

Horse power

'Riding Home' author to talk about how the animals help heal humans

By Angeljean Chiaramida Staff writer Apr 21, 2016



KERRY HAYES

Tim Hayes, pictured with his horse Austin, will talk about his book "Riding Home: The Power of Horses to Heal" at next Saturday's Newburyport Literary Festival and at a fundraiser next Sunday at The Carriage Barn in Kensington, N.H. Courtesy photo



What's the outcome of a psychology degree from the University of Vermont, a career in filmmaking and a passion for horses?

For New York City native Tim Hayes, it's "Riding Home: The Power of Horses to Heal," and both the man and his book will be featured at next weekend's Newburyport Literary Festival.

Now an internationally recognized natural horsemanship clinician who splits his time between homes in Long Island, New York, and a horse ranch near Stowe, Vermont, Hayes is the first to say that the journey that took him from studying the human psyche to making movies to conducting equine clinics and teaching at two New England universities is a surprise to him.

"I grew up in Greenwich Village. I got on my first horse when I was 48," said the 71-year-old Hayes. "I was as far from a midlife crisis as anyone could be. My dream then was still to see my name above the title of a Hollywood blockbuster. I wanted to win an Academy Award.

"But as I rode, I was drawn to the horse," he said. "I wanted to learn everything about what made them tick, just as in psychology, you learn everything about what makes humans tick."

Hayes spent years learning about natural horsemanship from some of the most famous "horse whisperers" in the country. Natural horsemanship is a relatively new notion in the equine world, he said, pertaining to dealing with the species based on what's natural for the horse. It's somewhat contrary to centuries of the traditional human-horse relationship based on how people wanted things to go.

The culmination of his study, and more than a decade's worth of knowledge and case studies, is "Riding Home."

Newburyport Literary Festival co-chairwoman Vicki Hendrickson became aware of Hayes through Ann Miles of The Carriage Barn, which offers equine therapy programs.

Miles teaches horsemanship classes for Newburyport Adult & Community Education, of which Hendrickson is the director.

"Ann brought the book to my attention," Hendrickson said. "We thought it was a good idea because we have a lot of people in this region who are interested in horses."

According to Miles, Hayes' book breaks ground in the field of employing the animal's innate horse sense to benefit humans.

She's so impressed with Hayes that she invited him to The Carriage Barn's headquarters at Trundle Bed Farm in Kensington, N.H., for two fundraising events after the Literary Festival — "Meet the Author" on the evening of Saturday, April 30, and a clinic and demonstrations the following day. He'll speak on differing equine therapeutic techniques, Miles said.

Miles said that Hayes offers powerful stories in "Riding Home," highlighting how horses can help people with physical and emotional injuries. She cites a case study in Hayes' book about the interaction between inmates in the Colorado state prison system and the wild mustangs they work with to tame prior to the horses' adoptions.

"It's the first time many of these men had ever touched a living animal," Miles said. "We see it heal them. We see a horse react to a human being and understand his trauma. There is so much happening between the 'quiet' of the relationship between these two creatures of different species."

Hayes said that horse therapy is only about 10 years old, but it can be extraordinarily helpful with battered and bruised humans. He's seen it work in stunning ways with people in need, including American veterans returning from war with severe physical injuries, as well as post-traumatic stress disorders.

How do horses know what to do, or not do, when humans are in distress? Hayes said that horses can see things that people are trying to hide because of instinctual survival skills developed over the millennia.

"Horses are prey," he said. "They have the ability to see and understand everything around them. They developed that ability so they could avoid being eaten. They can read every nuance of our body language, even when we're trying to hide it. A horse can look and tell: This person is emotionally wounded."

The result is horses' age-old gift of intuitiveness, needed to judge threatening beings and situations, also allows them to understand what's going inside humans, even when the pain is hidden deep within a person's protective shell, he said.

Further, a horse's nonthreatening nature allows men and women in need to open up in a way they never would with another human being, Hayes said.

"Many veterans with PTSD don't want to talk to a human therapist and tell them of the hell they've been through," Hayes said. "They're afraid of what that person might think of them. But they'll talk to a horse. Horses don't judge them. One veteran told me after working with a horse, he felt accepted for the first time. It allowed the healing to start."

If you go

What: "How Horses Heal Humans and Help Us All Become Better People," a book talk, signing and Q&A with Tim Hayes

When: Saturday, April 30, 10 a.m.

Where: Old South Church, 29 Federal St., Newburyport

How much: Free

More information: www.newburyportliteraryfestival.org

What: "Meet the Author" with Tim Hayes, plus fundraiser auction and raffles

When: Saturday, April 30, 5 to 7 p.m.

Where: Kensington Grange Hall, Amesbury Road, Route 150, Kensington, N.H.

How much: \$20 for adults, free for children under 12. Proceeds support therapeutic programs.

More information: 603-378-0140, carriage-barn@comcast.net or www.carriage-barn.org

What: Clinic and demonstrations with Tim Hayes and Ann Miles

When: Sunday, May 1, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Where: The Carriage Barn, Trundle Bed Lane, Kensington, N.H.

How much: \$20 per participant (group and family discounts available), \$50 per professional for certification for attendance. Proceeds support therapeutic programs.

More information: 603-378-0140, carriage-barn@comcast.net or www.carriage-barn.org

More horse talk

Can't get enough about horses? The Newburyport Literary Festival is also hosting Mary Gaitskill, author of "The Mare." The novel tells the story of a Dominican girl, the Anglo woman who introduces her to riding and the horse who changes everything. Gaitskill will present Saturday, April 30, at 1 p.m. at Central Congregational Church, 14 Titcomb St.

Volunteers welcome

The Newburyport Literary Festival is in need of volunteers to help out with this year's event, particularly at the afternoon events. The shift runs from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, April 30. To sign up or for more information, visit www.newburyportliteraryfestival.org/get-involved.

0 comments



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