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The Healer

Rainier trainer communicates with horses to begin recovery process

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Nisqually Valley News**

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Injured or difficult horses can be a challenge for their owners, and sometimes it leads to the animal being put down.

Mary Beth Meyers helps those people.

Owner and trainer at the Way Station in Rainier, Meyers developed a method of horse training and healing.

"I look at their body and truly understand not only the physical and emotional, but also the biomechanics," Meyers explained.

"I know how they should be moving."

Meyers moved from Seattle to her 35-acre property on Rainier's Koeppen Road about a year and a half ago. Before that, she worked for 23 years in Elma training and healing horses.

"This place really offers a unique place (for horses) to develop mentally and physically," she said.

"They're in a natural environment."

Meyers demonstrated her skills during a workshop Saturday at the Way Station.

She explained to visitors that her goal is to make a connection with each horse's spirit, acting as a mediator between the horse and its owner, who may not understand why a horse is unwilling to cooperate.

Initial communication between a horse and Meyers occurs when, she said, she matches "frequencies" with the horse.

That's a process in a treatment similar to "awareness through movement," or ATM, she said.

When an injured horse arrives at her ranch, Meyers said that she seeks to find the origin of the horse's injury.

"They're puzzles in some way," she said.

One of the horses, named Quinn, came to Meyers with a medial collateral ligament injury to the right front foot.

"He was either to be put down or never ridden," Meyers said.

While the natural setting allows the horse to be more calm and present in his body, Meyers said she was able to start the healing process once she discovered the cause based on observing Quinn's movements.

"I know how they should be moving," she said. "If the body is in pain, we shift our balance to alleviate pain."

"Horses are the same way," Meyers said.

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Mary Beth Meyers, who worked more than 50 years as a trainer, tends to a number of horses brought by owners for physical and emotional therapy at the Way Station in Rainier. Photo by Dean Siemon

Since beginning the physical therapy, Quinn is "now back in full swing."

"People who have known this horse are not only amazed about the change in his body, but also his personality," Meyers said.

"He's now easy to handle."

A horse's pain can lead to fighting with owners because of the animal's inability to communicate.

Another client brought Meyers 3-year-old David.

Meyers said David's owners found him difficult to work with, but would resort to more forceful ways of training. That only made the horse's behavior worse.

"(David) was rearing and bucking and it really was a quite severe expression of 'something's not right,'" she said.

After discovering the root of a horse's emotional or physical problem, Meyers provides the proper tools and tips to the owner so they can continue the proper therapy at home.

"It's not teaching them to control the horse," Meyers said. "I believe (horses) are here to represent the freedom of spirit."

Meyers is well known in the Pacific Northwest for her abilities to treat horses. She currently has 11 clients and three additional horses on the way.

"A session with a new horse can take an hour and a half depending on the age and the stress level of the horse," she said.

"In a process, through the year I'm probably working with a few hundred horses a year."

For information about Meyers and the Way Station's other offerings, including riding lessons for children, visit www.harmonicriding.com on the Internet.

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