

## **PROJECT HOPE**

Project Hope is a unique, nine-month program designed to fulfill an array of essential needs for troubled teenage boys. The FY12 program is a pilot project designed specifically for teenage boys ages 14-17 years old. The primary areas of focus are; education, health, counseling and life skills services.

The selected participants for Project Hope have various presenting behavioral issues associated with; juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, poverty, learning disorders, violence, child abuse and neglect, and/or many other behavioral or emotional disorders. It is a known fact that many youth suffering from these issues have a difficult time succeeding in any aspect of their lives.

The educational and case management services are pretty self explanatory. Teaching educational basics essential to today's societal demands and linking individuals and families with other necessary community resources will be critical. What makes Project Hope unique are the counseling and life skills components. Horses will be used as an added variable to the plan for each individual.

Since 1997, Ride To Pride has specialized in equine-assisted services for children, youth and families. The successful core of Ride To Pride is the equine-assisted behavioral health program. To assist the individuals participating in Project Hope to meet their goals, the current horse industry in the USA and live horses will be used.

In the last ten years, the use of horses for business and recreational pleasure has boomed. The breeding of show, pleasure and working horses has increased by the thousands due to this demand. The desire for horses that are educated and old enough to "do something" continues to thrive. However, the demand for young horses has declined and so have the number of qualified individuals to train them for use. The industry is now over populated and underserved, resulting in abuse, neglect and other forms of improper management.

In 2007 the last two slaughterhouses for horses were shut down in the United States as an effort to stop cruelty and inhumane practices. At that time it was reported that over 100,000 horses were slaughtered annually for their meat. The ban however, didn't cover exporting horses for slaughter, so slaughterhouses moved their operations to the Canadian and Mexican borders. This means horses headed for slaughter not only endure the cruelty of the slaughterhouse, but they also suffer abuse during the transport. Once across the border, horses bound for slaughter in Mexico are packed into trailers often designed for other animals, without segregating by sex or physical condition, and are typically given little to no food, water, or rest. Once there, they endure tremendous amount of stress and trauma during the process.

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It is this industry and market that will be used to engage our participants of Project Hope. The students will be educated on the industry and what has happened since the ban in 2007.

During the course of the nine-month program, the students will “train” these young horses to become marketable animals, better suited to today’s demand. At the end of the program, a special auction will be held to sell these horses as prospects for ranching, performance or trail.

Each student will be eligible for high school credit for their participation (TBD based on number of hours). Each student will receive a monthly stipend for participation. A graduation stipend from the sale at the end of the program will also be awarded. The rest of the proceeds will go back to the program for the following year.

Self-esteem, self-discipline, fear, anxiety, problem solving, conflict resolution, leadership, teamwork, peer relations, responsibility, assertiveness, increased awareness, empathy and compassion are many of the behaviors and skills that working with horses develops and promotes. These are the benefits that Project Hope would provide and instill.

