



Someone to Smile For

The Autist and the Equine

It has been proved time after time, yet it is always magical – the effect of horses and other animals on people diagnosed with autism...

Heaven Can Wait is an equine sanctuary that opens its doors, without charge, to the entire autism spectrum, as a community outreach program for the Central Coast. Our non-profit has been operating in San Miguel since 2003 and now is home for 6 donkeys and 21 horses, rescued from neglect and/or abuse

and living the rest of their lives in comfort, safety and compassion.

The same compassion these animals experience they return a hundredfold to those who come to HCW to share it with them. They never judge a person, yet they see into the heart. They are grateful for simple companionship and honest emotion, yet their stories teach us about ourselves and the human condition. The most basic act of genuine interest and affection – as seen in the photo above left – can produce the most amazing reaction in the individual with autism.

Rosa and Brian are the parents of son Javi with autism whose very first visit to HCW began a transformation in the entire family. They learned of HCW's community outreach through a visit by the home schooling organization they belong to. They come from a good distance but they say it's worth it. "This is fun for everyone in the family. The children experience the fresh air and country surroundings they don't see in the city. Javi is able to explore the environment and feel free. It gives us something wonderful and worthwhile to do together every other weekend."

For Rosa and Brian, the chance to see Javi opening up and allowing himself to be touched physically and emotionally by the animals has convinced them to make HCW a semi-monthly destination. They also bring Javi's sister Sierra. "Kids can learn about taking care of animals here. They can pick up a sense of responsibility and compassion for other living things with hands-on fun and they can watch the horses interacting naturally with each other. It's the best kind of learning there is."

This family is only one of the many we would like to serve by giving safe, gentle, unthreatening opportunities for being touched by our rescued animals. In a world that is not always welcoming to those who are different, Heaven Can Wait provides a sanctuary for people as well as equines.



Call us for more information and to schedule a convenient visit. Founder Susan Schwartz can be reached at 805/368-5702. Executive Director Ramey Zamora is at 805/712-3109. The Sanctuary is located at 6275 Cerros Pioneros Way, San Miguel CA 93451. Learn more about us and our certification by the American Sanctuary Association at www.heavencanwait.us.