



Wildwood Farm CLIPS & CLOPS Oak Harbor

JANUARY 2025

YOUR NEIGH-BORHOOD HULLABALOO

CREATED & EDITED BY HEATHER CARDER

He Thought He Knew Horses. Then he learned to Listen

By *Sterry Butcher, The New York Times*

Horses are exquisite machines. In the wild, they spend the entirety of their lives within the eyesight of another horse. Even domestic horses who don't venture beyond their pasture will take turns staying awake while others sleep. They can see nearly 360 degrees and can focus on two objects at once, one from each eye. They evolved to mosey along, grazing for up to 16 hours a day, using whiskers on their muzzle to discern, in part, tender grass from rocks. Their hide is so sensitive to touch that they can feel a single fly land on their body and wriggle the skin underneath to send it aloft. Their sense of smell is almost as keen as a dog's.

Horses form friendships, and friends stand nose to rump to cooperatively swish flies from the other's face with their tails. Where our brains are outfitted with a prefrontal cortex that allows for planning, organizing, setting goals and decision making, a horse has virtually none. They experience thoughts and emotions without the

benefit of evaluation, and although they can remember a great deal, they don't think about what they want to do tomorrow, which makes them geniuses at living in the present. Since they fear they may die without the collective protection of the group, they are experts at coexisting.

In the roughly 5,500 years since their domestication, horses have continuously been in our service, whether it's to charge into battle; race chariots; hunt buffalo; bust sod; carry the mail; run, leap and pull at our bidding; or, more recently and mundanely, tote kids around a ring in a county 4-H show. Despite this long and intimate association, interspecies communication can be tricky, and things between horses and people don't always go so well.

That's where trainers like Warwick Schiller come in, bridging the knowledge gap between people and their mounts. His methods for improving steering or loading a reluctant horse into a trailer weren't too different from those of the rest of the horse world. Lots of folks can teach an anxious horse to achieve a more relaxed state of mind; and horses, they're the same everywhere, generally willing to try to do what a

person demands, even if the request is clumsy. "Horses in the wild show almost no infirmity," Schiller explains. "They're good at pretending they're OK. They'll take a lot of heavy-handed training, and a lot of people with horses are fine with that. The horses still work for them."

Lately, though, Schiller has strayed from solving horse-and-rider issues through straight technique or drills. Instead, he has delved into a place where the horse-human relationship is more about cooperation than obedience, more process than product, and where horsemanship is about creating mutual trust and understanding.

That message resonates well beyond the trainer himself. On a late spring morning last year, Schiller, wearing a shirt that read "professional horse petter," sat with a clutch of 12 people under oak trees at the Paso Robles, Calif., ranch he owns with his wife, Robyn. The group was there for a three-day clinic, and among them were a retired firefighter with a filly who didn't steer well, an entrepreneur with a Ph.D. in leadership who worried about ruining her new horse and a lawyer with a steed that found grass more

Continued on page 11

WHAT'S TRENDING NOW

VIBE PEMF THERAPY by Earth Creature

Most people believe that a horse's stiffness, pain, or unease is just a part of aging or overuse. But there's a hidden factor at play: poor circulation and tissue recovery in your horse's muscles and joints. When blood flow and oxygen don't reach your horse's muscles effectively, stiffness, soreness, and even inflammation can become a daily struggle. Left unchecked, this can deeply impact their quality of life — and the bond you share with them.

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The VIBE is an advanced, easy-to-use device that works to improve your horse's muscle and joint health from the inside out. Using state-of-the-art, vet-approved technology, it's designed to:

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The VIBE Advantage:

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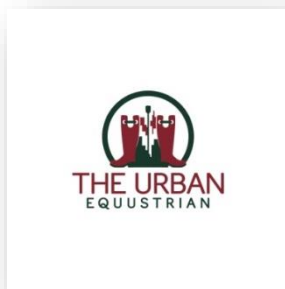
- Vagus Nerve Stimulation
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VIBE uses PEMF (Pulsed Electromagnetic Field) therapy to stimulate blood flow, reduce stiffness, and support muscle recovery. The gentle electromagnetic pulses penetrate deep into muscles and joints, promoting natural healing and comfort without any pain or side effects. It is recommended using VIBE a few times a week, especially after physical activity or on days when your horse seems sore or stiff. More info:

www.earthcreaturepemf.com

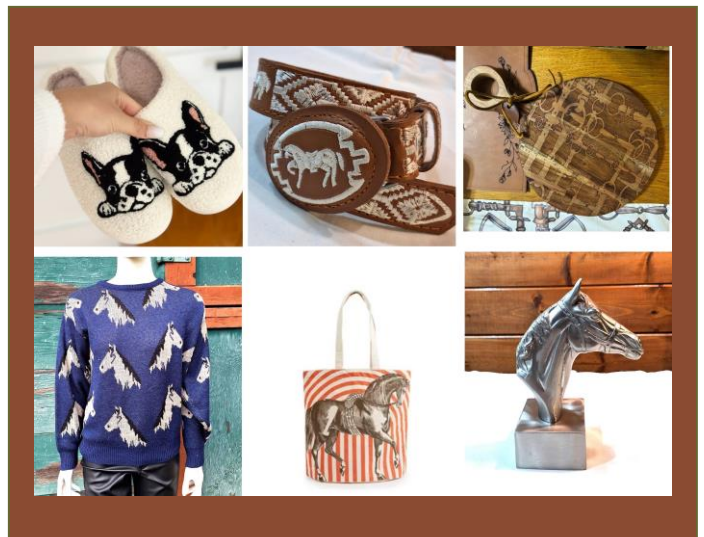


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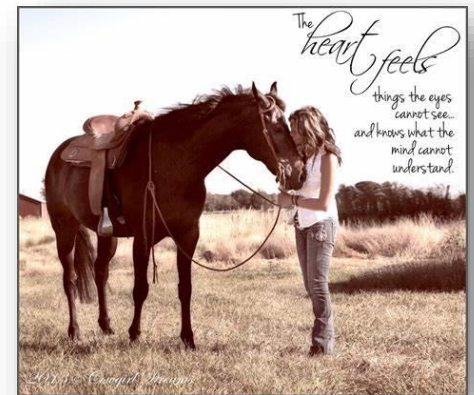
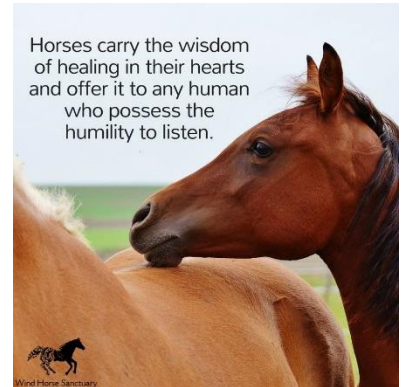
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An ice house for a horse: Oklahoma's most famous trick horse gets a marker and a museum

Story by Galen Culver/KFOR



COYLE, Okla. — It's been almost a year since Ice the Trick Horse made her last jump from her home pasture over 'the rainbow bridge' "She was just about 32 years old," says her owner and show business partner Johnny Blasier. Since January 2024, he had time to order and install a nice marker over the grave of a true friend, and the greatest horse he ever knew.

All this is for her," he tells us as he walks into a museum he put together in her honor. "Because she did so much that no other horse ever did." Johnny and Ice had a long show business run starting about the time we shot a feature story with them in 1994. "That was the first one to ever come out," he boasts of the early 'Great State' feature.

A working relationship that began when Ice was a colt, clear to the end, including trips to Hollywood for appearances on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, on a syndicated show called 'Pet Stars', to Nashville, TN for another syndicated show called 'Crook and Chase'. "She made it to Nashville and Hollywood three different times," he recalls. Ice and Johnny filled a whole show full of comedy and tricks. The horse could hold a fishing pole in her mouth, play instruments including harmonica, piano, and guitar. Johnny would let her drink grape Koolaid from a plastic bottle, and she would stumble around pretending to be drunk. For more than a decade, they were booked solid. Blasier says, "We were gone every weekend." The pair quit the road a decade ago and Ice and Johnny retired.

Blasier had always planned on a grave marker, but he still had all the props and pictures stored in a horse trailer. He says, "the weather was just tearing everything up with the heat and the cold, and all that stuff." When offered a good deal on a couple of portable buildings, he knew just what to do with one of them. "What you have here," we said, "is a real 'ice house'." "Yes, it is," he laughs. "I even have some ice in the freezer," he continues, referring to the frozen water kind.

Hang the pictures and the artwork, and create an Ice Museum, the only one of its kind in Oklahoma dedicated to a single horse. He wanted to open the Ice Museum before the new year hit and the first anniversary of her passing. "Do you still miss her," we ask? "Yes," he answers quickly.

Blasier is, by far, it's most frequent patron. Each memory is still enough to melt his heart with every visit. "I look at all of her stuff and thank her very much for all that she did for me."

Blasier's Ice Museum is open by appointment. If you're interested in seeing it, he suggests calling first at (405) 385-3148.

Nutrition Corner

Sugar & Peppermint Treats: Not safe for all horses

Q: Is it okay to feed my horse peppermints and sugar cubes?

A: Simple sugars, such as the sucrose found in peppermints and sugar cubes, are absorbed by the horse's small intestine as glucose and fructose. Glucose causes release of insulin to facilitate the entry of glucose into cells. Fructose (not to be confused with fructans) is metabolized differently. Only metabolized in the liver, fructose is more lipogenic than glucose, meaning that it's more likely to lead to production of fat. Most concern about sugar and starch intake has stemmed from our increasing knowledge about insulin resistance (IR), laminitis, polysaccharide storage myopathies (PSSM), and equine gastric ulcer syndrome (EGUS). Horses with IR release more insulin than is normal in order to remove glucose from their blood stream.

A pure sugar cube weighing about 4 grams is 100% sucrose. The popular round, red-and-white peppermint candies have a human serving size of three pieces (about 15 grams) and of that between 8 and 10 grams are sugar. Feeding a healthy horse three or four sugar cubes is unlikely to cause a significant glucose spike; however, for a horse with uncontrolled IR, PSSM, or a laminitis history, feeding sugar cubes isn't a risk worth taking.

Human research shows that tissues in insulin resistant people are more sensitive to insulin after exercise. This may or may not be the case in horses, but if it is, then your horse might be better able to handle the sugar in these treats when they are given shortly after work.

For the otherwise healthy horse, consuming a candy cane or a few peppermint candies is unlikely to have any major impact.

WILDWOOD FARM AND TRIPLE CROWN FEEDS.

Our partnership with Triple Crown began in 2014 through a promotion with the USEF encouraging farm members to compare their current feeding programs with Triple Crown products. We have found the TC products to be superior to other products primarily because of the EquiMix technology and the research support of a leading-edge team including independent representatives of Equine Universities, Medical clinics and top-level riders and trainers

Meet Zoey

In 2020, at the beginning of Covid, we received a call from a horse owner in Sedro Woolley that had a Percheron/Quarter Horse cross mare in the need of rehoming.

Her story was interesting: Her owner had purchased her when she was just weaned and thought this would be her perfect horse. Grey with a black mane and tail, stout but not too tall, and a mare. Because she wanted this horse for trail riding purposes only, she decided to spay her, or better known as an ovariectomy, to prevent her from coming into heat. This also meant she could not be bred, of course. Her disposition was definitely more like a gelding than a mare.

Although she had taken Zoey to a trainer to start her under saddle when she was 3, it had been a while since she had to do any real work and had been in pasture for the past 2 years while her owner was dealing with health issues. Zoey herself was dealing with some IR issues as well as some irritation that was causing her to have very loose stools, and what prompted the call for help was a colic episode after Zoey had escaped her turnout and started eating lush, uncut grass.



Her owner managed to nurse her back to health, but it left an impression that she was not equipped to handle a horse like her that needed a dry paddock and closer monitoring.

We brought Zoey to Wildwood Farm and put her in our lesson program to see how she would do; although she was not dangerous or mean, she was really on the lazy side and her training was minimal, so it took a lot of work to keep her moving forward. Only more advanced students could ride her, and the majority of our students were beginners.

We made the decision to find a new job for Zoey, and she was sent down to a friend in Oregon who ran a hunter/jumper barn. Although Zoey showed some interest in jumping, where she ultimately found her calling was in Western reining and cutting. She LOVED the cattle work and was a natural at working them. She found a young owner who still has her and regularly competes.



HORSE SHOW

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

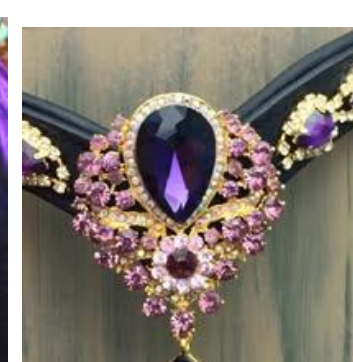
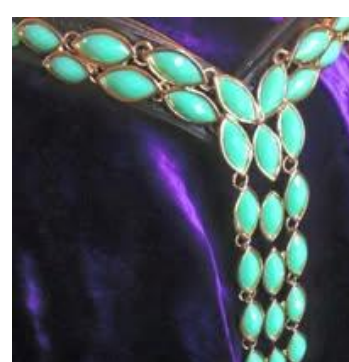
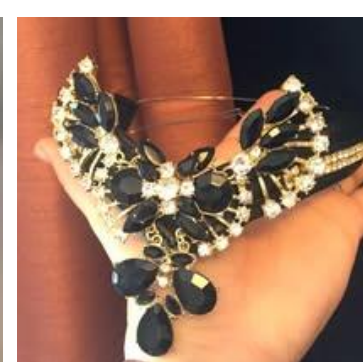
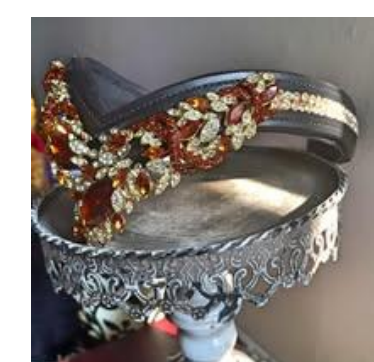
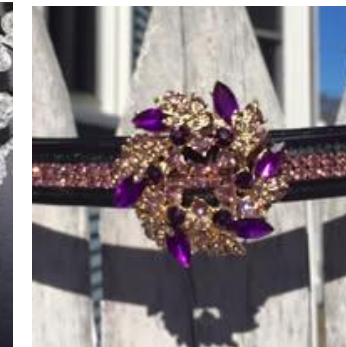
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The words appear UP, DOWN, BACKWARDS, and DIAGONALLY.
 Find and circle each word.



STUNNING OKO KONIA BROWBANDS!



Holbein Horse

Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany

A horse statue that receives constant makeovers from graffiti artists and locals.



The Holbein Horse is a foal statue created by Werner Gürtner in 1936. Made of concrete and approximately as large as a normal horse, Holbeinperd is famous for the fact that it is often redecorated by graffiti artists.

Starting out as being defaced to resemble a zebra, its other incarnations include unofficial advertisement carrier for Uhu cement and Milka chocolate, visual declarations of love, support for political candidates, and colors representing sports teams. The repainting of the horse has become a welcome and encouraged activity - done in the dead of night in the past, the statue is often given its new look in broad daylight, and is featured in its many different looks in TV ads and on postcards.

The Holbein Horse is located on a small patch of grass on Holbein Street, near Hans-Thoma-Strasse and the Günterstalstraße (Günterstal tram to stop "Holbeinstraße").



The Moyle Horse



One of the most amazing breeds in the United States is actually not a registered horse with a member organization. This particular breed is the result of decades of careful breeding efforts on a single Idaho property. On that ranch, horse breeding has a rich history that spans many generations of riders from the same family.

The Moyle horse breed is a unique and handsome horse breed characterized by its frontal bosses or horns. This rare horse breed is believed to have been bred by Rex Moyle in the mid-20th century. Rex Moyle developed the breed as a riding horse in Idaho from Mustangs brought from Utah. The horses from the Moyle horse breed are also distinguished by their unusual freedom of movement in the shoulder. Their standout frontal bosses referred to as horns are believed to have been inherited from their Asian ancestors. These horses are extremely hardy and possess extraordinary endurance. This rare horse breed is sadly not in its heyday and experiencing declining numbers.

The Moyle horse breed is sometimes called a Mormon horse breed. The horses from the breed are thought to have been initially bred by the Mormon people during the 1800s. Their lineage includes Mustangs and Cleveland Bays and genetic markers also indicate some common ancestry with the Spanish horse. Their small frontal bosses or horns are a feature seen only in a few breeds such as the Carthusian horse of Spain.

The history of their origin has a link to the Mormon Pony express. During the end of the Porter Rockwell era, an enterprising rancher named Chris Hansen seized upon an unusual breed of Moyle horse and convinced its owner to sell. The pregnant horse he bought was later gifted to his sixteen-year-old daughter. The lady went on to marry into the Moyle family and her son Rex Moyle became the person who bred these horses and gave the breed his namesake. The pregnant filly proved lucky and produced sixteen foals that became the foundation stock for the Moyle family ranch horses. As the original Mormon horse was disappearing, Chris Hanson constantly examined the areas mustang herds for tell-tale horses with the same lineage, and eventually had his own private breeding stock that was used exclusively on this ranch in Idaho. He added some Cleveland Bay into the mix to come up with what is now known as the Moyle horse, or Mormon horse.

The Moyle horse is usually known for its brown or bay coloring but comes in other solid coat colors too. They very rarely have face or leg markings. They are also the rare few breeds of horses with horns. They have a dense coat with long back muscles, making them ideal for riding. They are not very wide but have deep chests. Moyle horses have strong shoulders and muscular forelegs. They have large, tough feet and have an exceptionally long walking stride. Their uniquely large liver and spleen size make them especially suitable for endurance rides and ranch work.

With their exquisitely hardy temperament, Moyle horses are bound to make perfect companions for life. If you are a horse lover, you must experience this breed, with a unique and interesting history of origin, at least once.

Cont'd from page 1

motivational than her owner. There was also Chelsey Warriner, who bought a horse after selling her family's restaurant in 2021. Two bolting incidents resulted in two trips to the emergency room for her. "I ended up humbled and hurt," she told the group through tears. Despite her terrifying accidents, she bought a steadier mount that was disinclined to hold a trot and opted not to travel in straight lines. "We've struggled with connecting," she said. "We're still working on it."

The clinic attendees were already fans of Schiller's. Schiller never seems rushed or worried, even if there's a horse pitching around the pen or at the end of its lead. His voice doesn't rise. He's affectionate with the horses he encounters, offering a "Hallo there!" when they reach out a nose to investigate his hand. He never seems annoyed by either horse or rider, even when the human fumbles in the effort to do what Schiller asks.

He is, largely, a problem solver, and what sets Schiller apart is a vulnerability that has been minted in real time, in front of his followers and his audiences, as he experiments with incorporating the horse's emotional intelligence into more traditional training methods. "I think horses lead us to consciousness," he says. "I think that's what they're here for."

Schiller grew up in Young, a small community in New South Wales, Australia. As a child, Schiller showed horses and pored over the family's Western Horseman magazines, riveted by American cowboys and their horses. He landed a job at age 23 riding colts for a California horseman who told him he had promise.

For much of his career, Schiller specialized in reining competitions, where horse and rider run patterns of circles, stops and slides that require precise control of speed and responsiveness. He performed at the discipline's highest levels, posting wins at major shows. Twice, along with Robyn, he represented Australia at the World Equestrian Games.

Over time, his knack for communicating well with horses and people garnered notice. "I started getting a lot of phone calls, would you do clinics, and I started doing them, flying all over the place. When I was doing clinics, I realized there are some common misunderstandings about horses, so I thought, I'll make videos and put them on YouTube to help people out." By 2015, he focused on creating video content while also traveling nationally and internationally, helping clinic participants with their balky pony, their horse that didn't want to back up, the one that spooked on trail rides. His schedule was packed. Things were great. Couldn't be better.

It might have gone on like that indefinitely, but surprising things can happen with horses. In 2016, a little red horse called Sherlock stood in the Schillers' barn. He was Robyn's new reining mount, a talented athlete who was nonetheless a puzzle. He was obedient, but without curiosity or spark, so emotionally distant that he never ambled over to say hello to his people. His anxiety showed up in his body, where an imperfect stride or two in an otherwise solid reining performance consistently kept him out of the blue ribbons. Schiller turned to his arsenal of training techniques to soften and refine the horse, and yet Sherlock's tension and flat affect remained unchanged. The glum little horse stayed glum. "He had a few issues that I thought I could fix quite easily," Schiller says, "because it seemed pretty normal. But this horse had a level of shutdown I'd not ever encountered before. Nothing that I knew could get him out of it."

So, he experimented. He spent time just watching the horse in his pen. If Schiller moved back, the horse might sigh or slightly lower his head. If Sherlock turned to look at cackling chickens in the barnyard, Schiller looked, too. If Sherlock moved off to graze, the trainer kept pace on a parallel path. He realized that the horse's indications of stress were significantly more subtle and meaningful than he previously understood. "That was the start of communicating awareness," he says.

He was on the right track. Researchers are discovering that horses may have far greater sensitivity than we ever knew. The heart rate of horses in a 2016 University of Sussex study went up or down accordingly when shown photographs of angry or friendly human faces, demonstrating that not only can they discriminate between positive and negative expressions, but they can do so in a species not their own. Another study in 2020 confirmed that they can recognize their keeper in photographs, even after a six-month separation.

In the 1970s and beyond, a few revered American trainers in a genre that's loosely called "natural horsemanship" brought the horse's inherent acuity to the attention of clinic crowds or in books they wrote. One of these well-known mantras is attributed to the renowned trainer Ray Hunt, who died in 2009: "A horse knows when you know and knows when you don't know."

As he worked at unraveling Sherlock's mysteries, Schiller began considering the Hunt quote in a different light. "I always thought that meant that they know if you know what you're doing, or if you don't," he says. Maybe, he thought, it had more to do with a horse's knowing that you're truly present with them. "Horses do a lot of stuff to determine their level of safety around us. I started noticing things and letting Sherlock know I noticed things."

Something weird was happening to Schiller too. While lecturing at a big horse expo in Madison, Wis., Schiller found himself deviating from his standard talk, divulging keenly personal issues, like old childhood hurts. He returned to his expo booth rattled, and the woman in the neighboring booth asked how it had gone. "I feel like I've been run over by a truck," he told her. "I don't know what it was. I admitted to some things that I'd probably never admitted to myself to a roomful of strangers." Oh, the woman said: Like Brené Brown says, vulnerability is the ultimate bad-ass. Schiller went home and devoured Brown's books. One passage stood out among all the others: "We cannot selectively numb emotions. When we numb the painful emotions, we also numb the positive emotions."

Schiller remained perplexed by Sherlock's interior demeanor — detached yet obedient. While thinking about him one day, the Brown quote surfaced in his mind. As a child, his family hewed to the principles that boys don't cry, show fear or allow themselves to grieve. "We'd go to a funeral, and it would be: 'Oh, well, he's dead. No use worrying about that.'" He understood that from early on, his emotions had been tamped down, discouraged to surface, and that he had remained that way. "That's when I realized — that's Sherlock," he says. "Sherlock is me."

WILDWOOD FARM Clips & Clops Newsletter

Working with the horse awakened Schiller to other aspects of his own character. Old habits, like an inclination to talk *at* people instead of *to* people, started to fall away. “It’s from horses where I learned to listen,” he says. “Listening instead of telling.” What followed was a period of self-discovery that continues even now. “I stepped back from trying to make him any different and trying to change him,” Schiller said of the horse. “I really started exploring other stuff, and some of that other stuff led me to explore my own stuff, led me to going and seeing therapists and learning a lot about trauma and the autonomic nervous system and different states of arousal. And yeah, it was a horse that led me down that garden path.”

Weekend clinics filled Schiller’s schedule, a perfect testing ground for his new ideas about attunement. In time, Sherlock’s attitude brightened, and his optimism and curiosity bloomed. A few months into this exploration, Schiller encountered [Cody](#), a mustang in Texas with a bolting problem. In that clinic, Cody repeatedly turned his head in such a way that he blocked Schiller and his owner from seeing his right eye — so distrustful that he could not face them. Schiller spent time approaching Cody by taking a step or two and retreating a step or two according to the mustang’s subtle signals of concern. After a while, Schiller told the owner to simply stand and hold the lead rope. Within minutes, the horse, finally sensing he was protected, dropped to the ground and slept, and then slept again through the next day’s activities.

“Cody was the eye-opening moment where I realized the importance of our awareness and how it allows horses to feel safe around us,” he wrote in his book, “The Principles of Training.” “I had let him know I was very present. This approach was unlike any other way I would normally suggest solving a bolting issue, but ever since then I have taken much more care with working through the slightest level of tension in a horse.” The mustang’s owner later reported the horse no longer bolted; he understood that his rider could focus on what mattered. “What you find is the more that you communicate that you’re listening,” Schiller says, “a lot of times the behaviors go away.”

At the ranch in Paso Robles, Schiller coached the clinic participants, cracked jokes and relayed a multitude of stories that illustrated aspects of his training philosophies. Mostly, though, he noticed. At Schiller’s instruction, Macey McCallion’s gelding, Leo, galloped headlong around the Schiller arena when she untied his halter and let him loose. She bought him as a lesson horse for her riding students in San Dimas, where she teaches horsemanship, but he was prone to distraction, apt to spook and proving unsuitable for his job. “I can’t figure him out,” she told Schiller. “His focus is awful.” In the arena Leo called frantically to other horses, slid to a stop, and took off full speed in another direction, then did it all over again. This went on, uninterrupted, for some time.

At Schiller’s direction, McCallion walked a looping, indirect path in the arena, holding a wand with a small flag of cloth on the end. While Leo whinnied and ran and snorted, Schiller guided McCallion to waggle the flag until he turned an ear in her direction. She abruptly ceased what she was doing, signaling that she’d noticed his attention. The duo continued in this way, with Leo lurching around and McCallion flapping the flag, only to stop at the barest ear flick or glance. From his spot under the oaks, Schiller called out instructions on her timing.

Increasingly, Leo began to stop and look at her directly before winging off again. His gallop slowed to a canter and then to a trot. His passes drew nearer and nearer to her until he came to stand before her, dropped his head and heaved a sigh. As she turned to leave, Leo followed behind her for the length of the arena, docile as an old Labrador. He stood meekly to be haltered and taken back to his pen. About 20 minutes had passed.

“All that there was giving,” Schiller said. “Trading is expecting something in return. Giving is just giving with no expectation of anything in return. If the person can do the right thing every time, the horse will come around. It’s getting your communication right — letting him know, ‘I saw that.’”

McCallion returned to the hillside and sat under the oaks. “Horses have been super transformative to me,” she said. “I was a very awkward kid. I felt that horses saw me and responded to me. They’ve been my biggest teachers. I’ve evolved as a person in ways that wouldn’t have happened otherwise.”

It’s quite possible that despite this deepened insight into the horse’s vast emotional fathoms, humans still get the better end of the deal from the partnership. McCallion recognizes that Leo’s nervous distractibility may reflect changes that need to take place in herself. She’s OK with that. “Most people are attracted to horses because they need to figure out a lot of stuff for themselves. They’re going to show us what’s going on, whether we want to see that or not.” She paused for a moment. “Horses are so genuine,” she said. “They call us to our greatness.”

The act of noticing will improve horsemanship, but the heightened awareness also leads to becoming a better person — better at communicating, better at listening, better at being still and calm and in the moment. “People are quite passionate about their horses,” Schiller says. “If they stay passionate for long enough, and they keep asking the right questions, they tend to make changes in themselves that they wouldn’t make for their boss or their co-worker or their husband or their kids. But they make it for their horses. Then it carries over into the rest of life. That’s the amazing thing about what horses do for us.”