



Students at Mission Farrier School learn the core skills of horseshoeing, including how to map, examine and understand the mechanics of footfalls and problem areas.

If the Horseshoe Fits

Twenty-five-year-old Mission Farrier School moves to Tygh Valley

Story and photos by Drew Myron

A horseshoeing school with more than 1,000 graduates and several decades of success has relocated to Tygh Valley. Mission Farrier School is now in session at Wasco County Fairgrounds.

A licensed, private vocational school, Mission pairs equine science with practical craftsmanship. It is one of two farrier schools in Oregon.

A farrier specializes in shoeing horses—a skill that requires the ability to shape and fit horseshoes, as well as clean, trim and shape hooves. There are 35 farrier schools in the United States.

Mission was founded 25 years ago in Snohomish, Washington, by Mark Plumlee, a third-generation horseshoer and former rodeo cowboy.

In late 2021, Mark moved the program to Oregon and handed the reins to Teddy Franke, a respected horseman and 2016 Mission graduate who lives in Wamic with his wife, Lizz, and their three children.

Teddy manages the horse program at Camp Morrow, a Christian youth program, and operates Franke Equine, a horsemanship and farrier business.

Teddy holds five international certifications in horsemanship and is a master instructor through the Certified

Horsemanship Association. He has served on boards for two national horse associations and managed large horse herds in three states. Along with leading equestrian camps, clinics, lessons and events, he is championing efforts to “gentle” wild mustangs.

Even with its change of location and leadership, Mission will continue to stand apart from other farrier programs, Teddy explains.

“We strive to do something for the horse, not to the horse,” he says.

The school teaches from a perspective of natural balance farrier science and seeks to understand and treat the whole animal.



Mark Plumlee, founder of Mission Farrier School, leads a course in horse biomechanics.

Once considered a fad, the approach now has fewer detractors and more adopters.

"What's wrong with the way we've always done it?" Mark asks. "Well, the way we've always done it is part of the reason we have navicular horses. The way we've always done it has led to long toes and low heels. And the way we've always done it isn't really the way we've always done it."

"By applying relevant hoof science and understanding anatomy and biomechanics, we're rethinking the way we've always done it and learning a more complete approach to hoof health and farrier education."

The farrier program runs eight weeks, with classes held Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuition is \$12,000. The next session starts in March.

Using a case-study approach, students work with horses that have challenging foot issues and learn to work through rehabilitation decisions based on anatomical and biomechanical observations.

To provide concentrated learning, classes are limited to 10 students. Students work with experienced farriers and gain knowledge from hands-on instruction in

shaping and forging shoes, as well as classroom study of anatomy and physiology.

The school graduated its first Oregon students in November, and the outlook is bright. Nearly 90% of Mission graduates secure work and remain in the profession for more than seven years, according to Mark, who will continue to serve Mission as mentor and instructor. There are now more horse owners than ever, he says, and the need for good shoeing is strong.

"Fact is, there is plenty of work," he says. "If they show up on time, return phone calls promptly and learn to communicate to the horse owner why they are shoeing the horse the way they are, most will have all the business they ever want."

Student Kevin Vance, 45, is soaking up the new knowledge.

"I came to learn," says Kevin, who lives in Carson, Washington, and drives over an hour to get to class each day. "I have four horses and I want to know it for myself."

The average Mission student is 37 years old, though many are just out of high school or, conversely, nearing retirement age. Forty percent are women.



What does it take to be a successful farrier? Passion, drive and a few good tools.

Elsie Shaw, 19, lives in Gig Harbor, Washington. A Mission graduate, she's worked as a farrier for one year and is back to learn more.

"I like working with the horses and making a difference," she says. "There's a lot of technical information. It's a lot to wrap your head around, and you can always learn more."

Potential students go through an extensive interview process to assess their passion, drive and dedication.

"We want a focused individual," Mark says. "Whether you have grown up around horses or are just beginning, it's never too late or too early, if you are willing to learn."

In the United States, farriers are not regulated or required to obtain a professional certification. However, without proper training, the potential danger to self—and the horse—is high.

"It's easy to get hurt doing this job, and you can hurt the horse if you don't know what you're doing," Teddy says.

"This trade is self-gleaning," Mark adds. "If you're not making a positive difference, bad news travels fast." ■

For more information on Mission Farrier School, call Teddy Franke, owner/instructor, at 907-687-6047; email missionfarrierschool@gmail.com; or go to missionfarrierschool.com.