



Fall 2020

First Gun Raffle Huge Success!

Our first Gun Raffle was held on Saturday, September 26, 2020. While the day was quite dreary outside, it didn't dampen our spirits...or fun! The evening could not have been more wonderful...with the beautiful view of Newton Ransom from under the pavillion, to the delicious buffet prepared by The Penalty Box BBQ. Not to mention GUNS! 18 magnificent beauties raffled off, as guests played the most fun games!

Thank you to everyone who supported Equines through buying raffle tickets, donating raffle baskets, and being so generous throughout the evening! So many people to thank, including our organizers, Dr. Brenda Goodrich and her husband, Mike; Croasdale Sporting Goods; Dave Bowman, our emcee for the evening; the many volunteers from EFF's Board of Directors and Therapy Team; the Blue Star Mothers of NEPA; the incredible sponsors, and many more friends and family members who pitched in to make the night a complete success!



EFF's incredible treatment team: Ann Lewis, Emy Kurilla, Kristen Angelicola, Marica Ramey, and Robbie Long.

Gun Sponsors:

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Our fearless leader...Brenda Goodrich.



Equine Specialists Robbie Long and Kristen Angelicola.



Some of our amazing volunteers: John Panofsky, Kathy Croft, Joe Croft, Zachary Goodrich, Brenda Goodrich, and Mary Walsh-Dempsey.



The Blue Star Mothers (Kerry O'Grady, Cyndi Sause, Colleen Ell, Lori Bishop and Treyci Callahan) are having fun while working!



Feature on Founder, Ann Lewis, MH, EA-EMDR



We took a moment to interview Equines for Freedom Founder Ann Lewis shortly after a feature article was published in Lifestyles Magazine. Here's what she had to say...

Equines For Freedom had its genesis in 2013 and was kindled by my desire to own a horse. A friend had found a prospective horse for me on Craig's List, even though I had shared with her that the time wasn't right for me to own my first horse as I had been saving for a cruise to Alaska with Michael W. Smith and Friends. My friend convinced me to visit the horse, suggesting that I could name it "Smitty," after Michael W. Smith. When I got to the barn, the horse came right over to me and nuzzled my cheek. It was love at first sight and, when I learned that her seller's name was "Kathy Smith," it felt like a God moment. Smitty became part of my family that day and I stabled him at a barn close to my home.

I am a psychologist and have worked in the field of trauma treatment for over thirty years. During the time that Smitty and I had initially gotten together, I was learning more and more about the high suicide rate within the military community. From other horse owners at Smitty's barn, I also learned about Marley's Mission, a treatment center in my area that was providing equine therapy for children suffering from trauma caused by abuse. I was already certified in a type of therapy called Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing or EMDR and I thought that there had to be a way of combining horses and this therapy to assist our veterans.

I had come to realize that my "call" was with the military and had a strong feeling that this is what God wanted me to do. I found out about training available in Arizona that combines EMDR with equine therapy and got even more excited. Before embarking on my cruise, I met with others to explore the possibility of treating veterans in my area of Pennsylvania utilizing this therapy and in creating a non-profit to facilitate this treatment. I subsequently received training and certification in EA-EMDR therapy from Sarah Jenkins in Arizona together with some local equine specialists, including Heather Stage.

I was bubbling with excitement about my "call" while on the Alaskan cruise and shared my story with many people whom I met on that cruise. One of these people was Mary Eickemeyer, or EM as we call her, who was very interested in what I was sharing and confirmed my "call" through prayer. She was also excited about our fledgling non-profit and, following the cruise, arranged to meet me at a Michael W. Smith concert in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. We have become fast friends and she has been very supportive in our efforts and has continually helped to strengthen my resolve.

After much effort and many growing pains, we finally succeeded in getting Equines For Freedom off the ground and, after gaining recognition as a 501(c)(3) non-profit, Heather and I began treating our first veterans in November 2015. Our EA-EMDR therapy team is one of less than a hundred such teams in the world and we operate at an enclosed equine arena that Marley's Mission constructed for us at its location in Newton Township, in northeastern Pennsylvania. Our horses and arena are currently rented from Marley's Mission for each of our therapy sessions on an as-needed basis.

We are very much encouraged at the progress of the veterans in treatment with us and in the great strides that they have taken since initially coming to our program. We continue to grow and are planning to add additional therapy teams as they become trained and certified, as well as appropriate and sustainable.





President's Letter

Written by Bruce Spencer



At our recent gun raffle fundraiser, I was honored with a banner donated by my daughter, Elizabeth and granddaughter, Elyse. It will be displayed with many other banners in the Equines for Freedom's Gary Johnson arena for the next three years. To have family members recognize my service after so many years was a moving experience. It brought up memories of being out of the country for most of my four years of Navy service, some good and some better forgotten. But, my experience was nowhere near what many of our soldiers and sailors who experienced and fought through World War II and the subsequent wars since.

The following are excerpts from some correspondence I recently received:

My father in law was a navigator and pilot in Patton's Army Air Corps. Four years flying bombers into Europe and Germany. Seven bronze stars. Countless buddies lost. He came home to no real mental health support. Like so many countless men, that impacted his engagement and resiliency in his family-life ,which directly impacted his son, now my husband, and impacts even our home life today.

One of my favorite people of my whole life was my great uncle John. He was a first generation American. His parents were from a farming village in the fertile land of Ukraine. They were extremely proud to be Americans. And, at 18, their only son John enlisted and was sent to the land invasions in the South Pacific. Knowing him, he hardly spoke. He was extremely quiet. While he did not pay the ultimate price in many, many ways he still lost his life. He never married. He slept his whole life not in his bed but in a military sleep sack, with his boots shined, at his side, and ready to be put on. And late in life as his brain aged, he suffered flashbacks of trenches and land invasions. Like many men with similar stories, he didn't talk about it and it wasn't until we read his military record preparing for his funeral, we had any idea what he had been through...some of the greatest ugliness of the war. Four bronze stars. Two purple hearts. As an adult, seeing the documentaries and reading in college about the land invasions in the South Pacific, what he experienced is almost unimaginable. And he came home to no therapy, no treatment for PTSD.



EFF President Bruce Spencer is presented with his banner (donated by his daughter Elizabeth and granddaughter Elyse) by Marica Ramey, EFF Licensed Professional Counselor.

Reading these stories hit me like a brick. The reality is that a veteran or first responder's PTSD can affect family members for more than one generation. In most of my conversations about Equines for Freedom and our free PTSD therapy, I am reminded of the current veteran or first responder and how we can stop his/her condition from being propagated down through current and future family members.

Our job at Equines for Freedom is a serious one. It is important to treat as many veterans and first responders as we can. Please join us.

Warmly,
Bruce J. Spencer – president
US Navy Veteran -- 1967 to 1971



EFF Christmas Wish List

The Christmas holiday season will be upon us before we know it! Everyone on the therapy team has been extra good this year, as well as all of our hard-working horses. Let's help out dear old Santa and fill some stockings at EFF!

\$100.00 - a therapy session for a Veteran experiencing PTSD.

\$75 - some sweet hay for one of the horses.

Donations of copy paper, paper towels, office essentials (pens, tape, paper clips, rubber bands, envelopes, postage stamps)

\$100 - a therapy session for a First Responder

\$125 - Horse veterinary care

Donations can be sent to: Equines for Freedom
Box 53
Factoryville, PA 18419

Equines for Freedom is a nonprofit, 501c(3) organization and all donations are tax deductible.

Share This With a Friend!

We are so pleased to have you as part of our Equines for Freedom family! We are looking to spread the word about our fabulous organization and would love if you could help. Would you like to share this newsletter with a friend? Simply share their email address with us and we will email our quarterly newsletter to them. We promise not to overwhelm anyone's inbox! Send the email to eff@EquinesforFreedom.org or call us at 570-319-9684.

