



For Immediate Release

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Attn: News and Health Reporters

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***June Is National Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month***

**Unique Equine Program Offers Proven Help for People with Dementia and Care Partners**

(Oakland, CA): The number of people living with Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia is on the rise and a cure remains elusive. In Northern California, an evidence-based equine therapy program is making a profound difference for people living with the condition and for family members who provide most of their care. [Connected Horse](#) is the first and foremost therapeutic equine-guided program to help both the person affected by dementia and their care partner reduce feelings of depression and activate social connection.

Through in-person workshops involving guided interactions with horses at local barns and with virtual activities, Connected Horse strengthens social bonds, improves life quality, and facilitates a greater sense of closeness and more engagement for participants. The non-profit organization offers free in-person workshops in the Bay Area, Napa Valley and Nevada, virtual programs for people anywhere, and a certification program for barns and equine facilities to expand the helpful in-person program to more communities throughout the country.

Research shows that engaging in enjoyable social activities [benefits brain health](#) for people living with mild cognitive changes and equine therapy has proven benefits for a variety of brain related issues from PTSD to autism. The founders of Connected Horse determined their equine guided workshops offers a host of benefits.

In a four-year initial study to assess the Connected Horse program, researchers at [University of California, Davis](#) School of Medicine, Alzheimer's Disease Center, and School of Veterinary Medicine Center for Equine Health along with Stanford University's School of Medicine and Red Barn Leadership Program found participants overwhelmingly reported positive quality-of-life outcomes, including increased feelings of social support, greater self-awareness, reduced feelings of anxiety and depression, and improved sleep. Hundreds of workshops later,

participants continue to recount that they “feel alive again” and empowered to engage in activities that are important to them.

Connected Horse also delivers programming for people at home and in adult day centers who are not able to attend in-person workshops at the barns. The Barn At-Home program includes a Sensory Engagement Kit that includes a workbook with activities and instructions and items that evoke emotional memories and sensory experiences of the barn. Participants receive the Kit, which include a small burlap bag of hay, saddle leather, and a horse brush along, and a zoom session with a Barn-At-Home trainer to orient the activities that ignite sensory awareness and stimulate connection. The Connected Horse training institute certifies barns and facilities throughout the world in the life-changing method and enables them to provide the helpful workshops.

According to the Alzheimer’s Association one in nine people over 65 are living with Alzheimer’s and most people with dementia and Alzheimer’s have a family member who cares for them; the disease affects a growing number of people. Fear, depression, and anxiety are hallmarks of dementia and are also experienced by care partners.

The founders, both lifelong equestrians and experts in gerontology and elder care, were inspired to develop a program to address the paucity of supports for people affected by dementia and care partners together. “We knew how little support was available,” said Nancy Shier Anzelmo, Connected Horse Cofounder. “What did exist was siloed either for the person with symptoms or the person doing care with them. There wasn’t anything for both people to be alongside each other. We developed the program for both people together because core relationships are crucial to our well-being.”

“Our programming engages people’s senses and attention through non-riding interactions with horses. Through watching and learning from horses, people can learn to relax, learn about non-verbal communication, and become confident that they can still live well with the disease,” added Paula Hertel, Connected Horse Cofounder.

“This is such an important lesson,” said Leticia Metherell, who attended a Connected Horse workshop series in Nevada with her mother who was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s in 2017. “As my mother’s ability to communicate reduces and as her disease progresses, these lessons help me understand there will always be connection. Verbal interaction is not always necessary for deep, meaningful interactions.”

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Journalists are invited to interview cofounders Paula Hertel and Nancy Shier Anzelmo and attend [upcoming workshops](#) in Northern California. Please contact [Media@connectedhorse.org](mailto:Media@connectedhorse.org) to arrange an interview or to attend an event.

Media are invited to a special Connected Horse fundraiser event, Lassos and Love, with Cavalia star and famed trick rider Kansas Carradine at Five Star Equestrian in Pleasanton on Friday, July 7. Contact [Laura@sparkactionconsulting.com](mailto:Laura@sparkactionconsulting.com) for more details and to reserve a seat.