



THE MARYLAND HORSE COUNCIL

Equine-Assisted Services Committee

by Kim Egan, MHC Co-President

On September 22, MHC's Equine-Assisted Services (EAS) Committee hosted a Town Hall. Over 30 members of Maryland's robust EAS community attended, and there was good representation from the mental health community in general, the EAS certified therapists in particular, the owners and operators of the many EAS facilities across the state, and the volunteers who make it all possible.

The discussion was lively, supportive, and inspiring. Topics included the myriad ways that EAS can help a community, from grief counseling, to rape counseling, to veterans services, to overcoming the fear that results from a bad fall. The discussion also explored the ways EAS could help first responders, such as the police officers, fire fighters, and EMTs, to decompress from the trauma inherent in their professions. In addition, the group discussed the role EAS could play in corporate team-building programs.

Several current MHC members participated in the discussion, including, **Chesapeake Therapeutic Riding, BraveHEART, Burning Benjamins LLC, Gentle Giants, Great and Small, Maryland Therapeutic Riding, Potomac Horse Center, and Promise Landing Farm.**

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE DISCUSSION INCLUDE:

- the need for a matchmaking service to connect practitioners and facilities;
- the need for local access to national EAS trainings and certifications; and
- the need for resources for volunteers interested in getting involved in EAS.

In response, and in the short term, the committee is creating a working group to develop webinars for volunteers interested in EAS. Please

contact the EAS Committee chair, Rachel Neff, at rachel@promiselandingfarm.com, if you are interested in joining the working group.

MHC also plans to incorporate a matchmaking resource in its forthcoming re-designed website.

Lastly, several participants became MHC members after the town hall, and we are thrilled to have each of them join our family. They are: **The Annapolis Children's Therapy Center; Mary Shunk of the Retreat at Beckleysville; Mary Sue McCarthy MS, LCPC, NCC; and Kim Pheobus of the Frederick 4-H Therapeutic Riding Program.**

Thank you to everyone who helped make the Town Hall a success. The future of EAS in Maryland is bright, and we have a lot to be proud of.

Rachel Neff is the Chair of MHC's Equine-Assisted Services Committee. You can reach her at rachel@promiselandingfarm.com.

PATH Intl. Awards

This year's PATH Intl. Awards were presented in the following categories: Credentialed Professionals, Equines, Veterinarians and Volunteers, as well as the Youth, Adult and PATH International Equine Service for Heroes equestrian awards. The national organization is divided into 11 regions and Maryland is part of Region 2.

Mary Shunk of Retreat at Beckleysville won the Region 2 Credentialed Professional award. **Patricia Blakesly**, connected with Freedom Hills, won the Region 2 Veterinarian award while Freedom Hills' **Katherine Intano** won the Region 2 Volunteer award.

The winners will be celebrated at the PATH Intl. Award Presentation on November 15 after the organization's annual meeting.

MHC EQUINE-ASSISTED SERVICES COMMITTEE CHAIR: Rachel Neff • rachel@promiselandingfarm.com