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Amity Foundation Celebrates Partnerships, Upcoming Events

By Sara Paul

A United States Army veteran looks in the mirror and sees a horrible monster. With his selfless service to his country complete, the broken soldier returns home to his family and struggles with connecting with loved ones, with humans. It wasn't until this old soul began bonding with a four-legged pal that he was able to begin to see himself in a more positive way.

It was a beautiful breakthrough and a momentous day when Corey DeMala, licensed therapist at the Amity Foundation for Healing with Horses, witnessed the now better adjusted veteran accepting that he was not, in fact, a monster.

"He had severe issues with anger and aggression so we had him work with the horses for several sessions. Soon he was walking around with no lead rope, with the horse's head on his shoulder. We explained to him that horses are prey animals, so if they were not running from him, he



Photo by Sara Paul
Christine Swanson Dykshorn co-founded the Amity Foundation in 2015 & along with her partner, Corey DeMala, offer therapeutic services to people suffering from trauma.

Photo by Sara Paul
Corey DeMala & her horse, Rockstar, work with people at the Amity Foundation who have suffered trauma.



She is also an award-winning equine trainer.

Corey explained the three main reasons why horses are so good at healing. Horses are prey, grazing, and herd animals.

"As prey animals, they are incredibly sensitive to their surroundings. Trauma makes people hyper-vigilant just like horses, but the difference is that horses also can relax. They need to be able to respond to danger but then go back to grazing. People need to learn to go back to grazing. Finally, as herd animals, horses can't be alone so they are masters of good relationships. They are non-judgmental, so if a relationship is not working, we can try something different and get a different response. It's not the same with people; horses don't hold grudges," details Corey, who owns Rockstar, one of the 15 horses on the farm. Six of those horses are used for therapy. Her great danes, Bacchus and Molly, also help with therapy on the farm.

For more information about the Amity Foundation and for tickets to the Kentucky Derby Party, visit www.theamityfoundation.org.

was certainly not a monster. This gave him hope and connected him to a part of himself he thought he'd lost," tells Corey, who founded the Foundation in 2015 with partner, Christine Swanson Dykshorn.

The non-profit organization "harnesses the therapeutic power of horses to help humans recover from emotional trauma," according to their website.

The Foundation was inspired by Shelley Schacter, a horsewoman who boarded at Amity and was battling cancer. It was through horses that Shelley discovered a path to inner peace, and she was determined to share what she learned through equine-assisted therapy with others. She became convinced that unresolved trauma can be an impediment to the healing process, according to the Foundation.

Amity has recently partnered with the Committee for the Families of War Veterans, which allows Corey and her staff to work with veterans, their spouses and their children free of charge. Corey works with veterans agencies in Westchester, NY as well.

The Foundation also brings therapy horses to the Honor Homeless Shelter in Middletown, NY once a year, a program Corey hopes to expand.

As the Amity Foundation is donation based, services are limited. While there was a time when staff had to turn people away, today they strive to see those who need help on a sliding scale and sometimes free of charge.

She highlights their two main fundraisers: an autumn Yard Sale and the Kentucky Derby Party, both at the Amity Farm in Pine Island. The third annual Kentucky Derby Party is slated for Sat., May 4 and will feature food and beverages, live music, a Great Dane Dash, a Hat Contest, a Silent Auction and, of course, a simulcast Kentucky Derby race in the Farm's arena.

Amity depends on volunteers and donations to continue the group's important work.

"These programs are geared towards trauma, which shows up in different ways. People can come in with anxiety, depression, and self-esteem issues, and 99 percent of the time the root is trauma, big or small," comments Corey, who has a master's degree in mental health counseling.

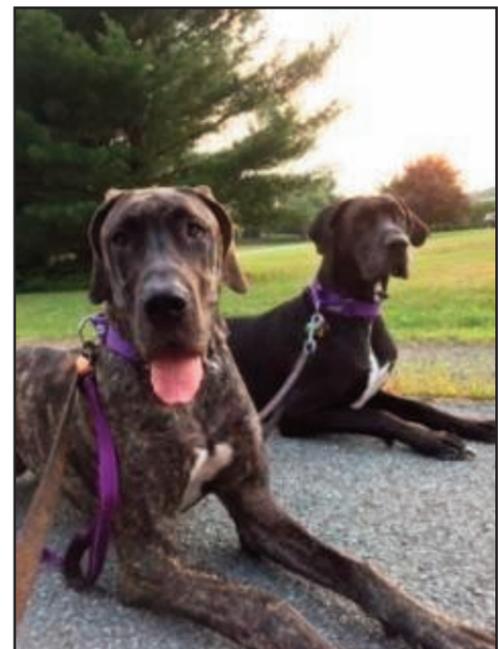


Photo by Sara Paul

Christine Swanson Dykshorn's therapy dogs, Bacchus & Molly, also pitch in with therapy at the Amity Foundation.

