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EFMHA and NARHA to Integrate

Denver, CO—EFMHA (the Equine Facilitated Mental Health Association) and NARHA (which was created in 1969 as the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association) are excited to announce that a full integration of vision, membership and programs has begun. The integration is intended to:

- Embrace, more fully, NARHA and EFMHA missions
- More efficiently steward EFMHA and NARHA resources
- Ensure inclusion

After years of leading the way through innovation and organization of leadership in the fields of equine facilitated learning (EFL) and equine facilitated psychotherapy (EFP), the board of directors of the Equine Facilitated Mental Health Association and the board of trustees of NARHA are excited and proud to announce a full integration of EFMHA members, programs and volunteer leadership with NARHA members, programs and volunteer leadership. Currently EFMHA is a section of NARHA that maintains a separate committee structure and board of directors.

Horses are good for the whole person

This integration exemplifies the Association's commitment to approach equine-assisted activities and therapies recognizing that the whole person is affected through his or her interactions with horses. Horses are good for the physical body, the learning mind and the emotional state of a person. Likewise, horses are affected by the work that we ask them to do.

Unification provides easily accessible benefits to more equines and humans than ever before. This comprehensive way of looking at things, for instance, will educate the public and industry about the fact that EFL is not specifically nor solely applied in a clinical, mental health setting.

Sharing information

Association members are typically hungry for information about how to safely offer equine programs, how to help each participant expand his or her potential, and how to share their personal love of horses to benefit others. Whether teaching riding, driving, interactive vaulting or conducting a hippotherapy session, with this integration each NARHA Certified Instructor, therapist, volunteer, or other session participant will have easy access to the tools necessary to recognize, and engage more fully, in the moments where EFL is taking place and be able to maximize the positive outcomes for their participants. Additionally, licensed psychotherapists will have clearly defined processes for establishing a practice in EFP, taking advantage of our Association's long history and solid reputation for standards of safety and professionalism. Accredited centers will be able to add EFP to their services with more ease.



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NARHA and EFMHA envision that this integration will offer a multitude of other benefits that will allow the diverse disciplines in our field to work together with more ease and effectiveness.

What's in a name?

What's next? EFMHA and NARHA have experienced similar challenges related to the names of their associations. Neither name accurately reflects the full scope of services provided. For NARHA, the words "North American," "riding" and "handicapped" are no longer accurate, acceptable or appropriate. The Association presently is known simply by the acronym of NARHA. EFMHA has faced a similar challenge. Not all services provided by its members are offered in a clinical mental health and healing environment.

In order to project a correct and current image of the important work being done by members at NARHA centers and elsewhere around the world, a new association name will be researched with the goal to encompass all of the disciplines represented by the Association. A more inclusive name will more accurately reflect the mission of changing and enriching lives by promoting excellence in equine-assisted activities and therapies. Members' input will be solicited through various face-to-face and electronic forums.

Better service to members

Finally, the new Association website, which is currently under development, will offer the power of this integration to Association members and the public at large.

In May of 2009 the EFMHA Board of Directors, NARHA Board of Trustees and NARHA staff developed a timeline and processes for how the integration will progress. Over the next 12 to 18 months, the Association boards and committees will integrate, providing accurate representation throughout.

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About NARHA:

NARHA was formed in 1969 as the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association to promote equine assisted activities and therapies for individuals with special needs. At almost 800 member centers, a total of 42,000 children and adults find a sense of independence through involvement with horses. These member centers range from small, one-person programs to large operations with several certified instructors and licensed therapists. In addition to therapeutic riding, a center may offer any number of equine assisted activities including hippotherapy, equine facilitated mental health, driving, interactive vaulting, trail riding, competition, ground work, or stable management. Through a wide variety of educational resources, the association helps individuals start and maintain successful equine assisted activities and therapies for individuals with special needs. There are more than 30,000 volunteers, 3,500 instructors, 6,300 equines and thousands of contributors from all over the world helping people at NARHA centers.