



For Immediate Release

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Therapy Horse “Reeses” Receives 2019 Honor & Service Award at the Washington International Horse Show

Reeses, a 27-year old Thoroughbred from the Project Horse Empowerment Center in Purcellville, Virginia, will be a recipient of the Washington International Horse Show's (WIHS) Honor & Service Award, sponsored by the EQUUS Foundation. Reeses will be recognized in center ring on Friday, October 25, 2019, during Military Night at the annual Washington International Horse Show in Washington, DC's Capital One Arena.

The WIHS Honor & Service Award was created in 2013 following the induction of the horse, Klinger, into the Horse Stars Hall of Fame. Klinger, a member of the Old Guard Caisson Platoon of the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, was the inspiration for the award and its first recipient. The Honor & Service Award annually recognizes a horse, individual or organization that best demonstrates the values of honor and service as embodied by Klinger.

In 2007, Darcy Woessner was searching for a sport horse for her personal enjoyment, yet unexpectedly crossed paths with Reeses, an ex-event horse who was malnourished, arthritic and covered in rain rot. She was appalled by the condition of the horse – permanently physically disabled, and in poor emotional condition and health. Although Reeses was not the sport horse she was seeking, Darcy intervened and rescued her.

That fortuitous decision not only changed Reeses' life, it became a turning point in Darcy's. “I'll never forget the moment when I first met Reeses, quite by chance. We made eye contact, and I felt like I was hit by a ton of bricks! Right then I *knew* I had to do something. I sensed she would change my life, but I didn't yet know how,” remembers Darcy Woessner, Executive Director and Co-Founder of Project Horse Empowerment Center.

As Reeses received proper veterinary care and started to gain much-needed weight, she displayed an incredibly gentle disposition. It seemed that this lame, thrown-away Thoroughbred mare would be an amazing therapy horse. Unfortunately, at the time, nearly all of equine therapy programs were focused on therapeutic riding, and Reeses would never be able to be ridden again.

It was Reeses who inspired Darcy to found the Project Horse Empowerment Center, an equine assisted psychotherapy and wellness center that helps individuals of all ages and challenges. Since the nonprofit's founding in 2008, people and horses have been active partners in healing – on equal footing. In a unique approach, *Project Horse's client services do not include riding* – all interactions are ground-based, focusing on collaborative relationships, honest and clear communication, and resilience. Reeses specializes in supporting children and women, in particular those who have experienced trauma. Reeses delivers hope and inspiration to hundreds of individuals every year, sharing her message: **No matter what, everyone has value!**



Project Horse Empowerment Center, a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization founded in 2008, is dedicated to improving the quality of life for humans and horses. Through the power of equine assisted psychotherapy and experiential learning, Project Horse has created a unique community of mutual healing and benefit.