiential Learning Program and the weekly Therapeutic Riding Program, offered for children with disabilities by Tekoa and Professional Therapies.

Willow Ridge Farms is owned by Dr. Kent Adams, who also owns Appalachian Veterinary Services. The farm is located in Christiansburg and offers a large indoor riding ring that allows classes to be held rain or shine. The property also has a wooded area with trails, which were made by the Tekoa boys and volunteers from the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine's AAEP Club.

The horses will return to the farm when classes resume in the Spring.

# Tekoa Joins Forces with AAEP

Tekoa recently formed a partnership with the American Association of Equine Practitioners club from the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine. Last semester, AAEP volunteers did barn and horse clean up projects, as well as trail clearing with the Tekoa youth. They also taught basic equine medical techniques to the Tekoa youth.

AAEP plans on creating a Junior Vet certification course that they will offer to the Tekoa youth this Spring. The existing equine volunteer program has also gained some strong volunteer exercise riders through the AAEP club as well. We are very excited about this new and promising partnership!

## Tekoa's Equine Experiential Learning Program Receives Grant

Tekoa's Equine Experiential Learning Program was recently awarded a \$1,000 grant from the New River Valley Community Foundation. This grant will fund six rider scholarships and supplies for one six-week session of the Therapeutic Riding Program for children with disabilities.

The Tekoa staff is currently working on a Carillion Foundation grant seeking larger funds to offer scholarships to all participants through the entire length of the six-month program. Additionally, this grant would provide funding to take all riders, horses and volunteers to the Therapeutic Riding Association of Virginia's annual two-day horse show held in Lexington. This show allows riders from therapeutic riding centers across the Commonwealth of Virginia to participate in a challenging but light-hearted competition.

We hope this grant can become a reality, which would in turn allow dreams to come true for many kids and families. Watch for the outcome in the next newsletter! If you know of grant opportunities that might benefit the Tekoa Equine Experiential Learning Program, please contact Tiffany Smith at [tekoahorses@-swva.net](mailto:tekoahorses@-swva.net).

## We've Moved!

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## Therapeutic Riding Mutually Benefits Physically Disabled Children and Tekoa Youth

In Summer 2003 a pilot program was started with the collaborative efforts of the Tekoa Equine Experiential Learning Program and Professional Therapies to provide children with disabilities an opportunity to ride horses. Residents from the Tekoa girls' facility were trained as volunteer sidewalkers and leaders for this program. While in session as volunteers, the girls joined with a physical therapist to create a four-person volunteer team for each rider.

The Tekoa Therapeutic Riding Program is mutually beneficial to the Tekoa kids serving as volunteers and the children with physical disabilities. Through this program, the Tekoa youth have an opportunity to gain further life skills, including empathy and concern for others. Meanwhile, the riders increase their physical abilities and gain new experiences while they and their families gain a better understanding and respect for the "at-risk" youth that are safely and compassionately helping to make the program possible.

Misty, a Tekoa youth who volunteers with this program, initially was hesitant about helping the handicapped children, but now is confident in her abilities.



*The Tekoa Therapeutic Riding Program provides lasting benefits to handicapped children and Tekoa youth volunteers.*

"I think this program is really good," Misty said. "Working with the children did scare me at first, but now all I see is bringing big smiles to their faces."

This former pilot program is now a permanent part of Tekoa's program and will resume with even bigger dreams in April 2004.

## On the Horizon...

With the addition of a new employee comes the addition of new and exciting programs! The Tekoa Equine Experiential Learning Program will begin accepting community clients for individual and small group/sibling therapeutic riding sessions tailored to address emotional and

behavioral issues. The program will also accept referrals from local individuals and community agencies.

Look for more information in the next newsletter, or contact Tiffany Smith at [tekoahorses@swva.net](mailto:tekoahorses@swva.net)!

# Make a Difference for At-Risk Youth; Become a Tekoa Sponsor!

Tekoa's Equine Experiential Learning Program touches the lives of many youth, but not without a great cost to support the creation of new programs and care for the treatment team of horses. Tekoa is excited to announce the commencement of a new program that offers sponsorship opportunities to support the horse program.

## **Drill Team Sponsorship: \$1,500**

Donations fund coordinated riding apparel, saddle pads, polo wraps, cost of hauling horses to exhibition locations and other needs. Sponsors will receive name recognition on attire, invitations to exhibitions and practices, and as much involvement as desired in watching the kids learn and share in the success of teamwork.

## **Horse Sponsorship: \$1,000**

Donations fund a full year of farrier, feed, and routine and preventive vet

expenses allowing horses to stay healthy while happily being a strong part of our equine treatment team. Sponsors will receive quarterly reports about their horse written and photographed by the kids, invitations to special functions, and an opportunity to get to know their horse and learn about the therapy he or she provides for Tekoa's kids.

## **Rider Sponsorship: \$500**

Donations fund show apparel, show fees and horse hauling fees for one child to participate in a public show. Sponsors will receive invitations to shows and practices, and an opportunity to meet and work with the sponsored rider.

## **Program Needs Sponsor: \$100**

Donations fund helmets, grooming supplies, first aid supplies and tack needs. Sponsors will receive the comfort of knowing that their donations provide a safe horse experience for at-risk youth.

**Resource Library Sponsorship: \$50**  
Donations fund the purchase of educational videos and books to add to Tekoa's library.

While full or partial sponsorships are an exciting new option within our program, donations in-kind are accepted as well. Tekoa, Inc. is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization. For information about tax benefits associated with your donation, we encourage you to contact a tax advisor.

For more information, please contact Tiffany Smith at 540.392.9995 or [tekoahorses@swva.net](mailto:tekoahorses@swva.net). Please forward donations to:

Tekoa, Inc.  
930 Cambria Street, N.E.  
Christiansburg, VA 24073

\*Note: When writing checks, please write "sponsor donations" in the memo section.

## Meet the Tekoa Team

**Tanya Hobbs** is an equine professional with more than 25 years of experience in riding, teaching, judging and training. Tanya has been a part-time instructor with Tekoa for six years and has a certification in Equine Assisted Psychotherapy. When not running her own boarding and lesson program at Coldspring Farm, Tanya enjoys learning and practicing photography.

**Tiffany Smith** is the equine program director and has been with Tekoa for nearly five years. She is a registered instructor with the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association and is a member of several therapeutic riding associations. Tiffany is a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist

(CTRS). In addition to directing Tekoa's Equine Experiential Learning Program, Tiffany also serves on the Tekoa administrative team and coordinates the therapeutic recreation internship program. In her spare time she continues her love and appreciation for the gifts horses offer by riding and showing her own horse, Katie.

**Lia Pollock** recently left the Tekoa team to work with Stephen Bradley, an Olympic horseback rider. Lia played many roles in the Tekoa program - from training horses and teaching students to horse management and administration. Best wishes to Lia for future success!

## Job Opening for Equine Assistant Instructor

Tekoa's Equine Assistant Instructor position is a full-time salaried job that requires a dependable, responsible, reliable, self-motivated, and trustworthy team-oriented individual. The position requires a wide range of abilities, including at-risk and disabled adolescent instruction, extensive horse management knowledge, intermediate to advanced riding skills, organizational and management skills and good communication skills.

For inquiries, please contact Tiffany Smith at [tekoahorses@swva.net](mailto:tekoahorses@swva.net) or 540.392.9995.

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## What's In A Name?

We would like to develop a catchy, new name for the Tekoa Equine Experiential Learning Program! While the current name effectively explains the purpose of the program, it really is a mouthful! If you have any creative ideas, please email Tiffany Smith at [tekoahorses@swva.net](mailto:tekoahorses@swva.net) or call her at 540.392.9995.

## Wanted!

Mellow horse for warm weather months to become part of Tekoa's Equine Treatment Team. If you know of free-lease horse opportunities, please contact Tiffany Smith at [tekoahorses@swva.net](mailto:tekoahorses@swva.net).

## Tekoa Calendar of Events

### March

*Move horses to Christiansburg this month!*

3/26-27 Tekoa kids pack their bags for 36 hours of nothing but horses at the Equine Affaire in Ohio

### April

*Therapeutic Horseback Riding starts this month!*

4/01 Horse show practice starts

### May

5/15 Tekoa kids strut their stuff at Shadows Pride Fun Show at the Greenhill Equestrian Park in Salem

5/19 Drill team practice starts every Wednesday

### June

6/21-26 Tekoa youth participate in the yearly ritual of watching great riders and seeing beautiful horses at the Roanoke Valley Horse Show

### July

*Look for the next Pegasus Press this month!*

7/4 Tekoa youth hit the street as they ride in a parade

7/28-30 Tekoa youth instruct a horse camp for at-risk children

### August

8/12 Tekoa Classic; Drill Team performs