For many years, BOK Ranch has been quietly providing services to military men and women who have returned home with war related injuries. Working with the Palo Alto VA Hospital, we have also extended our services to spouses, family and friends of military personnel. Beginning on day one, BOK has provided these group classes, trail rides and private sessions at no charge to the veterans or their families. Recently, BOK Ranch received recognition for our special program.

The Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) awarded a significant gift of $200,000 to Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) International. WWP grants were given to organizations that provide unique sporting, fitness, and wellness activities for warriors and their families. Preference was given to programs that engage warriors over a sustained period of time and facilitate opportunities for leadership and peer mentoring. PATH is using the grant funding to award scholarships for Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies to WWP Alumni. These funds are awarded only to PATH International Premier Accredited Centers.

As the Peninsula’s only PATH Premier Accredited Center, BOK Ranch was selected to provide services to WWP Alumni. BOK Ranch has welcomed many veterans, spouses and caregivers to the barn.

One of our wounded warriors participated in a weekly program for several months. Unable to ride, he came with his support team of therapists, fiancé, family members and fellow service men to feed and groom Twilight, BOK’s little Appaloosa mare. The bond between the two of them was instantaneous. Week after week our warrior would come to the barn and prepare Twilight a bucket of grain. Once her meal was prepared, the instructor opened Twilight’s stall door and Twilight walked herself, without halter or lead rope, to the warrior and before taking a bite of the food, she gently nuzzled his chest as if to say “thank you”.

After he was discharged from the VA Hospital, the hospital therapists told us that the time he spent with Twilight at BOK Ranch, was the highlight of his week.

BOK Ranch is grateful to PATH International for providing scholarships to support our local wounded warriors.

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Dear Friends,

We had a very eventful summer here at BOK Ranch. For the first time in our 28 year history, we broke the old record of 500 guests at Western Day. At this year’s Western Day we welcomed 750 guests!

In June, we also held our first “social skills” camp. We welcomed lots of new friends, old friends and shared hours of horsey fun including turning our blank horse canvases into beautiful works of art.

Now we are busy planning for next year. We are putting together a schedule for a variety of workshops and seminars. The workshops will be taught by experts in our equine community including veterinarians, equine massage therapists, special education specialists, and BOK staff and volunteers. All of the classes will be open to the public and everyone is welcome to join us in learning valuable equine-related information and child development/caregiving information.

As we enter another school year, parents and caregivers are working out schedules, signing up for after-school activities and beginning to enjoy adaptive horseback riding for the first time. We welcome all our new riders and their families.

On a personal note, I started horseback riding again. As some of you know, I rode horses as a child and continued to ride as a young adult. Since then I have had problems with my back and core muscles and have been unable to ride. With no front nor back strength, I decided to enroll myself in therapeutic riding lessons to help improve my health and well-being. So far so good! It has been an amazing experience. I am encountering what it feels like to recall the intellectual training for giving the correct cues and aids to the horse, but not having the body and muscle strength “to make it happen”. Little by little, I’m getting stronger and I hope to be riding with the “big guns” (my trainer friends) soon.

The horses of BOK are here to inspire and change lives. Every rider, volunteer, parent and staff member who walks through our door has their own story (even the director) to share about the amazingly patient equines of BOK Ranch and their gift for healing.

~Tish

There is one BOK Ranch community member that most riders and volunteers have never met. He is one of our most generous donors who has supported BOK for many years both financially and by sharing his time, skills and talents. Who is this person? He is BOK Ranch’s farrier, Steve Wiberg.

Steve is in charge of trimming and shoeing the horses in our program, and he does this challenging task free of charge!

Approximately 13 years ago, Steve agreed to start shoeing one of our three horses that we had at that time. The little Quarter Horse mare had some soundness issues and the farrier who had been working with the program, wasn’t able to keep up with her need for special, adaptive shoes. Steve stepped in to help and has been helping ever since.

Steve stops by our barn every 7 weeks and tends to our herd of 13 horses and ponies. Every horse and pony in our program is sound, comfortable and reliable under Steve’s care.

When we bring in horses for a 30 day trial, Steve takes time out of his busy schedule to stop by to check out the new horse and offer his professional opinion regarding hoof health and soundness.

In 2010, BOK started our Horses for Heroes program for injured military service men and women returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Steve became interested in the program and wanted to learn more about it. As a result, he began offering shoeing demonstrations at the local VA hospital, offered classes at the barn and connected veterans with farriers and an owner of a shoeing school. His goal was to teach veterans the trade and help them find employment as farriers.

The years go by, horses come and go, riders learn, strive, grow and flourish but through all the changes BOK Ranch has experienced over time, Steve Wiberg has always been there when we needed him.

Thank you Steve for all your support and generosity over the years!
**Parent Trail Rides**

Every parent or caregiver needs a little respite now and then. What if you could enjoy some rest and relaxation while on the back of a horse? The BOK Ranch’s Parent Trail Rides are geared specifically for parents of children who ride in our program. Since we started offering these rides, many parents say they have a new appreciation for the amount of effort their child requires to achieve the balance and coordination that is essential for a successful lesson.

The Parent Trail rides are offered once a week on days and times arranged to accommodate parents’ busy schedules. There is no commitment to this program; you may participate as often as you like. Instructor Hannah leads the rides and can accommodate up to 4 riders per session.

For more information or to sign up for trail rides, email office@bokranch.org.

**PATH Certified Instructors**

Have you ever wondered what the difference between a typical riding instructor and a PATH therapeutic riding instructor is? At BOK Ranch all our instructors have a taken unique training and have earned a PATH instructor certification.

This special certification process takes approximately one year and about 100 hours to complete. All our instructors began as volunteer side-walkers and leaders. Then they completed 25 student teaching hours under the direction of a certified instructor/mentor. To complete the final step in the process they attended a two-day On-Site Workshop at a PATH Approved Training center. Each candidate instructor was required to pass three separate tests: a written exam based on horsemanship skills and knowledge of a variety of medical diagnosis/disabilities, a riding (dressage) test, and a teaching demonstration of a class with at least 2 students with disabilities. During the class the candidate instructor was judged on safety, lesson planning, lesson structure, articulation and the ability to adapt and modify the lesson to meet the needs of the riders.

It is an intense, rigorous process that produces therapeutic instructors who are dedicated, knowledgeable and the very best at what they do...ride/teach/care.
Wish List:
Looking for the perfect family to adopt Hollister

Meet Hollister, aka Holly. Holly was purchased by BOK Ranch recently and is now up for adoption. Holly is a Pony of the Americas, about 11 years old and 14.2 hands tall. Her history is not clear, but we are sure she has been used as a trail pack horse and summer camp horse. We believe Holly has never had an owner, but was part of a string of horses.

This sweet girl doesn't have a mean bone in her body, but she is a “fixer upper”. She came to BOK needing dental and veterinary care and shoes. She has had little formal training, but we are quickly bringing all the pieces together to create a wonderful little horse. She is a fast learner and is willing to please. All Holly needs now is a family to call her own.

As with all BOK horses, once Holly has an owner she will stay in the program. While she is part of the program, her day to day expenses (feed and board) will remain the responsibility of BOK Ranch.

Her new owner may visit, ride and give Holly lots of TLC whenever she is not being used for lessons.

If you are interested in adopting Holly, please call the BOK office at 650-366-2265 for more information. She is waiting for you.