



## ORGANIZATION BRIEF

Name of organization: Second Chance Ranch

Name of Program: Leading With Horses

Address of organization: PO Box 19602, Spokane, WA 99219  
1810 W. Paradise Road, Spokane, WA 99224

Telephone number: (509) 443-7003 (office)  
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Website: [www.secondchanceranch.org](http://www.secondchanceranch.org)

Executive director: Katie Merwick

Email: [katie@secondchanceranch.org](mailto:katie@secondchanceranch.org)

Annual Income: \$225,000 - \$250,000

501c3 Nonprofit Status: Established, December 1999

### **Registrations**

Federal Tax ID (EIN) ..... 91-1999946

Washington UBI..... 601-980-369

Washington State Charities Registration..... 7980



## Mission

Leading With Horses is a platform for mental health professionals to incorporate Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP) into their existing treatment program, as an alternative to conventional talk therapy. A collaboration of mental health professional and equine specialist offers a more holistic and comprehensive approach in providing solutions and treatment.

Our program serves any person who is being treated by a licensed mental health professional, with emphasis on youth development and family counseling. SCR offers the only EFP program in Washington that is *free to the community* and funded by public donation, grants and program service fees from our mental health partners. We also offer EFP workshops and certification programs for mental health professionals (MHP) to best utilize horses in their therapy sessions.

With a special collection of retired sport-horses, we are building resilience in families and addressing the negative health and behavioral consequences of trauma and toxic stress. Our program delivers an environment that fosters emotional growth and healing to those who are moving forward from trauma, with proven success in treatment of substance abuse, suicide prevention, anger management, anti-bullying, and pandemic related distress.

This large reach into the mental health professional field optimizes collaboration and maximizes the positive impact on our community. It is our belief that creative learning environments lead to outcomes of increased confidence and resilience; enhanced motivation and engagement; and development of social, emotional and critical thinking skills.

## Summary

Second Chance Ranch, a 501c3 nonprofit organization, has served the community since 1999. We hold the record for the largest and longest standing canine and equine rehabilitation and training/behavior modification program in the Pacific Northwest before transitioning into an Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP) program in 2012.

Our learning philosophy used to instruct the horsemanship part of the program is based on the concepts of fundamental psychology; the developmental processes that include emotional behavior, self-control, perceptual, and cognitive development and sequential learning.

Our special collection of retired sport horses have been together for more than a decade are distinctively trained to partner with people and demonstrate their exceptional capacity of teaching and healing abilities. Our programs do not include riding or riding instruction. EFP is focused on human skills, not horse skills. Allowing horses and client to interact naturally and of their own free will is what leads to change in people's lives. It's all about the relationship between the horses and clients, not the relationship between the facilitators and clients. Professionals are there to facilitate opportunities and bring perception or realization to the lessons being learned.

We invite whole families to a program that encourages communication and results in emotional growth within the entire family or spouse, rather than equipping children with new skills and tools that will not be reciprocated at home.

No prior horse experience is necessary for the client/patient. In fact, the more unique the experience is, having not been around horses, the more powerful and effective it is. Our equine coaches and human horsemanship instructors have worked as a team for more than a decade. Our platform is not intended to be the sole location of a therapist's practice. We provide a workspace and collaboration opportunity that many therapists could not otherwise offer to their clients while maintaining full control of the counseling aspect.

## About Our Services

Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP) is a collaboration between a mental health professional and an equine professional to include adjunct EFP therapy to existing treatment programs. In most cases the therapist works privately with their client and the horse(s). Our HIPPA certified equine specialists are only there as much or little as needed to ensure privacy. Therapists address a multitude of issues effecting both adults and youth such as depression, PTSD, anti-bullying, domestic violence, and suicide prevention, with a focus on "family counseling" to achieve a more holistic and comprehensive approach in providing solutions and treatment.

By integrating the horse-to-human connection, we offer experiential learning where the meaning and the process is solely based on the individual's personal experience, rather than being "taught" through someone else's experience. Often professionals find their clients to be

more receptive of accepting information from the horses through this non-verbal, alternative to talk therapy. And, as well, more open to expressing themselves, than if directly speaking about their issues. By allowing them to process information in a different way, it allows professionals to observe their client's triggers and respond to them in real-time counseling. The professional and client can work freely in a safe environment to elicit, decipher, prove and encourage their clients healing and growth.

This team approach of licensed mental health professional and equine expert offers a safe, controlled environment for the client. Sessions are structured and facilitated to specifically address the reasons clients come to therapy, and designed to best create metaphors to "real life". Clients have shown us that they truly do have the answers they seek, when given the opportunity to discover them.



### Why Horses?

The unique nature of the horse is what makes the therapy so successful. Horses reflect the behavior and emotional state of the people around them and provide us with immediate and effective feedback. The most important element of therapy is trust. There is an unspoken truth that horses don't lie or deceive. Not because they are altruistic, but because they are incapable of deceit as an animal who cannot concoct an alternate tale of reality. As the horse builds trust it connects with the person. This quite often provides the client with a feeling of comfort and the opportunity to break down barriers and

address the challenges they have been facing. Horses have a majestic and powerful presence. For those who lack confidence, being put in a position of leadership over a 1000lb animal, and successfully managing that animal, is sure to build self-esteem and self-confidence. Or even those who have a false over confidence, the horse teaches humility through example as these powerful creatures live peacefully and cooperatively with us.

### **The three basic aspects of learning from equine therapy;**

#### *Metaphoric Learning*

Horses share much of the same personality traits and emotions as humans; they are dynamic, playful, curious, emotionally sensitive – but more consistently honest and unbiased. Activities with the horses challenge participants to work together to find solutions through positive communication and collaboration. It is an experience that becomes a metaphor for real life situations. The unpredictability of these activities and their outcomes require participants to apply and develop important relationship and life skills. The most important aspect of these

activities is not whether the goal is achieved but rather identifying patterns of behavior and emotional response that relate to the modern-day experience.

### *Experiential Learning*

The strength of experiential learning is that the meaning and the process is solely based on the individual's personal experience, rather than being "taught" through someone else's experience. Aristotle once said, *"for the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them."*

As prey animals, horses have evolved exquisitely sensitive perceptual abilities that far exceed that of humans. As herd animals they have developed a refined ability to read body language and emotional incongruence. Horses are masters of presence. Powerful teachers of integrity of will, intent, energy and alignment. Quite simply, horses change the way we see ourselves.

### *Non-Verbal Communication*

People typically learn best by doing. Life lessons take deeper root when individuals understand them in their minds and experience them in their bodies. Horses respond with unique insight into exactly who we are in the moment. They are profoundly gifted reflectors of our true selves because their very survival depends on reading us correctly. Subtle changes in our actions or behaviors can provoke responses that give us immediate feedback about ourselves – they are an excellent source of organic biofeedback able to mirror our emotions and provide non-judgmental feedback. Through interaction with the horse, even running a hand over a neck, or putting fingers out to touch a muzzle, can do much to open a door to ideas or thoughts not before disclosed. In a world of technology, voice, the spoken kind has seemed to have lost its importance. What horses offer to the community is an exploration of the self, and self-discovery. A model of show and not tell.



Leading with Horses has created a safe place for coaches, therapists, researchers and individuals to explore their behaviors. We believe horses are uniquely adapted to coach humans. SCR offers a curriculum and structure that provides opportunities to teach critical life and communication skills. A few examples are;

### **Benefits of the horse as a partner in therapy;**

- Honest, non-judgmental feedback gains immediate trust – clients are willing to be more emotionally vulnerable

- Stimulus/Response: immediate responses by the horse demonstrates patterns of behavior and belief systems by both equine and handler
- Non-verbal interaction tests ideas of connection and attachment. horses communicate mostly with body language and limited vocal communication, clients are able to observe and practice how non-verbal communication might be impacting or influencing others in our lives.
- Awareness and Focus. Handling a large and powerful animal or dealing with the unknown creates a need for boundaries, awareness, and horsemanship/handling requires that we are observant, focused and attentive.
- Confidence: Horses are a majestic and powerful presence. For those who lack confidence, successfully managing a horse raises self-esteem and gives instant gratification. For those who have a false or over-confidence, the horse teaches humility through example as these powerful creatures live peacefully and cooperatively with us.

### **Funding**

As an independent nonprofit organization, Second Chance Ranch's primary funding comes from private donations, grants, and program services. Second Chance Ranch has cultivated a program to provide our community with a progressive solution to mental health wellness. While we are proud to offer free services to vulnerable and underserved communities, we appreciate revenue generated from the mental health partners who benefit from our services.

### **Board of Directors and Advisors**

Collectively, the Board of Directors includes equestrian professionals and those with backgrounds in nonprofit, marketing and business administration. The organization also draws on a community of volunteers that bring additional knowledge and expertise advisors in the fields of legal, accounting, marketing and development.

**SCR is seeking to expand our board of directors by inviting key business professionals in the Spokane community to provide strategic planning and implementation.**

**Katie Merwick, President | Executive Director** As the founder of SCR, Katie continues to be the visionary for the organization's direction of growth and program development. She has enjoyed a career of nearly four decades as a professional animal trainer, behaviorist, and author.

**Valerie Burgess, Vice President** –Valerie is a member of, and works at the corporate offices of, the Tulalip Tribe. She has been involved with SCR for ten years. Her home in northern Washington has served as a foster and rehabilitation facility for SCR, and she also contributes to marketing concepts and technical assistance for our website. Valerie is the owner of three SCR adopted horses.

**Jessica Hoppe, Secretary** – Jessica has been involved with SCR as a volunteer, adopter and board member for 12 years. She was formerly a writer for Thurston Talk.com and an anchor person for NBC Montana. Jessica has adopted four SCR horses, and now lives in North Carolina.

**Cindy Crawford, Director** – Cindy is a faith-based life counselor and retired ICU surgical nurse of 30 years.

### **Current Advisory Board**

- **Adam Karp, Attorney and advisor to Second Chance Ranch and Katie Merwick since 1993.** Mr. Karp is a Martindale-Hubbell AV Preeminent-rated and AVVO 10.0 Superb-rated lawyer who exclusively practices animal law throughout Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. Having graduated from **Gonzaga University** with a B.A. Honors (Majors in Political Science and Sociology, Minors in Spanish and Philosophy) and University of Washington with a J.D. and M.S. in statistics, he is in his twentieth year actively practicing law. He estimates having evaluated and/or handled over 6100 animal law cases to date and has authored *Understanding Animal Law*, published by Carolina Academic Press, in October 2016.

Mr. Karp founded and served as first chair of the Washington State Bar Association's Animal Law Section in 2002 and has held executive committee positions since its formation. He founded the Idaho State Bar Association's Animal Law Practice Section in 2012 and continues to serve on its executive committee. In 2015, he became an executive committee member of the Oregon State Bar Association's Animal Law Section. He has also been a vice chair of the American Bar Association's ("ABA") Animal Law Committee since its creation in 2004.

- **Nicolas Kovarik, a founding member at Piskel Yahne Kovarik, PLLC and *summa cum laude* of Gonzaga University.**
- **Suzanne Cantrell**, an EPONA certified therapist, has developed a unique program of her own, built on a lifetime of experience as an equestrian, horse trainer, and riding/therapy instructor. She is currently a select trainer enrolled in the 2018 national competition, "Retired Racehorse Project". Suzanne also holds several business management degrees with clients including Microsoft. Her role with SCR will also include serving on the advisory board for curriculum review as well as operating her therapeutic clinics and classes here at SCR with our horses in the near future.
- **Paul and Pam Padgett:** Professional business, finance and investment consulting.

## *Choose Your Coach*

