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**PONY POWER THERAPIES LAUNCHES ALL-NEW PROGRAM,
*PALS (PONY-ASSISTED LIFE SKILLS)***

Through Groundwork with Horses, Mahwah-Based Organization Helps Children and Adults with Developmental Disabilities, At-Risk Youth, Veterans and More Develop and Strengthen Key Life Skills

Mahwah, NJ (January 29, 2015) – Pony Power Therapies is proud to announce the launch of the PALS (Pony-Assisted Life Skills) Program, aimed at developing and honing fundamental life skills in individuals, families and groups facing a range of life challenges. The PALS Program, which uses horses in non-riding, goal-oriented activities, now serves as one of the organization’s key offerings alongside its signature therapeutic riding service.

PALS was created to meet the growing need for meaningful programs for developmentally-delayed adults, many of whom age out of traditional services when they are 21 years old. With critical support from a generous donor, Pony Power Therapies successfully piloted the program in fall 2014. Soon after its inception, Pony Power discovered that this life-skills curriculum could benefit other populations, and began adapting the program to serve those dealing with trauma and loss, substance abuse and recovery, eating disorders, anxiety and depression, relationship and social issues, parenting challenges and more.

Participants Build and Practice Key Life Skills While Working with Horses

Through its PALS Program, which is designed to supplement existing habilitation or educational programs, Pony Power now serves children and adults with developmental disabilities, at-risk youth and veterans. Participants come as individuals, or in organized groups, usually for a six-week session.

Each PALS session focuses on one of six key life skills, including safety, communication, setting boundaries, critical thinking, social skills and responsibility. Sessions are experiential in nature; participants take part in ground activities such as catching and haltering a horse, working together to lead a horse through obstacles, grooming, and observing horse behavior, all of which require them to identify and apply the skill of focus. The goal is for participants to strengthen life skills while developing a greater sense of self-respect, confidence and esteem through their interactions with horses and each other.

“At Pony Power, we’re always seeking opportunities to extend the multifaceted benefits of horse-assisted activities to new populations,” said Dana Spett, Founder & Executive

Director, Pony Power Therapies. “Interacting with horses facilitates a rich learning environment in a setting where participants can learn by doing. In this program, the barn becomes a unique classroom where the horses serve as the mentors, allowing participants to build life skills in an enjoyable and memorable way.”

All PALS sessions are directed by a licensed social worker certified by the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) International and Equine-Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA), and co-facilitated with a PATH-certified, Pony Power Instructor.

New Jersey Groups and Individuals Find Benefit in the PALS Program

Pony Power has successfully implemented this program with several northern New Jersey-based schools and groups, including New Horizons in Autism, INC., Yachad of New Jersey, Children’s Aid & Family Services and veterans from the VA Hospital in Lyons, NJ, as well as nearly one dozen individual participants.

“Practicing team work and communication is something we work on very often with individuals at New Horizons in Autism, INC., and our sessions at Pony Power – especially those that focused on these fundamental skills – have allowed them to hone and practice them in such a unique way,” said Atacha Closeil, Vocational Supervisor, New Horizons in Autism, INC. “We truly appreciate the thought and care that has gone into developing this curriculum, and we look forward to watching our men draw from their experiences with the horses.”

In planning for this new program, Pony Power successfully worked with the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) to include horse-assisted life skills training as part of its billable services, ensuring that interested participants can apply their allotted DDD funding to their Pony Power sessions.

About Pony Power Therapies

Founded in 2000, Pony Power Therapies gives special needs and at-risk children and adults a unique opportunity to ride, care for and interact with horses. Its riding and non-riding activities enhance individuals’ physical, social and emotional well-being in a safe, nurturing farm environment. Pony Power offers recreational activities that help riders gain greater flexibility, balance and muscle strength, as well as explore and develop unique relationships with the horse, which can lead to increased confidence, patience and self-esteem, and foster feelings of independence and pride. Pony Power instructors are either certified or in training to be certified by Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) International. Pony Power Therapies is recognized as a Premier Accredited Center (PAC) through PATH International. For more information, please visit www.ponypowernj.org.

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