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Craig RN helps patients build confidence with horse therapy



Photos by Terry Chase/Craig Hospital
Craig Hospital patient Wyatt Welch leads Slick as Clair Cahow assists at The SaddleUp! Foundation in Parker. Welch was one of the first patients to participate in the hospital's new Equine Program--started by clinical nurse specialist Terry Chase--designed to help spinal cord injury patients build confidence.

by Joelle Moran
Staff Writer

Terry Chase likes to see her patients test their mettle in the real world--to push themselves to discover what they're capable of.

So in April, Chase started

an Equine Program at Craig Hospital geared toward spinal cord injury (SCI) patients who are close to going home from the Denver rehabilitation hospital. The program provides an offsite opportunity for SCI patients to work with horses to develop self-confidence and

build relationships while doing functional things like grooming, leading and haltering horses.

"Experiential learning assists people in learning that they have much more in them than they ever thought they did, that they are

much more capable," said Chase, who is the patient and family education coordinator at Craig. "My goal is to help people go home. This takes it to another level of

Nurses Association Announces New Award Recognizing Emergency Departments' Commitment to Quality, Healthy Work Environment

The Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) today announced that it is accepting applications for a new award recognizing emergency departments that exemplify exceptional and innovative performance in leadership, practice, education, advocacy and research. The newly-created Lantern Award will honor emergency departments that demonstrate a commitment to quality and ensuring a healthy work environment.

The Lantern Award is named for Florence Nightingale's lantern, which has long been considered a symbol of health care innovation, dedication to quality care and respect for health care professionals.

Lantern Award recipients will receive a physical award to display in their emergency departments, and recognition in ENA publications, on the ENA web site and at ENA conferences. Recipients will also be entitled to use the official Lantern Award logo in hospital advertising for the duration of the two-year award period.

"We created the ENA Lantern Award to encourage and reward efforts to encourage evidence-based practice and innovation in emergency care," said ENA President Diane Gurney, RN, MS, CEN. "We all would prefer to work in and receive care in emergency departments that are committed to providing high quality care and to ensuring that emergency department staff are able to do their jobs to the best of their ability. This Award will help patients identify those hospitals and emergency departments that are ahead of the curve in those areas."

The Award is open to all emergency departments. The application and more information about the Lantern Award are available online at <http://www.ena.org/IQSIP/LANTERNAWARD>. Application submissions must be completed by May 1, 2011. The first Lantern Awards will be presented at the 2011 ENA Annual Conference in Tampa, Florida. The application fee is \$2,500. Critical Access Hospitals and emergency departments with fewer than 10,000 annual patient visits qualify for a discounted application fee of \$1,250.

About the Emergency Nurses Association

The Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) is the only professional nursing association dedicated to defining the future of emergency nursing and emergency care through advocacy, expertise, innovation, and leadership. Founded in 1970 and currently celebrating its 40th anniversary, ENA serves as the voice of more than 37,000 members and their patients through research, publications, professional development, injury prevention, and patient education. Additional information is available at ENA's Web site, www.ena.org.

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skill building and confidence building."

Chase, MA, ND, RN, CNS, became interested in equine therapy when she started training with the Gestalt Institute of the Rockies in 2008 as a therapist. She started the equine pilot program at The SaddleUp!

Foundation in Parker with four patients and is planning to continue with six more sessions throughout the next year--the next scheduled for October.

"If I had a stable on campus, I would do it everyday," she said of the equine sessions.

The outings are a interdisciplinary effort coordinated between patient education, therapeutic recreation, and physical and occupational therapy. The patients are grouped into pods, each consisting of a horse, Craig staff member, SaddleUp! staffer and the patient.

While equine therapy is not for everyone, Chase said that it is a terrific opportunity for patients who are interested in trying something new.

The feedback from the patients who have participated has been 100 percent positive, with recommendations that it be offered to other patients. Patients were surprised and amazed by how adaptable they were to the environment.

One patient, for example, was hesitant to go on the equine outing because she didn't want to miss her therapy walking sessions at the hospital. But at SaddleUp! she quickly realized that she could do more types of walking on terrain she hadn't walked on and went twice as far as before, Chase said.

Whether picking a horse's hooves or leading him around a dirt arena, part of the experience is the relationship the patient develops with their horse. The patients are encouraged to spend quality time with their horse, centering themselves, really noticing what the horse is doing, Chase said.

"Working with the horses is a really cool thing. They are very good with awareness and feedback; if they don't like something, they let you know," she added.

While the program has functional goals such as walking and mobility on tough terrain, adapting to equipment and keeping yourself safe, a big part of the experience is the emotional aspect.

"You deal with emotions and how to deal with big scary things like horses," Chase said. "You learn how



Craig patient Colin Butler spends some one-on-one time with Prince Phillip at The SaddleUp! Foundation in Parker.

to ground yourself and keep yourself present."

Chase learned the value of presence when she herself was a patient at Craig 22 years ago. After sustaining a T12 spinal cord injury that left her a paraplegic, Chase saw the importance that relationships played in healing.

"I knew as a patient that I got the most out of the ones who could stand by me and just be there and not just run in and out," she said. "There was something about their presence and our relationship that made me feel better. It's because of that work that I do what I do here."

Her experience at Craig also made her realize that nursing was not just "giving pills and treatments," but also about these crucial relationships, which ultimately pushed her into a career in nursing.

In her role as a clinical nurse specialist managing the education programs at Craig, Chase teaches classes on spinal cord and brain injury, working with patients and families with the goal of helping the patient go home. In what she calls a "mini-university,"

Chase covers topics ranging from self-care, and skin, bladder and bowel issues to stress management and psycho-social issues.

Chase spent a year of her residency for her doctorate at Craig and at the end of it proposed to develop a patient education position at Craig. She's been in her role at Craig for 15 years, essentially building the program from the ground up.

She earned her Doctorate of Nursing in 1996 from the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center in Denver, where she studied under nursing theorist Jean Watson and embraced her healing of human caring model. She further explored the healing of human caring by earning her MA in Spiritual Psychology with an Emphasis in Consciousness, Health & Healing in 2004 from the University of Santa Monica, California.

According to Watson's Theory and Science of Human Caring, nurses are the ultimate instrument for patients in the way they are able to meet their needs and be responsive to their concerns not only with technology and skills, but also with their hearts.

"It's about relationships between that practitioner and client--that's where healing takes place, based on the healing of human caring," Chase said.

For more information about the new Craig Hospital Equine Program, contact Chase at 303-789-8211 or tmchase@craihospital.org

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