



## Israel Mitzvah Horses Newsletter

Dear Friends,

With the up-coming of spring, Pesach arrives, and nature blossoms. This year, we were blessed by a particularly rainy winter. However, with a little luck, we managed to keep the activity going between the rain drops. The feeling was that no participant was willing to give up the encounter with the horses and took advantage of the puddles for exciting games.

We want to take this opportunity to wish you and your family a happy, healthy Pessach. Please be sure that your support of children, youth, and young adults through Israel Mitzvah Horses truly releases them from their "narrow straits", providing them with skills, freedom and joy.

On behalf of Israel Mitzvah Horses Organization Board Members, we are pleased to share with you, last winter's update.

### Program for children with Autism at Nir David Riding center.

Thanks to Mrs. Brigitte Bigar's contribution (Founder and President of IMH) and other generous donators, the program grows from one year to another.

Ten children aged 7-10 participate in this program. All are diagnosed with low-functioning, non-verbal, autism. Two of them also suffer from cerebral palsy. They participate at the farm in Kibbutz Nir David once a week for two hours.

Three instructors and eight helpers operate the program. Helpers are students in Therapeutic Riding Training Courses, youth from the pre-military program. Two of them are diagnosed with high-functioning Autism.

The program's impact on children exceeds all expectations. Most children, benefit from a significant reduction in stress and anxiety. With the help of the horses, they raise their independent functioning abilities and improve their communications skills.

Still, ten additional children are waiting to enter this program. In order to make it happen, we need your contribution. Please make a gift. Thank you!



### **PTSD Program with IDF Veterans**

\*PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome

Thanks to the generous contributions of Mrs. Shelly Katzman and of our friends from France, the program is a success. Here are a few words from Dr. Anita Shkedi, Program Director: "This year, through the kindness and generosity of IMH, eleven veterans signed up for the program of equine assisted activities and therapy. All the veterans have said that EAA/T\* has a positive impact upon their symptoms and that their lives have improved in all environments."

Most of the participating veterans have had physical injuries that are now healed. However, as they had remained conscious during the time of their injuries they continue to suffer from chronic PTSD.

At INTRA the veterans enjoy their EAA/T sessions. They take care of a specific chosen horse. They have built positive feelings, and a sense of coping. The veterans have said that the sessions have taught them how to help themselves in their daily lives.

With tears of joy, one veteran explained that horseback riding was the most positive experience he has had since his trauma. He understood how important it

was to come to the center each week and use what he learns to reestablish and repair his life.

All the veterans coming to the sessions have made great progress and find that it is easier for them to face what happened to them and to admit that they have PTSD. This an important step towards healing.



### **Youth at Risk Program at Epona Stables, in Sde Warburg**

Fifteen Young at Risk participate to the IMH's Rehab Program through Equine Activities and Therapies. The program is held at Epona Riding Center in Sde Warburg. The participants come three time a week.

At the yard, we have created a non-threatening "school" environment to encourage the development of learning and communication skills. Through the bonding with horses, the participants build trust, self-control and confidence.

When looking at a group, after two years of intensive work, we can clearly feel the changes. Everything is quiet. Each participant is busy with his tasks but they also help each other and communicate without aggressivity.

After the end of the program, some of them continued training to become riding instructors, some studied to learn another profession, others joined the regular school system.



To send a contribution, please click at: <https://www.mitzvahorses.org.il/donate/>

You may also contact us directly through email: [l.ikan0212@gmail.com](mailto:l.ikan0212@gmail.com)

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Sincerely yours,

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