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3504 Alpine Circle
Austin, TX 78704

December 8, 2017

Beth Eakman Re
St. Edward's University
3001 South Congress Avenue
Austin, TX 78704

Dear Professor Eakman,

I am writing to you to explain my grant, the process of writing it, the difficulties I faced while doing so, and how I overcame them. My biggest set back in this project was having to start over again in early November because the nonprofit I had originally intended to work with sat on their hands and couldn't even schedule a time and date for me to visit their facilities over the course of two months. As much as I liked their mission, I realized that if it would be this difficult to just meet them, that later on when I needed forms and data from them, that they would not be helpful then either. I visited HARTH Foundation on Veteran's Day, and while I wasn't able to see the programs in action, I was able to meet the horses and view the facilities. Here, I spoke with Sherry about the different programs available, and found a particular interest in the veteran weekend retreats.

After visiting the Texas Grant Resource Center, I decided on working with Meadows Foundation. I found them by searching for grants given to nonprofits that do dog therapy for veterans with mental illnesses or disabilities. After visiting their website, I found that funding mental health programs was one of their main initiatives. With some further searching, I found that they had donated \$25,000 to an equine therapy program for people with disabilities, so I felt that they were a perfect match. I landed on the amount of \$10,000 for my proposal when I realized how much the foundation had donated previously. As stated in the grant, this would fund three weekend retreats, instead of just enough for one retreat, like we were initially going to ask for.

When writing the grant, I found difficulty in including quantitative data. I had emailed Sherry some questions in late November, which she never replied to, but I'm hoping that some of the other statistics and the genuineness of the testimonies will make up for that. I don't think HARTH has a lot of solid statistical data as of yet anyways, since they are such a new nonprofit. I was scared that this may make my evaluation section not as strong, but I think that since I showed its something in progress, that that will create more confidence in the funder.

Another difficulty I found was finding hard data to support my claims. There is no straight-forward number for how many veterans have PTSD, since depends on when they served, and

since many go undiagnosed. I tried to present this in a concise way to the funder, so that they could see it was still a significant amount of people, without drowning them in numbers. The majority of writing this paper was just going back and checking my notes from the text to see what I had to include in each section and to make sure I was being thorough without being overly repetitive and wordy.

My foundation's grant proposal requirement asked for everything in the categories provided in this version of the grant; however, they wanted me to break down the sections a bit more specifically than asked here.

I feel confident in my ability to win this grant; however, I decided to hold off from submitting it just yet, as I would like to wait to hear your feedback first if you have any, so I can modify the grant if need be and increase the likeliness of winning. The Meadows Foundation has a rolling submission, so I'm not under any deadline constraints, but since it does take them 3-4 months to get back with a response, I'd like to submit the proposal sooner than later. This project means a lot to me, as my grandfathers were WWII and Korean War veterans, and while they didn't suffer from PTSD, I think it is important to give back to those who protect our country.

Sincerely,

Marji Dzenko

Grants Administration Department
The Meadows Foundation
3003 Swiss Avenue
Dallas, Texas 75204-6090

Dear Meadows Foundation,

Hundreds of thousands of U.S. veterans return home after fighting in combat for our country, only to experience difficulties readjusting to everyday life due to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other trauma-induced mental illnesses. Many struggle to find effective therapeutic methods; however, equine psychotherapy has been found to be one of the few treatments to create a significant positive change in their condition. The Healing and Recovery Through Horses Foundation (HARTH) provides individual and group setting equine therapy sessions, in addition to weekend retreats for veterans to participate in equine therapy, speak with professional counselors, and immerse themselves in the beautiful nature of the Hill Country, all free of charge. The Meadows Foundation's generous investment of \$10,000 will provide three weekend retreats for veterans in the upcoming year.

Sincerely,

Sherry Atherton
Founder and Board President

Introduction

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a condition defined by the American Psychiatric Association as a psychiatric disorder that can occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, a serious accident, a terrorist act, war/combat, rape or other violent personal assault. Those who serve in the military are at an increased vulnerability. There are about 1.5 million veterans residing in Texas, and anywhere between 11-31% of these suffer from PTSD, depending on era of service, according to the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. Because of this, PTSD affects many thousands of veterans in Texas alone, and hinders their ability to function normally in everyday life, in addition to compromising their ability to work, be social, and manage relationships and family. While there are multiple treatment modalities available for PTSD, equine therapy has been found to be particularly effective. The Healing and Recovery Through Horses Foundation (HARTH) provides veteran weekend retreats where veterans suffering from PTSD and other trauma-induced mental illnesses can have a relaxing weekend in the countryside, where they can participate in equine psychotherapy and counseling, while being surrounded by a small group of supportive peers. The retreats are all-inclusive and free for veterans, so that they do not have to worry about financing something so invaluablely helpful towards their recovery. HARTH Foundation is seeking a grant of \$10,000 to support three veteran weekend retreats in 2018.

The Meadows Foundation was founded in 1948 with the mission “to assist people and institutions of Texas improve the circumstances of life for themselves and future generations.” One of the three main initiatives of the Meadows Foundation is in mental health. Through HARTH’s veteran weekend retreats, the Meadows Foundation can help Texan veterans with PTSD and other trauma-induced mental illnesses improve their lives through healing, aid, and recovery through equine therapy. Additionally, the Meadows Foundation had donated \$25,000 in 2015 to the GaitWay program at ManeGait, which has a similar goal of helping the disabled through equine therapy.

Organization Information

HARTH Foundation (Healing and Recovery Through Horses) was founded in March 2015 and received its 501(c)(3) designation in August 2015. Since 2004, the facility in which HARTH foundation resides has operated as a Show Jumping Equestrian Facility and in 2015 transitioned to an equine assisted therapy center. HARTH’s mission is “aid, healing, and recovery through horses.”

The private 21-acre facility is located in Burnet, Texas, on the shores of Lake Buchanan, with 200 feet of waterfront and trails available to its clients to aid in the healing process. The facility is in the heart of the beautiful Hill Country, where it is removed from the chaos of city life, making those who visit feel at ease. For the weekend retreat programs, there are on-site cabins, where veterans can stay while participating in the program.

Founder and Board President, Sherry Atherton, has many years of experience both competitively showing and caring for horses. After competitively showing horses for years, Ms. Atherton has since retired her horses. She realized that her passion for horses, specifically the calming effect she finds from being around them, is something she wanted to share with others and use as a way to give back. She thought it would be best to share this experience with those who could most benefit from it and enlisted the help of long-time horseshow friend, Priscilla Flawn-Chopp, who knew first-hand about the benefits of equine therapy. With Priscilla's educational focus on counseling along with her equine experience, the mission came to life. Together they did the research, interviewed countless experts in the field, and put together the groundwork for HARTH Foundation.

Currently, HARTH offers veteran weekend retreat programs, horsemanship certifications, and equine psychotherapy lessons, which are available either individually or in a group setting. HARTH has only been able to do two to three veteran retreat weekends per year because of the costs associated with running the weekend retreats. For this same reason, they have also had to limit each veteran to participating in a maximum four weekend retreats free of cost.

Project Overview

Problem

Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a serious issue faced by a significant number of veterans. PTSD often causes flashbacks, making the veteran relive the trauma they experienced to a certain degree, ultimately leaving them unable to cope with daily life in a safe and healthy way. This harms their productivity in the economy, and handicaps them socially. It can hinder their ability to know how to act in line with accepted societal norms and make them feel out of control. PTSD directly affects one's health, relationships, work, and day-to-day life. According to the American Psychological Association, 44% of veterans report readjustment difficulties after returning from deployments in Iraq and/or Afghanistan. The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs reports that PTSD in veterans varies depending on service area, with 11-20% of Operations Iraqi Freedom/Enduring Freedom, 12% of Gulf War, and an estimated 30% of Vietnam War veterans are estimated to have PTSD within a given year. According to the U.S. Census, there are 18.8 million veterans in the United States as of 2015, with 1,496,724 residing in Texas. Texas also has the second highest veteran population, with 7.6% of the population having served. HARTH veteran weekend retreats serves veterans of all ages and backgrounds. The equine therapy focuses on specifically helping veterans suffering from PTSD and other trauma-induced mental illnesses.

Solution

HARTH provides all inclusive weekend retreats for veterans, free of charge. These 3-day weekend retreats allow veterans to participate in equine therapy and to get away from the bustle of the city. This program is completely free to veterans, active duty service members, and their families with the goal of helping to improve their quality of life. While able to

accommodate up to eight veterans, the average number of participants is usually six veterans. Having a small group helps keep the veterans from feeling overwhelmed, and allows them to form close bonds with those experiencing similar difficulties to them. This, along with the low-pressure environment provided by the location and activities, help veterans relax and be themselves without worry of judgment. The retreats focus on equine therapy, but also include other activities and services, such as hiking and professional counseling. In the future, HARTH would like to also include other activities like fly fishing and art or music therapy.

The equine therapy used at HARTH does not incorporate riding, instead focusing on horsemanship. They have found major therapeutic benefits through activities with horses such as grooming and interactions on the ground are widely accepted as beneficial for participants. These activities are important for bonding, working on trust, and building relationships, among other benefits. Horsemanship can teach judgment, body language, and both verbal and nonverbal communication, amongst other skills. Those who suffer from PTSD often struggle with communicating and interacting with others in a customary way, so horsemanship can help them overcome these difficulties. Horses, in particular, are found to be effective in therapy because they are animals of prey, so they need build a relationship with an individual to trust them, whereas dogs are often friendly towards everyone. They are also biofeedback machines that mirror the feelings of the person they're with, so if a veteran is on edge or anxious, the horse will reflect that. This physically shows the veteran how they're acting, and lets them know if they need to calm down. One must be calm in order to be around a horse safely, so this allows the veterans to check themselves and evaluate the situation. Because of their own hypervigilance, veterans with PTSD easily understand and can relate to the trust and hypervigilance in a horse.

Cost

We are requesting \$10,000 to go towards hosting three veteran retreat weekends in 2018. At a costs \$550 to host each veteran per retreat, and with the average of six veterans attending each retreat, there is a cost of \$3,300 per retreat. Three retreats would cost a total of \$9,900, which we then rounded up to \$10,000, where the extra money going towards the expenses of the horses or the costs of the next retreat. Since the retreats are all-inclusive for veterans, this funding would cover all of their needs for their stay on the ranch. This includes all meals and snacks, upkeep of the facilities and cabins, and paying the professionals who help at the retreats. Most of the people who work at HARTH are volunteers, but HARTH does pay for professional equine psychotherapists, equine trainers, and mental health counselors to provide their services to the veterans. Since Ms. Atherton and her family already own the horses and the property, the funding is able to go directly towards the veterans' needs.

By granting this request, the Meadows Foundation would be doubling the number of veteran weekend retreats per year. This would directly impact many veterans seeking to participate in these weekend retreats, which often get filled up in advance, due to high demand. This would give more veterans the opportunity to experience equine therapy in a low-pressure environment with peers, without having to worry about being able to afford the experience.

Mission

As previously stated, HARTH's mission is "aid, healing, and recovery through horses." HARTH executes this mission through its programs, including the veteran weekend retreats. It does this by providing equine psychotherapy and horsemanship lessons to veterans to help them heal and recover from their mental illnesses. It aids them by creating a community of peers with similar experiences and difficulties, in addition to providing them with alternative resources like professional counseling.

Goals

The main goal of the veteran weekend retreats is to help veterans suffering from PTSD and other trauma-induced mental illnesses heal and overcome the difficulties of their disorder through the use of equine psychotherapy. Another goal is to expose more veterans to this type of therapy and show them the effectiveness of it, with the ultimate goal of them continuing to seek equine therapy sessions outside of the weekend retreats. A final goal is to create an environment in which veterans feel that they have a community to be themselves and seek help, while also helping others.

Objectives

HARTH is seeking to change the way in which veterans with PTSD find healing and aid for their illness. This will be accomplished through the efforts of the equine psychotherapists, equine trainers, counselors, and volunteers at HARTH, who help make it an impactful and peaceful healing experience. This change will be measured by seeing how many veterans have returned for either another weekend retreat or a personal therapy session after their initial retreat. HARTH also gives brief surveys asking veterans to rate their anxiety and stress levels upon coming in and then again upon leaving. Since this is on a numerical scale, it can be used as a data set to see to what extent an individual felt that the program had helped him or her. This change will take place for the duration of the program; however, the extent to which each veteran is positively changed by the equine therapy depends on the individual. Some may take longer than others to overcome their PTSD.

Evaluation

The impact of the HARTH veteran weekend retreats has been immensely successful, with many veterans returning for either another weekend retreat or for personal therapy sessions. Coming to terms with and then finding effective treatment for PTSD is a huge step for many, due to the anxiety and extreme stress that sufferers feel. The fact that HARTH has become a place that so many veterans feel comfortable being themselves at and feel that they are healing from their equine therapy sessions is a testament to the impact of the program. As previously mentioned, HARTH had to begin limiting veterans to only four free weekend retreats each, which shows the eagerness towards and effectiveness of the program. Don Ludden, a U.S. Army veteran from Austin, said that "The ranch and the personnel that maintain are nothing short of spectacular. I

returned to the ranch soon after my initial visit because it afforded me another opportunity to unwind and forget about the stresses of everyday life. Forming bonds with Cappy, Sammy and Doobie who I interacted with, was a new and valuable experience that is otherwise unattainable in urban settings." An Air Force veteran said, "This weekend retreat was much more than I expected. This experience has encouraged me to try some things even while I'm still scared." A retired US Army Colonel praised HARTH saying, "I've always avoided retreats as I'm not a good "sharer". Wasn't sure what to expect with the equine therapy sessions but decided to go anyway. It was OUTSTANDING! It is not intrusive or pushy. Loved it!" Lastly, a Marine veteran said, "HARTH is a place to simply be. There are no specific expectations or criteria to be met. HARTH is a place where we veterans can be with our peers and simply enjoy each other's company along with the magnificent horses and peaceful setting. HARTH staff and volunteers are true patriots that love our country and the men and women who have sworn to protect it." The direct impact of this program is clear from the veterans' testimonies; many who thank HARTH exclusively for helping them not only with their PTSD, but also with their relationship with family and others.

To better quantitate this impact, HARTH has been collecting data of those it has served, but since the program is new and only a few retreats can be held per year, there is not enough data collected yet to make statistically significant claims. However, from what has been observed so far, every veteran that has attended the weekend retreats has had a positive experience and comes out feeling better than before the retreat.

Sustainability

Currently, HARTH's programs are funded by local businesses and organizations (see "Partnerships" below) and by donations made through their website. On the HARTH website, individuals can make a one-time or a recurring donation, an in-kind donation (a wish list is provided), or launch a personal fundraising campaign. Additionally, individuals can sponsor a meal for a weekend retreat, if they do not have the means to support a veteran's entire retreat. HARTH also encourages people to volunteer; this is mostly with property maintenance and barn tasks, but can also be fundraising coordination and office assistance. Because of the many volunteers, HARTH can make the weekend retreats more cost-effective. Reaching out to large foundations, like the Meadows Foundation, with the prospect of a continuation grant is another method of sustainability being sought.

Financial Support (Partnerships)

Sponsors of HARTH include:

- Texas American Saddle Horse Association
- Chisum Photography
- Stitch Gallery
- Circle S Pest Control
- Minuteman Rentals
- Knights of Columbus
- Westminster Senior Living
- Fall Hard Films
- Artist Franco Mondini Ruiz

- Texas Relocation Company
- The Urology Team P.A.
- Smith-King Designs
- The Menagerie
- Walgreens
- Cadillac
- Covert
- Flores Septic Service
- Artist Bryson Brooks
- Tractor Supply Company
- Blue Star Cafeteria
- Clare Christie Fine Art
- H.E.B
- Pop Austin
- Hoover Building Supply
- Kenfield Golf Cars
- Adam Gouldie
- Powell Financial Partners
- Bill's Burgers Wings and Things
- Gusto Italian Kitchen and Wine Bar
- Lakeshore
- Café Twenty-Three Hundred
- Santa Rita Tex Mex Cantina
- Body Brite Austin
- 34th Street Café

Key Personnel Bios

Board of Directors

- Sherry Atherton, Board President
Ms. Sherry Atherton is the founder and president of HARTH. Horses have always been a passion of hers, and she has many years of experience caring for and competing with horses. Before starting HARTH, she worked in business where she was a high-tech executive and participated in three company IPOs, so she is familiar with what it takes to make a business successful. She has built first class, scalable organizations from the ground up and knows how to build teams oriented for success. In 2004, Ms. Atherton left the corporate world to focus on raising her daughter and showing horses. Being a cancer survivor, Ms. Atherton has experienced firsthand the healing power of horses.
- Howard Morrison, Secretary
Mr. Howard Morrison has been an avid equestrian from a young age, later showing, competing, and then riding professionally. He uses his experience with managing grants and contracts awarded to educational institutions, as well as his degree in Business Administration, to help HARTH.
- Jen Banton, Board Treasurer
Ms. Jennifer Banton came to HARTH with experience in the nonprofit sector through her own non-profit, SMART Smiles, which helps underprivileged children receive dental care. Ms. Banton also has served in the US Marine Corps as a CH-53E Helicopter Crewchief. After her service, Ms. Banton came to HARTH and experienced the therapeutic effect of the horses. Seeing how much the horses helped her and her fellow veterans inspired her to give back through HARTH.

Advisory Board

- Dr. Cynthia Franklin

Dr. Cynthia Franklin is Assistant Dean for Doctoral Education and Professor and holder of the Stiernberg/Spencer Family Professorship in Mental Health at The University of Texas at Austin, School of Social Work. In her research, she studies the effectiveness of solution-focused brief therapy with children, adolescents, and families. Dr. Franklin grew up with horses, and has personally seen how horses contribute to one's mental well-being and sense of community.

- Dr. Tania Glenn, PsyD, LCSW, CTS

Dr. Tania Glenn is the president of Tania Glenn and Associates (TGA), PA, a clinical practice in Austin, TX and the TGA Trauma Defense Team (TDT), a sub-component focused on promoting critical incident response and peer support teams and providing situational awareness training. As a leading national clinician in the identification of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Dr. Glenn specializes in the treatment of emergency responders and combat veterans by providing briefs on pre- and post-deployment, combat stress, and family readiness. She has many years of experience recognizing symptoms of PTSD and battlefield stress and providing intensive therapy to combat their PTSD. Additionally, Dr. Glenn grew up around horses, showing horses, and was even a member of the University of Texas Equestrian Team.

Licensed Professionals

- Jason Ledlie, Equine Psychotherapist

Mr. Jason Ledlie is a professional equine psychotherapist, obtaining a degree in Psychology from Texas A&M while taking many Equine Science courses as well. He has also trained with several equine assisted therapy programs including The Horse Boy Foundation, The O.K. Corral Series, and Unbridled Faith Farms. He is now finishing a post-graduate "Equine-Assisted Mental Health Practitioner" program at the University of Denver. In his therapeutic work, Mr. Ledlie strives to create an environment that allows his clients to center-out, to breathe, to explore, to undertake, to dare, to dream, to change course, and to reconnect.

- Amy Sugeno, LCSW, Certified Ecotherapist

Ms. Amy Sugeno worked as a wildlife biologist for many years, which led her to realizing the healing, restorative powers of nature on people. Now as a ecotherapist, Ms. Sugeno helps heal clients through nature based therapies along with conventional therapeutic methods. Ms. Sugeno has experience working with clients with PTSD and other trauma-induced illnesses through her private practice and through working with local nonprofits.

Equestrian Professionals

- Jereny Johnson, Director of Equestrian Programs
Ms. Jereny Johnson comes from a family of horse professionals and has been riding and showing professionally for over 25 years. She has many years of experience training horses and enjoys helping others experience the benefits of horsemanship.
- Julie A. Biggs, PATH International Certified Instructor
Ms. Julie Biggs has always been a horse enthusiast, and began showing as an adult. In 2008, she teamed up with Jennifer Kaut M. Ed at Inspire Behavior to put together a therapeutic riding program for children with autism and other special needs. Three years later, she obtained her PATH International Instructor Certification and has continued to work with special needs clients.