

2020 Year in Review

2021 Goals & Opportunities

As the wind is blowing outside and 2020 comes to a close, everyone here at Midwest Animal Assisted Therapy & Education Organization can only say WOW! what a year. First, Tammy and I would like to say thank you to all of our volunteers and staff. Without them, this organization would not be here. To the veterans we have met, clients we serve, and those we have met through the Community Outreach Center we pledge to continue to give you our best efforts as we work to help everyone Relax, Reset and Recover.

We literally got the green light, and the organization received its 501(c)(3) status in the middle of the pandemic. Not the greatest time to start a non-profit. The need was great, and Tammy and I just began to look at what was happening locally and where we could help. With no donations to start, we decided to pull money from our own businesses and jump in. Helping veterans is where we began.

The Military Animal Assisted Therapy & Education Action Plan was the result of the “PAWS for Veterans Act” getting stalled and tabled in congress. This would have helped veterans get and be involved with training their own service dogs. After talking with our local Veterans Administration and understanding the frustrations veterans were facing, we designed an action plan that would help veterans get the dogs they need at no cost to them. We would also provide professional services that included animal behavior management as well as health care evaluations for the veteran for as long as the dog was in service. Some of the benefits we have seen are reduced dependency on medication, increase in physical abilities, and what we deem as most important – increase in quality of life for both the veteran and their new animal family member.

The one thing no one was expecting at the beginning of this year was the complete and total shut down of our schools, assisted living facilities, mental health services, and other healthcare services. This meant that the traditional forms of animal assisted emotional support programs like school reading programs and animal assisted therapy in the home or at the clinic were not available. However, people still needed services. Tammy’s philosophy from the beginning has been that “Everyone needs mental health” now more than ever. 2020 has been challenging for everyone. After consulting the CDC guidelines for Covid-19 and animals and being in communication with our local county department of public health, we decided that if we can’t go to them, they could come to us. Malls were just starting to open up. We negotiated with NorthPark Mall in Davenport for a space and after a complete remodel of the space, Midwest Animal Assisted Therapy & Education Organization Community Outreach Center was open. Our clients could now have a place to go Monday through Friday that had easy access and public

transportation. We also decided to open to the general public on the weekends on a donation basis. No one was turned away. The result at times is nonstop. Students of all ages, families, homeless, seniors, those with emotional and physical disabilities are finding the center. Many ask if we are going to open Community Outreach Centers in other cities. The answer is Yes. We believe that the Community Outreach Center model will continue as a viable option for many even after the pandemic. Other healthcare organizations have reached out to us to begin a referral program relationship. The key to the success of the Community Outreach Center is VOLUNTEERS. All of our COC staff started as a volunteer.

As you reflect on 2020 and the new opportunities that may come your way in 2021 consider becoming a volunteer at our Community Outreach Center. You can help us help others and of course, you get to work with some pretty cool animals. We only ask for 2 hours of your time per week. Contact us by coming to the Community Outreach Center at NorthPark Mall on the weekends or contact us through the website covid19esa.org and give us your contact information. We look forward to meeting you.

As we look forward into 2021 there are some new and exciting things on the horizon.

First off we are looking to purchase a diesel RV and convert it into our Rapid Response Vehicle. This vehicle would be able to rapidly go to where there is an immediate need. For example, should there be a crisis at a school or university where emotional support counseling is needed, we could be there. Healthcare workers on the frontline dealing with anxiety and stress, we could be there. The immediate need is \$50,000 for the RV.

Our priority capital campaign is to secure land and buildings for the Midwest Animal Assisted Therapy & Education Organization Ranch. This is a multiple acre facility with buildings where we would conduct educational programs as well as have facilities where we could provide additional services. This would be an outpatient facility that would provide services like Hippotherapy & Equine Assisted Therapy, Animal Assisted Therapy, Horticulture & Natural Habitat Therapy. We are also looking into the possibility of providing housing for clients that may require multiple days of services. We have been in contact with a family that has what we are looking for and we would be able to provide services from day one. This would be a 1.5 million dollar turnkey opportunity.

We ask that all of you consider making your tax-deductible year-end donation today. Some of you may be able to take advantage of covid-19 related tax donation incentives. Some of you may want to make a donation on a monthly basis and become a Paws for the Cause Partner.

Tammy and I are very grateful to have met all of you. We look forward to 2021 as we all learn to Relax, Reset and, Recover.