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LEEDS, AL 35094

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2017
IN REVIEW



Best Job Ever

Horse Play camps and classes are always in high demand because they combine fun, learning, horses, goats, bunnies, ducks, construction paper, and paint! The programs vary from one time camps to ongoing classes, such as our newest program - Job Skills Training. The concept of the Job Skills program began when a parent asked if her son (one of our students) could also be a volunteer. He had recently started junior high and was on a vocational track. He loved working with animals and she thought that volunteering might help him learn skills to prepare him for the workforce, as well as help us out with our daily chores. Over time, the program has developed into a win-win for everyone! Here's what the parents have to say:

"He felt proud of his work and would share what he had done with others. They were able to choose from available jobs - so that they were doing something of interest to them. He got positive reinforcement for some emerging behaviors - social and workplace interactions with adults. He has good instincts and that was able to be acknowledged. His favorite part was probably having people to interact with. He is a people person!"

"The Red Barn job skills training program was more than just how to perform and interact in a job situation. The program increased his self-confidence. The life-skills of goal setting, performing and self-reflection were developed - crucial skills as he moves into adulthood."



2,434

**HOURS OF
CAMPS AND
CLASSES**

8,800

**HOURS OF
VOLUNTEER
SERVICE**



The Family That Volunteers Together...

Alex Rawls first began volunteering at The Red Barn through the Leeds High School Key Club, and he quickly discovered that this was an opportunity for him to make an impact in the lives of others. He started volunteering more often as well as attending horsemanship classes to become a horse handler. Four years later, Alex remains a faithful volunteer along with his mother, Jo Lynn Hoover, who fell in love with coming to the Barn as soon as Alex introduced her to it.

According to Alex, the best part about volunteering is getting to know the students he is paired with and experiencing the bond that is created between the student and volunteer. Having the same volunteer for the duration of the semester provides the student stability, comfort, and a sense of connection with those that are there to greet and assist them when they arrive for their lesson. "I had one student for a semester who would light up when he saw me. That confirms to me that I have made a difference in this kid's life."

Jo Lynn especially loves assisting in summer camps, when she and Alex can work together with a group of kids in a variety of activities. She recalls one particular camper who had grown so attached to Alex that he would ask, "Where is Ow-wix (Alex)? I want Ow-wix!" whenever he would step away to help another student.

"Being able to serve different children each semester is equally important to me, because I can create that connectedness with more children," Alex smiles as he reflects on how many kids he has gotten to know at the Barn.

During the winter months when lessons slow down, Jo Lynn instead spends her time volunteering for special events and helping out with one of her favorite chores - cleaning stalls! "This type of volunteer work is very rewarding in the sense that you know you are helping ease the workload of the staff."

We are grateful to our volunteers. Without their servant hearts, the Barn could not function! YOU can make a difference by volunteering!

*Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.
Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. ~ Psalm 37:3-4*



An Interview with Randy Pence

Randy Pence is one of the many Marines who travel to Alabama to participate in the annual Take the Reins Run in Memory of Cpl. Anthony Clay Ward. Randy and Clay served together in USMC Fox 2/11. While the Marines are in town each year, the Red Barn welcomes them for an afternoon of barn activities including grooming and painting the horses, and visiting with the critters that inhabit the property.

How did you meet Clay? I met Clay when I joined Fox 2/11, right before we were deployed to Iraq.

Do you have a favorite memory/story about Clay? Honestly, there is no way I could pick just one story. Clay could always put a smile on your face no matter the situation. He was always a jokester and willing to do whatever it took to make you laugh. He had that recognizable laugh and smirk that is impossible to forget.

What does Clay's Memorial Run and the weekend mean to you? The run weekend is an amazing time to reconnect with your USMC brothers, and a rare opportunity to be able to talk and reminisce about our days together.

How has it impacted you? I honestly feel like it has changed me as a person because I have become more open and emotional about my time in the Marines. I have had friends tell me that they notice that I talk about being in the Marines more, and share stories and open up emotionally about my feelings instead of bottling those feelings up and locking them away until I explode.

Favorite part of the run weekend? My favorite part of the weekend is the time we just sit around and share stories and laugh until we almost cry. The bond and the love I have for the other Marines is unreal. Even if I don't talk to one of them for months, I can then pick up the phone to text or call, and it will be like we didn't miss a beat.

Is there anything you would like to say? I'm so thankful that Momma Ward and The Red Barn put this run on for us. I missed the first year, but that will be the one and only time I miss.

Beyond the Barn

In addition to providing direct service to children and adults with disabilities and special needs, our programs include training opportunities for instructors, volunteers, and other similar agencies. This improves our own programs, as well as extends our reach beyond the barn to help even more children.

"My daughter and I came over a year ago to tour your beautiful facility and to gain wisdom from your experiences with The Red Barn. That day spent with you was invaluable and I have referenced info frequently that I learned from you that day. We are at a new facility and moving forward as a nonprofit. We are now focusing on the therapeutic riding program and have a PATH certified instructor. We'll be seeing students soon!! That you so much for your help."

- Jennifer Wimberley, Training Program Participant



226
HOURS OF
PROGAMS
TO VETERANS

1,428
HOURS OF
TRAINING

Someone is Always Waiting for You!

Autumn Reed is a talkative pre-teen girl who eagerly anticipates her days at The Red Barn. However, communication hasn't always been easy for Autumn.

Mike and Alison Reed found The Red Barn through the recommendation of a school social worker who believed that the Barn could enhance Autumn's social and communication skills. Since starting riding lessons, she has learned how to verbally communicate her wants and needs with her instructor, who has been instrumental in bringing Autumn 'out of her shell' according to her family, and who she identifies as her 'safe' person with whom to share her journey. Therapeutic horseback riding has opened a fresh world to Autumn. Before coming to The Red Barn, Autumn struggled with verbal communication. Now she communicates freely with everyone!

In addition to private riding lessons, Autumn also participates in the family program along with her parents. Raising a child with a cognitive disability can be challenging, because it affects how the child processes instructions. For example, a simple instruction such as 'time to get out of the shower' can be difficult for a child with a cognitive disability, because they know they need to get out of the shower, but just cannot put action to the task. During their time together at the Barn, the Reeds are learning methods to bridge the gap, which has made a world of difference in this family's life.

Autumn would like everyone to know that "No matter how bad your day may be, there is always someone waiting for you at the Barn."



What Parents Say

“Supporting the Red Barn gives children and families a place of solace. Peace exists in an indescribable way when you drive through the gates. Not only are the children strengthened physically and emotionally, but parents are renewed and families thrive because of all the Red Barn continually gives to its participants.”



1,865
HOURS OF
RIDING
LESSONS