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To Whom it May Concern,

I'm writing in testament to Operation Horses and Heroes' "Equine Resiliency Program". They are an invaluable provider of animal supported experiential psychotherapy, which is vital to our responsibility to care for our country's service members. My son is leaving soon to begin his Navy career and I've always desired to support military issues in any manner I'm able as a civilian. It's my strong belief our service members deserve the best quality of life available.

In my work profession, I'm familiar with different organizations using horse therapy models. Operation Horses and Heroes is the most unique and unrivaled over others. I researched over 50 programs and found OHH to be an ideal program I can support. My experience this September, in Chardon, Ohio just confirmed that OHH is succeeding in their mission with glowing results! The overall event was top notch, thoroughly planned, efficiently conducted with attention to detail. Everyone involved is passionate and dedicated to their efforts. The Board Members, Clinician, and Equine Facilitator are an impressively accomplished group of people. They bring an admirable myriad of military achievements from all branches of service, working tirelessly to execute an unparalleled experience for the military participants. The host family at Hambden Hills Stables were endearing and accommodating in every way. And a diverse gathering of volunteers, supporters, and local businesses' generous donations tied everything together.

I couldn't observe the sessions for confidentiality, but, I was privileged to spend time with participants after their activities. I developed a profound insight, empathy, inspiration, and comfort seeing them grow. It was difficult to learn the hardships, struggles, and tolerance it takes to survive. But, on the other hand, it was so compelling to hear them share how horses affect them in unique ways, where none other has before. In particular, as the weekend went on, I heard people discovering, on their own, that a horse is paralleling their personal human characteristics and behaviors. And through that, they developed a deeper understanding of themselves. To quote from a conversation I had with one veteran he said...

"Gosh, I need to be more like Her (the horse). She's extroverted, brave. She isn't scared to approach me, check me out, want to get to know me, see what I'm about...I'm not good at that, it's very hard for me, I'm introverted and it makes life hard....yeah, I need to be more like Her (the horse)."

Some participants mentioned how 'alone' and 'isolated' they feel in civilian society, how difficult it is to cope. But, toward the end of the program, I heard expressions of them feeling as part of a family, a valid member of a familiar community again. In a similar way, my son and I received so much encouragement and support to prepare us to be a healthy military family. And I have everyone in attendance at Operation Horses and Heroes to thank for helping me grow a sense of connection to my son's future experiences in the Navy. The healing and personal growth I witnessed in only 3 days was astonishing! It's without a doubt OHH's program design, and methods by which they conduct a therapeutic process, results in a fast and effective positive change for individuals suffering from mental health illnesses. It's a heartbreaking epidemic that plagues the lives of our courageous military service members.

My personal relationship with horses is the dominant stabilizing component for me. Talk therapy, medication, mind/body practice, and support groups help, but, I'd be at a loss without horses. They don't lie. They don't judge. They don't have hidden agendas. This event was an incredibly heart warming experience for me. I'm extremely grateful to this fabulous organization and will to continue to support them in any way I can.

I enthusiastically recommend Operation Horses and Heroes over no other program! They genuinely know how to facilitate horses to 'heal' in a pivotal way.

Sincerely,
Becky Kimmel