

Dear Donor,

For decades, two constants in my life have been living with my wife Sandy's deep love of and knowledge of all things horse (think pictures of horses in every state and country we have ever visited) and my professional work to promote the rights and dignity of persons living with Alzheimer's and other dementias and their family caregivers. (And sadly, we have had our share of family dementia experiences, too.)

Imagine my delight when my colleague and long-standing friend Nancy Schier Anselmo and Paula Hertel come along with Connected Horse, with its equine guided workshops and programs for people living with memory loss and their care partners. Knowing well that dementia impacts individuals, families and communities, this unique program invites people with memory loss and their care partners to participate together with horses, both benefiting from the experience. It is based on sound principles of dementia care and further supported by its own research at Stanford and UC Davis, Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, and the Center for Equine Health. Ongoing evaluation ensures quality and increases understanding of how the program benefits its participants.

Sandy reminds me that humankind has a long and powerful history with horses and that horses, especially older or unwanted horses, need new roles in our society. At the same time the benefits of equine therapies are beginning to be more widely recognized.

Horses' innate abilities to understand their environment, support their herd and provide nonjudgmental responses and feedback allow for a rich learning and healing environment. Combining working with horses with workshop exercises such as mindfulness leads to a therapeutic result, including reducing feelings of depression and anxiety, strengthening coping skills and reducing isolation, which we all learned from COVID is deadly and demoralizing.

As part of its commitment to further activation and engagement, **Connected Horse** is now launching innovative sensory and virtual experiences at home as part of its Barn Connection programs, providing opportunities for marginalized groups and people who do not have access to horses, to participate. Eventually through digital delivery (now in pilot) Connected Horse hopes to expand this resource to partners in community-based programs such as care managers, adult day health care and PACE programs.

Horses heal hearts. They are great givers and receivers of nonverbal communication. They just know how to "be" not just "do" which is the soul refreshing moment for Connected Horse participants. Please support this fine work.

Michael Splaine, MA, CEO Cognitive Solutions, LLC

*"Michael Splaine is known worldwide for bringing the real face of a problem into the policy arena to yield success with policy influencers."*