



## Creating a Therapeutic Culture in Equine Facilitated Therapy and Activity Programs

**Wednesday, October 10, 2018**  
Leir Retreat Center · Ridgefield, CT

### WHAT

The Sam and Myra Ross Institute will host a one day symposium focused on helping equine facilities expand their therapeutic programming while maintaining both high professional standards and a culture of compassion and respect for both people and equines. How does one create a therapeutic culture that extends to staff, clients, families, volunteers and horses? Green Chimneys has specialized in animal-assisted education and therapy for over 70 years. In that time, equine-facilitated therapies have become an increasingly popular intervention for individuals with autism, physical challenges, ADHD and speech disorders. To meet demands, many equine therapy centers now offer a variety of professional services, including speech, physical therapy and psychotherapy. This exciting growth comes with challenges that must be considered in order to ensure that clients and horses receive the best and most compassionate care.

### WHO

We invite individuals in diverse professions who share an interest in equine therapy, therapeutic horsemanship, hippotherapy (speech pathology, physical therapy, occupational therapy) and psychotherapy.

### GOALS

- To identify common challenges faced by growing equine facilities
- To help health-services professionals transfer important ethical practices into the stable and arena
- To draw attention to the quality of all of the interactions that occur in the therapeutic center, including those with from volunteers, to parent interactions, to interactions with the horses outside of the arena
- To provide strategies for upholding high standards of client confidentiality and professional boundaries in multidisciplinary facilities
- To offer specialized volunteer training techniques for volunteers working in hippotherapy and psychotherapy sessions

### REGISTER

**Space is limited. There is no cost to attend.**

Reserve your place before **October 1** by completing the Registration Form (PDF).

### THANKS

This meeting is made possible with generous support provided by Henry J. and Erna D. Leir Foundation.

## AGENDA

- 8:00 – 8:30am Registration and Coffee
- 8:30 – 9:00am **Welcome and Introduction**, Michael Kaufmann, Director of The Sam and Myra Ross Institute at Green Chimneys
- 9:00 – 10:00am **Creating a Therapeutic Culture**, Nina Ekholm Fry
- 10:00 – 10:15am Break
- 10:15 – 11:00am **Making Time for the Equine Relationship: Case studies from Green Chimneys**, Aimee O'Brien & Valerie Parody
- 11:00am – Noon **Equine Selection & Longevity**, Christina Horn
- Noon – 1:00pm Lunch
- 1:00 – 2:00pm **Ethical Considerations**, Sabrina Donalies-Schell
- 2:00 – 2:15pm Break
- 2:15 – 3:00pm **Specialized Volunteer Training**, Joanna Becker
- 3:00 – 3:45pm **Putting Strategies into Practice: A Question & Answer Panel**  
Led by Nina Ekholm Fry
- 4:00pm **Closing Remarks**, Michael Kaufmann

## SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

**JOANNA BECKER PhD** is a researcher, clinical psychologist, and registered PATH instructor specializing in animal-assisted interventions (AAIs). She is also an adjunct professor at Fordham University's Graduate School of Education. In collaboration with the Sam and Myra Ross Institute, Dr. Becker has published research on the influence of dogs on children's social skill development, attention and mood. Her research on AAIs has been presented at the International Society for Anthrozoology and the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship conferences. In clinical practice, Dr. Becker works with children and families in schools, residential treatment facilities, and outpatient centers. Her current projects focus on integrating equine activities with cognitive-behavioral techniques to improve behavioral control, self-regulation and communication skills.

**SABRINA DONALIES-SHELL** is a Mental Health Counselor and licensed Medical Technician, currently preparing her dissertation in health psychology. For over a decade Sabrina has been passionate about a nature-based approach to health and resilience. She has successfully integrated equine assisted activities into her clinical work with children and families, and continues to do so in her position at Green Chimneys. Sabrina is also advanced certified in the EAGALA model for equine assisted psychotherapy, and serves on the EAGALA research committee. As a consultant, Sabrina has worked with multiple organizations including non-profit mental health providers to help them include equine assisted learning into their programs.

**NINA EKHOLM FRY, MSSc.**, has specialized in equine-assisted therapy as a treatment strategy in psychotherapy/ counseling. She is the Director of Equine Programs at the Institute for Human-Animal Connection and Adjunct Professor at University of Denver where she leads the new Equine-Assisted Mental Health Practitioner Certificate program. Nina is the former Director of Equine-Assisted Mental Health at Prescott College and served as Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology and Counselor Education. She is an Executive Board member of the national Certification Board for Equine Interaction Professionals (CBEIP) and has trained in a number of equine-assisted approaches in North America and in Europe. She has worked with populations diagnosed with trauma/PTSD, ASD, ADHD, anxiety, addiction, as well as with veterans and others. Nina is the editor of the Scientific and Educational Journal of Therapeutic Riding, published by the International Federation of Horses in Education and Therapy (HETI).

**CHRISTINA HORN** has been actively involved in the field of Equine Assisted Activities for the past ten years, including the program management of several PATH Intl Premier Accredited centers. She is a lifelong equestrian and studied Equine Management at Michigan State University. After completing an internship at a therapeutic riding program, she immersed herself fully into the work of partnering horses with people who have physical, cognitive, social and emotional challenges. Christina has attained multiple specialty certifications including: PATH Intl Advanced Therapeutic Riding Instructor, PATH Intl Equine Specialist for Mental Health and Learning, and EAGALA (Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association) Equine Specialist. She is a former member of the PATH Intl Equine Welfare Committee and is an experienced speaker at both PATH Intl National and Regional Conferences. Currently, she is the Barn Manager at Miller & Associates equine veterinary practice in Brewster, NY where she oversees the care of horses in the CEM Quarantine facility and Rehabilitation programs.

**MICHAEL KAUFMANN** has been actively involved in Human/animal Interaction Programs, Animal Welfare and in Humane Education for 25 years. In 2005 he joined Green Chimneys Children's Services as Farm and Wildlife Director and in 2012 was named Director of the Sam and Myra Ross Institute at Green Chimneys, a program dedicated to education and research on the human connection to animals and the natural world. At Green Chimneys, he directs all aspects of the nature based therapeutic/educational programs and supervises the Institute dedicated to education and research on the human connection to animals and the natural world.

**AIMEE O'BRIEN** is a Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.) certified instructor and is the main teacher of equestrian studies and riding at Green Chimneys, a therapeutic day school and residential treatment facility in Brewster, NY. Specializing in helping students age 5-18 with psychosocial and developmental issues, Aimee has training in the Cornell model of Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI), applies Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies (PBIS) and is an integrated member of the treatment team. Previously she has instructed at various therapeutic equestrian facilities, served as volunteer coordinator, team lead and has experience in leading summer camp horsemanship programs. Aimee combines horse care activities, vocational elements and equine studies with riding instruction. As a dedicated horse advocate Aimee strives to bring elements of emotional connection and self-awareness to her lessons and activities focused on building a mutually beneficial relationship between people and horses.

**VALERIE PARODY** is a certified PATH Intl. therapeutic riding instructor with a bachelor's degree in Animal Veterinary Science. She graduated from the University of Maine in the spring of 2016 and was accepted to an internship with The Sam and Myra Ross Institute at Green Chimneys the following fall. Valerie successfully completed two consecutive internships specializing in facilitating horse care activities for children with special needs. She continued her equine studies in California and following her certification was immediately offered a full time position by Green Chimneys to facilitate Equine Activities for over 100 children ages 5-18 with social, emotional and behavioral issues in residential care. Her programs focus on allowing each child to progress in their overall treatment goals and to create a safe and therapeutic environment for students via their interactions with equines.

## ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

Green Chimneys and The Sam and Myra Ross Institute offer a meaningful introduction to the theoretical and practical principles of incorporating animals, plants and the natural world in the re-education, socialization and treatment of deeply impacted children who have experienced crisis and a lack of success in their lives.

The Institute serves to deepen the legacy, vision and impact of Green Chimneys' animal and nature-based programs by demonstrating how purposeful contact with animals and the outdoors can enhance formal therapies and traditional education, and sharing knowledge to bring continued growth and leadership to the field. [Learn more by visiting www.greenchimneys.org/theinstitute.](http://www.greenchimneys.org/theinstitute)

## GETTING TO LEIR

Leir Retreat Center · 220 Branchville Road · Ridgefield, CT 06877 · (203) 438-6074

### **From I-84E**

1. Head **southeast** on **I-84 E** entering Connecticut
2. Take exit **3** to merge onto **US-7 S** toward **Norwalk**
3. Turn right onto **CT-35 S/Danbury Rd**
4. Turn left onto **Main St**
5. Turn left onto **Branchville Rd**
6. Turn left onto **CT – 102 E/Branchville Rd**

Destination will be on right.