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'Connected Horse' program

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Hertel had been working with gerontologist Schier Anzelmo for years; together they decided to create a program that would support the dyad: both the affected adult and their caregiver.

Hertel had been involved with horses all her life on a recreational level, and knew that in the presence of that powerful animal, transformation can happen. Gloria and Richard were invited to join the UC Davis pilot and were able to come back twice as Connected Horse partnered with Xenophon Therapeutic Riding Center in Orinda to use their barn and horses.

Connected Horse is about approaching, sensing, touching, smelling, and taking care of the horses by grooming them or walking with them.

Gloria says that when her husband was diagnosed four years ago she became very anxious, she needed skills, she needed help for herself in order to help her husband. She explains that the first blessing came by participating in the program together, sharing the closeness of a mutual experience. She says that her husband understands that they can do things together and that she still has a partner.

The caregiver explains that at Connected Horse clients do not have to do anything, they are present with the horses, and the animals know where people are

physically and emotionally, and are supportive of them. "They can see you, they are present," Gloria says. She noted that her husband had a natural ability with the horse and it let him pick up its leg to have its hoof cleaned. She said that his feeling of being able to make a difference for the horse, to be able to take care of the large animal, made him very happy. Richard said he had clear memories of the different places he had been with the horses and he talked fondly about the program.

Gloria even goes a step further into an almost spiritual realm when she talks about Connected Horse. She says that the horses being totally in the present moment understand and feel when humans are troubled and are capable of helping process those feelings. She says it had transformed her approach to life, that she notices things differently, is more in the moment and less judgmental. She adds that the horses do things in their own time, that our will to be in control has to be put aside, that it is like God's will, to which one surrenders.

Hertel explains the horses' natural empathy through their genetic makeup. She explains that they are herd animals and that despite their size, they can become prey in the wild. "They have evolved to be in tune with their environment and alert," Hertel says. "In the wild they will

mirror each other's emotions and they do the same with humans. If you are nervous they will sense it and become nervous, if you are relaxed, they will relax." Hertel explains that the clients are taught to breath and ground themselves if they feel nervous; they will then notice the difference in the horse's behavior; the clients then understand that they can have an impact on their environment and can take the realization that they are still in control home with them.

The program, says Hertel, gives each participant something different; the two university trials measured the program's efficiency. Clients were tested before and after the six-week sessions and the results showed an increase in confidence, self-worth, a decrease in the feelings of isolation, and a physical improvement as well – people stood straighter. What is most important to Hertel is nurturing the dyad's quality of life. For her having them getting a new experience together strengthens the relationship, and offers a way for the two to fight together for the quality of their story.

Connected Horse is a service that is grant funded and that can be offered to families affected by dementia. Available in Lamorinda, the program has now secured funding to develop it in Alameda County. More information can be found at www.connectedhorse.com.

OUSD board school bonds

... continued from page A7

Stuart House, OUSD Director of Facilities, Operations and Maintenance, but speaking as a private citizen who resides in Orinda, explained this at the meeting. "My house is valued at about \$2 mil-

lion," he said, "with an assessed value of about \$1.2 million." He calculates that adding \$60 per \$100,000 of assessed value will increase his annual tax bill by \$720. "This doesn't seem like a big ask," he said. "It's not going to break the bank." Assessed values differ based upon the market value of the home at the time it was purchased, with older homes having lower assessed values and more recently purchase homes having higher assessed values.

According to attorney David Casnocha, bond counsel for the school district, the bonds will be issued in a three-part series two years apart for each issue. Bonds usually have a 25-year term. Therefore, according to Casnocha, the period of the tax will likely be 31 years, ending 25 from the date the last bond series is sold. The two ballot measures show slightly different annual obligations because one bond measure is \$5 million greater than the other and they differ slightly, with one focusing more on facilities updates to improve academic excellence and STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) programs, the other focusing more on insuring the safety of and repair of the buildings.

One major goal of the plan is to install air conditioning in the schools. The primary objectives of the bonds is to fund the facilities master plan, which is designed to update STEAM classrooms, provide laboratories in each school, maintain libraries, upgrade technology infra-

structure, and acquire, construct and/or repair classroom facilities, sites and equipment. The bonds will also fund safety measures, such as electrical updates, fire safety, security lighting, communications and camera systems, and classroom locks.

According to the district, Orinda schools have fallen behind neighboring areas such as Lafayette, Moraga and Walnut Creek, and updates are needed to insure high-quality instruction in core academic subjects such as science, technology, engineering, math, reading and writing to help prepare students to compete in high school, college and 21st-century careers. Without air conditioning, schools could be forced to close when temperatures are too high.

The bond elections are governed by constitutional and statutory provisions that require that two-thirds of the school board must approve the measures being placed on the ballot and 55 percent of the voters must approve the measures before they can take effect. In addition, the laws provide accountability requirements, including annual independent financial and performance audits of how funds are spent, and the formation of a Citizens' Bond Oversight Committee.

To view the comprehensive master plan, visit <http://lpamas-terplans.com/orinda-usd-fmp/>.