

25 March 2015

Mr. Gerald Paulsen
President & Founder
Operation Horses and Heroes
Elgin, IL 60123

Mr. Paulsen,

This letter is in regards to Operation Horses and Heroes Equine Therapy. I was honored to be a part of this amazing program for a weekend as I was asked to be a participant and relay my personal opinion to the board members. During the program, I was able to work closely with other participants as well as the board members of Operation Horses and Heroes. There were many participants with different backgrounds of both Military and civilian lifestyles. This program allowed for a wide range of insight into the everyday lives of someone who is carrying any hardships of a deployment or a significant life event. An important aspect of this program was its ability to relate to both Military and civilian individuals, as post-traumatic stress is not only Military specific.

The many exercises that we participated in showed great insight into normal human behavior as seen through the horses. The horses have a tendency to act in the same manner as we do but without the facade that is used in order to mask our emotional state in certain situations. I personally learned a great deal concerning the interactions that I have on a daily basis and how the perception of myself can influence that same perception from someone else. This program allowed me to witness others who have been going through some of the same situations as I have since my deployments. This of course is one of the most important parts of understanding that we as veterans are never alone. It allowed us to work together as a team to complete each task as well as support each other through certain situations that weigh heavy on us as individuals.

Overall, I would recommend this program to anyone that may be having personal, professional, or relationship issues. As stated previously, I find this program to be non-bias and have the ability to assist with anyone and with any situation. It was obvious that each of the board members cared deeply for what the program stands for as well as those who participated in the program. This program's foundation is based on trust and has given me what I would consider close friends through the bond that we shared over a short period of time. This experience will forever remind me that we will never be alone.

Very Respectfully,

SSG McGonigal, Michael R. Jr.

United States Army