

My name is James Hoffman and I attended the Horses for Heroes event in Hinesville GA in the month of February 2016. Upon applying for the program, I didn't have a full understanding of what it would entail, until Mr. Paulsen himself called me up on the phone and took a moment to introduce himself to me and explain a little about the emotional bonds that can be made between humans and horses, and the positive impact it can have on people who may need a more positive outlook. Admit I was a little bummed out that I wouldn't be learning to ride any horses, but as a disabled soldier I was interested in exploring what was explained to me.

The program itself was very interactive with both the horses as well as other veterans themselves seeking assistance in various ways. In my group, we have several veterans of the War on Terrorism obviously, but also some people from the first Gulf War and Vietnam. Officers and enlisted alike, male and female, some from other states, everyone came together for a few days to explore what this idea had to offer. I found the environment to be very welcoming, very slow paced. The volunteers both local and from afar were very polite and helpful and very lively.

The program itself I feel was a success because, for me, I got out and interacted with people in a way that I quite honestly hadn't done in a very long time. I am talking a couple years since my injuries. I wasn't in a place where most of my fellow service members could relate, and maybe not everyone in the program could either, but the thing is they tried. Everyone in the program had their own story with what they were dealing with, and during the process of growing more comfortable with each individual horse, learning how to care for it and earn its trust, people seemed to let go just a little of whatever it was they were clinging to. I would recommend trying it if there is anyone out there who feels lost or alone, and am even looking to trying to volunteer for an event sometime.