



*"Ensuring excellence and changing lives through equine-assisted activities and therapies"*

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**PATH Intl. Attests to the Benefits of Therapeutic Horsemanship**

**Denver**— Thanks to Ann Romney and paralympian Rebecca Hart, equine-assisted activities and therapies take center stage again. Mrs. Romney was guest hosting ABC's "Good Morning America" on October 10, 2012, when she spoke about her depression after receiving the diagnosis 14 years ago that she had muscular sclerosis.

"I was very, very weak and very much worried about my life, thinking I was going to be in a wheelchair as well," she said. "Turned to horses, my life has been dramatically different. They gave me the energy, the passion to get out of bed when I was so sick that I didn't think I'd ever want to get out of bed."

Mrs. Romney stood in New York's Times Square, petting Paralympic horse Lord Luger as rider Rebecca Hart discussed how equine therapy helped keep her out of a wheelchair.

Hart, who was diagnosed when she was two years old with familial spastic paraplegia, spoke about how therapeutic horsemanship has helped her muscle memory and strength and given her a sense of freedom and vitality. When asked what she would have done without equine therapy, as the interviewer called it, she said that it has given her mobility; without it she would be in a wheelchair.

"It's so extraordinary, what horses do for us," Mrs. Romney said. "For me, it's again, it's balance. It's love. It's joy. What they're doing for so many other people right now. We have wounded vets coming home and they're turning to horses for therapy. We have kids with autism, Asperger's. They get on a horse, and all of sudden, their life changes; they become strong and confident. But horses, they're a gift from God, is the way I look at it. And they're a partner in our life journey. And they can bring such joy."

We at PATH Intl.—the certified professionals, the volunteers, the participants, the families—can attest to the power of the equine to change lives, physically and emotionally. We so appreciate the message of Mrs. Romney, as well as the athletes at the Paralympics, that horses can heal body and spirit. Unfortunately, therapeutic horsemanship is wrongly seen as a "high-end sport." PATH Intl. participants come from all economic brackets, and most PATH Intl. centers are non-profits. Most of PATH Intl. center horses are older, and many are donated after careers in another field.

For information about PATH Intl., visit [www.pathintl.org](http://www.pathintl.org). If you would like to read our press releases and learn even more about PATH Intl. and therapeutic horsemanship, visit [www.pathintl.org/about-path-intl/media-room](http://www.pathintl.org/about-path-intl/media-room).

Thank you, Mrs. Romney and Rebecca Hart, for continuing to spread the word about the benefits of therapeutic horsemanship.

About PATH Intl.:

*Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.), formerly NARHA, was formed in 1969 to promote equine-assisted activities and therapies for individuals with special needs. At more than 800 member centers, nearly 48,000 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 equitation, 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 44,700 volunteers, 4,300 instructors, 6,300 therapy horses and thousands of contributors from all over the world helping people at PATH Intl. centers.*