

THE RESOURCE



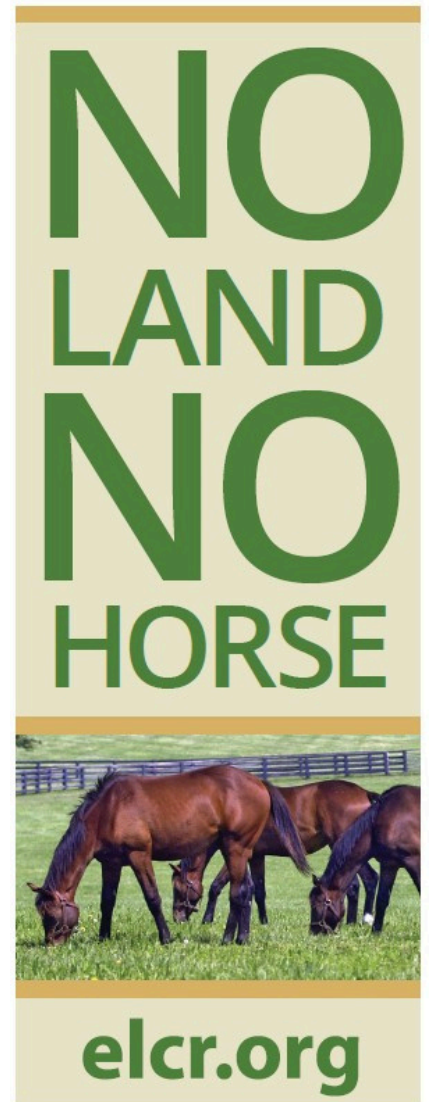
Saving Young Lives Through Horses: How Programs in Arkansas Are Making a Difference

By Rebecca Thompson for ELCR

While horses may no longer play the everyday roles they once did in human society, their capacity to positively impact individuals and communities remains significant. One such area is equine-assisted therapy, a practice that has existed for centuries. However, it was not until the 1990s that equine-assisted psychotherapy (EAP) gained broader public recognition. Since then, growing research has continued to demonstrate the therapeutic value of human-horse interactions, particularly within the field of mental health.

Equine-assisted psychotherapy is a form of experiential therapy that incorporates horses into mental health treatment. During EAP sessions, a licensed mental health professional collaborates with an equine specialist to facilitate therapeutic activities. This interdisciplinary approach has been used to support individuals experiencing a range of conditions, including ADHD, autism, anxiety, depression, substance misuse, and other mental health challenges.

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A related article published by ELCR, *Horses Healing Humans: The Multifaceted Role of Equines in Addiction Rehabilitation*, highlights several programs across the United States where equine-assisted therapy is being successfully used to support individuals affected by addiction on their journey toward recovery. This article focuses on four Christian faith-based organizations in Northwest Arkansas that are using equine-assisted programs to guide at-risk teenagers toward becoming responsible, healthy adults.



In the 1970s, John and Nelda Nevels opened their home in Morrow, Arkansas, to troubled boys in need of guidance and care. What began as a personal, Christ-centered outreach known as the King's Ranch grew into something much larger. In 1973, the ministry became officially affiliated with Teen Challenge USA, establishing the first residential Teen Challenge program dedicated exclusively to adolescent boys struggling with addiction and behavioral issues.

Since its founding, Teen Challenge Adventure Ranch (TCAR) has helped thousands of young men overcome substance abuse, mental health challenges, and destructive behavioral patterns. With more than 50 years of experience and over 2,000 families served, the program has become a trusted source of hope for families navigating some of the most difficult challenges of adolescence.

Nestled on a 31-acre campus in the scenic Arkansas Ozarks, the ranch is set in a tranquil valley surrounded by sweeping mountain views—an environment well suited for healing and personal transformation. This natural setting complements TCAR's holistic approach, which integrates outdoor adventure and equine-assisted therapy with evidence-based clinical care, all grounded in a Christ-centered framework.

At the heart of the campus is the Full-Life Center, a multi-purpose facility that provides therapeutic services, academic support, and recreational opportunities. Additional amenities include two residential dormitories, a recreation building, and a fully equipped equestrian center.

Growing research has continued to demonstrate the therapeutic value of human-horse interactions, particularly within the field of mental health.

Equine-assisted therapy plays a central role in the healing process at TCAR. Through working with horses, teens develop self-awareness, strengthen non-verbal communication skills, and begin to rebuild trust. For many participants, these experiences are both new and deeply transformative. Guided by trained therapists and supported by natural horsemanship techniques, equine-assisted psychotherapy at TCAR offers powerful, hands-on opportunities for lasting emotional and behavioral growth.

Through a holistic, faith-based approach, TCAR continues to transform lives and restore hope for teens and families across the country. TCAR's leadership now plans to open Genesis Ranch, a similar residential program for teenage girls. To that end, the Ranch seeks to raise \$1 million in start-up costs, including the purchase of a nearby property in Cane Hill, Arkansas. TCAR therefore sought advice and support from Saving Grace in Centerton, Arkansas, a transitional program with equine therapy for young women.



Saving Grace offers hope and transformation to young women ages 18-25 who are aging out of foster care or facing homelessness. That transformation comes through relationships, coaching, and opportunities that empower generational change. Saving Grace provides safe housing in a dorm-style setting and offers each young woman educational assistance, career guidance, coaching, counseling, and more. Young women in their program are taught essential life skills like money and time management, cooking and meal planning, relationship skills, and car care. They receive personalized coaching to support them in achieving important life goals, including getting a driver's license, securing a job, buying a car, continuing their education, starting a savings account, and more.

In 2025, representatives from Saving Grace and the Northwest Arkansas Equine Coalition (NWAEC) met at Teen Challenge Adventure Ranch for a shared lunch, a guided tour of the facility, and a presentation outlining plans for Genesis Ranch. During the visit, members of Saving Grace and NWAEC offered valuable insight on fundraising strategies, best practices for supporting girls in residential programs, and ways to promote Genesis Ranch through social media. They also emphasized the importance of grouping girls in even numbers within dormitories and small-group settings to help foster strong friendships and avoid feelings of isolation.



Additional recommendations included providing young participants with nurturing experiences, such as caring for and bonding with horses, and opportunities to engage in challenging, skill-building, and competitive activities. These experiences build confidence, instill a sense of accomplishment, and allow girls to take pride in achieving goals comparable to those offered in boys' programs. Drawing from their own experience, Saving Grace representatives also shared practical guidance on hosting successful benefit dinners, galas, and online TCAR and future Executive Director of Genesis Ranch, shared that Genesis will follow the same faith-driven, clinically based model that has produced a 78 percent long-term success rate among TCAR's young male graduates. Genesis Ranch and TCAR will operate under the same Board of Directors, and the young women enrolled at Genesis will have access to TCAR's equines and stables during times when the boys are engaged in other activities.

Thomas also noted that Genesis Ranch is in the process of securing a permanent home. A suitable property on sufficient acreage has been identified nearby, and Genesis has already raised significant funds toward its purchase.

Another program based in Fayetteville, Boston Mountain Youth Ranch, provides a free, outdoor youth mentoring program designed to support children facing trauma, poverty, grief, and other challenging life circumstances in Northwest Arkansas.



BOSTON MOUNTAIN YOUTH RANCH

Through hands-on mentoring alongside a herd of horses, children build positive relationship skills using movement, playfulness, and non-judgmental connection. These experiences help children process emotions, develop resilience, and gain new perspectives on themselves and the world around them.

Rooted in a mission to offer a safe, structured, and loving environment, the Ranch invites children and families into a supportive community grounded in God's unconditional love.

By fostering curiosity, spiritual growth, and authentic relationships, Boston Mountain Youth Ranch seeks to guide children toward wholeness with God, themselves, and others—ensuring all families can participate at no cost.

Northwest Arkansas is fortunate to be home to programs such as TCAR, Saving Grace, Boston Mountain Youth Ranch, and the forthcoming Genesis Ranch. Together, these organizations exemplify the enduring value of the human-horse partnership and underscore the importance of advocating for horses within our communities, particularly as local landscapes continue to evolve.



To learn more about how horses benefit our communities, check out our corresponding online resources [here](#).

2025

Anson W. H. Taylor Jr. Memorial Scholarship Award

Congrats to Abigail Haskins for being the 2025 Anson W. H. Taylor Jr. Memorial Scholarship recipient!

The Anson W. H. Taylor Jr. Memorial Scholarship was established in 2006 to honor Anson Taylor for his work with The United States Pony Clubs and the Equine Land Conservation Resource.

This year's winner, Abigail Haskins, is an HB, C3 EV member of the Deep Run Hunt Pony Club, Virginia Region. She, along with the Deep Run Hunt Pony Club and Deep Run Hunt Club, has been visiting the Virginia Capitol Building in Richmond, annually. While there, the clubs explain what fox hunting is, how it's important to the economy of both the county and the state, and how the decrease in land conservation continues to lead to significant limitations of the sport. By bringing awareness to the congresswomen and congressmen about how, without proper amounts of land, their sport and other equestrian sports are in grave danger of decline.

Abigail hopes to decrease the push for building and increase the push for conservation and will be attending Randolph Macon College as an Animal Science/Biology major.



To encourage Pony Club members in their academic pursuits and reward them for their outstanding achievements in Pony Club, commitment to and efforts on behalf of land conservation, \$1,500 annually will be provided to award a one-year scholarship.

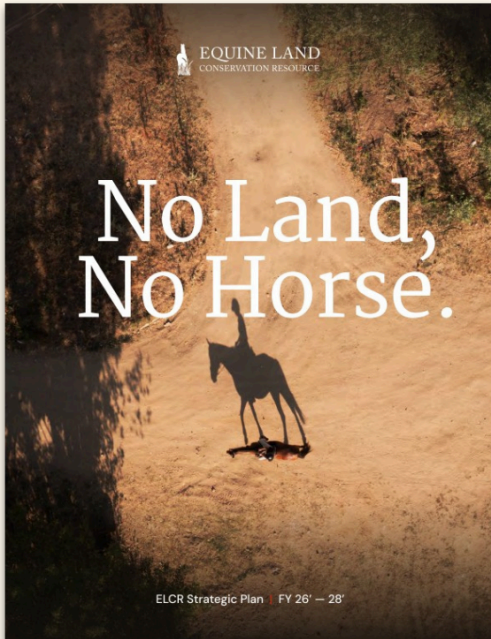


Recipient must be a current Pony Club member, must have entered their senior year in high school at the time of application, and must have been accepted to (or attending) an institution of higher education. Applicants must also have achieved a C-1 H-M or higher certification and at least 3.0 GPA in their academics.

Applicants must complete the USPC Scholarship online application form, which is available on the USPC website.

Want to apply or know a deserving student? Click [here](#) for more details.

ELCR FY2026 - FY2028 Strategic Plan



The ELCR FY2026-FY2028 Strategic Plan provides a framework for strengthening ELCR's role as a national resource for equine land conservation. Through expanded partnerships, improved tools, and targeted programs, ELCR will support communities working to protect land for horses and equestrian use and maintain the economic, environmental, and cultural benefits those horse lands provide.

Strategic Focus Areas

Building Organizational Capacity
Strengthening Governance and Leadership
Expanding Programmatic Impact
Elevating Advocacy and National Influence

Read the full Strategic Plan [here](#).

Request for Proposal: Website & Fundraising Platform

Our website is key to becoming more visible, consistent, relevant, and interactive with our audiences. We are seeking a digital agency to design and develop a modern, responsive website that serves two primary goals:

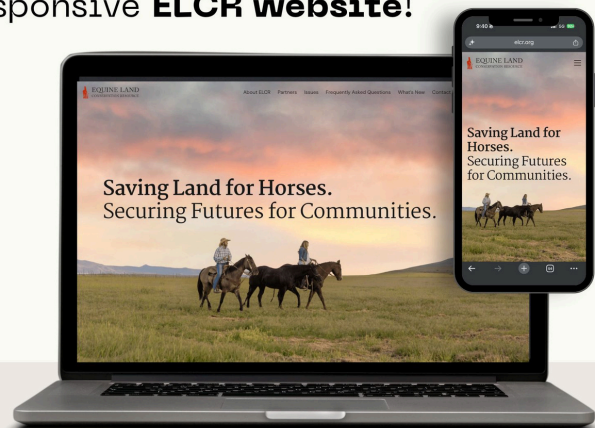
Education

Develop the most trusted destination for information and resources to support individuals, communities, advocates, and policymakers with an interest in equine land conservation.

Conversion

Elevate the brand and online destination to become a high-performance engine for donor acquisition and retention.

We are seeking a digital agency to design and develop a more modern and responsive **ELCR website!**



Proposal Submission Deadline:
Email info@elcr.org by June 12, 2026

See RFP for project details.

To read the full RFP and submission requirements, click [here](#).

EQUINE PLACES AND SPACES

LOST: Pine Log WMA, Burbank, Bartow, GA

After over four decades of the Pine Log Wildlife Management Area being open for hikers, riders, and other outdoor activities, the 14,000-acre property is no longer available for public use. The state of Georgia had leased the property for 46 years, but the landowners decided to sell the property.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) submitted several bids for purchase, but were outbid by developers with significantly higher offers.

Steve Friedman, Georgia DNR Chief of Real Estate said, “We want our constituents to know—hunters, fishermen, hikers, everyone who enjoyed Pine Log—that we did everything we could to make this work.

“We have no animosity toward the family, they have been great partners. The family believes it is worth more, and they have every right to seek as much as they can.”

Read the article [here](#).

PRESERVED: Wild Banker Horses, Corolla, NC

A remote stretch of land in Corolla, North Carolina, is home to a herd of about 120 wild Banker horses that roam freely along the beaches and have adapted to living in a not typically equine-friendly landscape. The horses are believed to be descendants of Spanish mustangs that survived shipwrecks more than 500 years ago. The herd lives in a 7,500-acre protected land near Carova Beach and can only be reached by four-wheel-drive vehicles, which has drastically cut back on traffic, helping the horses thrive.

The Corolla Wild Horse Fund helps manage the horses, and tours help fund veterinary care, research, and conservation of the horses’ habitat.

Read the article [here](#).

THREATENED: Golden Spike Event Center in Weber County, UT

The Golden Spike Event Center is one of only two venues in Utah that holds recognized United States Eventing Association competitions. Recently, the venue’s ability to offer a safe space for horses and riders was challenged when bulldozers and crews entered the property without warning and began dismantling Wasatch Pony Club-owned jumps. The Wasatch Pony Club has a 50-year lease for the land, with 12 years still remaining, but the county approved this demolition without warning to the Club.

“We were shocked to discover that a large part of our cross country course had been bulldozed overnight, just weeks before our Pumpkin Schooling Event,” noted the the organization.

“Like many of you, we were heartbroken. Since 1987, our course has hosted horse trials, schooling events, clinics, bike races, dog walkers, community events, even “Yellowstone” shot scenes here... It’s a place full of history, stories, learning, and shared joy.”

The Wasatch Pony Club remains committed to doing what they can to support the local equine community and hosting events.

Read the article [here](#).

THREATENED: Rohr Park, Chula Vista, CA

A proposal to replace the riding arena at Rohr Park with athletic fields has sparked a strong response from local equestrians and city leaders, including Mayor John McCann, who publicly urged city staff to oppose the repurposing of the space. The Sunnyside Saddle Club maintains the ring at little to no cost to the city and serves an estimated 500 local horses and riders. The local equestrian community was not brought into initial discussions about the potential upcoming changes in the city’s master plan.

Read the article [here](#).

SAVED: The University of Lynchburg Equestrian Team, Lynchburg, VA

One Lynchburg, a multiyear fundraising campaign for the University of Lynchburg, has helped secure a home for the University's equestrian team. The equestrian center was put on the market in the fall of 2025, leaving the future of the equestrian team up in the air. Then Jennifer and Watt Foster stepped in and invested over \$1 million, immediately leasing the property back to the school, to make sure the team could keep their home.

"The Fosters' generosity ensures that this tradition not only continues but thrives. ... [They] have stabilized the equestrian program for the next 20 years. Their generosity will impact dozens and dozens of young people, ensuring that one of our most decorated and beloved programs continues to flourish."

Read the article [here](#).

LOST: Aurora Horse Boarding Stables, Aurora, CO

Aurora Horse Boarding Stables is being transformed into a housing community, turning a longtime equestrian property into affordable housing. The property is close to schools, job sites, and shopping locations, making it a prime location to develop.

The new development, named The Stables, will include 137 new homes. The first phase will include 85 apartments, aimed toward families. The second phase will add an additional 52 units for seniors.

Read the article [here](#).

If you are aware of equine-related land that has been lost, saved, or is in danger, contact us at (859) 455-8383 or info@elcr.org, or visit the *Report an Issue* page on our website at www.elcr.org/conservation-resources/report-an-issue.



A financial gift from Jennifer and Watt Foster stabilized The University of Lynchburg's equestrian program for the next 20 years.

Education Corner: Community-Based Organizations Advocating for Sustainable Land Use

By ELCR

The Equine Land Conservation Resource (ELCR) regularly receives requests for assistance from individuals, organizations, or communities threatened by development plans that can negatively impact horse-keeping in their local communities. Often, residents have been blindsided by these proposed development plans that leave them with little time to organize and react.

For that reason, ELCR encourages equestrian communities to organize and advocate at the local level. Establishing a formal group allows stakeholders to monitor land use and planning decisions, share information timely, advocate effectively, and respond proactively, or when necessary, reactively, to policies that may threaten equine land access.



Photo Credit: Deb Balliet
Local advocacy helps ensure that land use and planning decisions benefit equine communities.

Across the United States, grassroots land-use watch groups are forming as residents grow increasingly concerned about suburban and rural sprawl. These organizations focus on sustainable growth, land-use planning, and agricultural preservation by advocating for smart growth, protecting rural land, and promoting sustainable development in and around urban areas.

These organizations play a critical role in shaping the future of their communities by:

- Identifying and assessing local land-use priorities and concerns
- Engaging residents to determine a shared vision for community development
- Advocating for planning decisions that reflect those priorities and holding decision-makers accountable when they do not

Even organizations that do not focus specifically on equine lands can be valuable allies in your efforts to protect horse lands. Thoughtful, well-executed planning benefits everyone by helping to protect valuable agricultural, equine, and natural landscapes for the benefit of this and future generations.

Read more about how these organizations are doing their part [here](#).

What We Can Learn from Community-Based Organizations

Seven Practical Steps for Advocacy and Action

- 1 Come together and get organized.**
Strong local groups help individuals and communities have a real voice in decisions about growth, development, and protecting open land.
- 2 Listen to your community.**
Understanding what people value, along with the needs of equine land users, helps ensure plans reflect the full picture. Sometimes outside experts can help gather this information.
- 3 Find solutions that work for everyone.**
It is possible to support horses, people, and local economies while also protecting the environment and respecting land-use rules.
- 4 Speak up for smart local policies.**
Advocacy at the local level is one of the most effective ways to protect equine land and keep trails and open spaces accessible.
- 5 Work with others to make a bigger impact.**
Building relationships with local leaders, agencies, and organizations, even those with different perspectives, helps move ideas forward.
- 6 Get involved in local planning.**
Learning how community plans are made and how decisions happen gives you the tools to protect open space and shape your community's future.
- 7 Think long term.**
Advocacy does not happen overnight. Lasting change takes ongoing communication, attention, and a commitment to protecting equine land for generations to come.



The **ELCR Online Resource Library** represents the largest available collection of resources, including articles, guides, tools and templates, and recorded webinars related to conserving horse lands. These online resources are available to the public free of charge. The online library can be accessed at www.elcr.org.

Ways to Support ELCR

ELCR could not continue the critical work it does without your support. Below are some of the many ways you can help support ELCR's vital mission of saving horse lands!

1. Join ELCR as a **Conservation Partner**.
2. **Make a gift** in honor of friends and family who also love our equine friends and way of life.
3. Consider a stock gift to ELCR **Donate stock**.
4. **Become a monthly donor** and leverage a smaller monthly gift into a larger annual impact.
5. Remember a cherished loved one or equine companion with a **Memorial Tribute Gift**.
6. Like and share ELCR on **Facebook**, **YouTube**, and **Instagram**. The more people we reach, the more cherished lands and equine heritage we can save!

Visit www.elcr.org for more information or contact us at elcradmin@elcr.org.

ELCR's work is mainly funded by charitable contributions and memberships. Your gift combined with others helps us to expand our outreach, grow awareness about conserving land for horses, and continue our educational programming and technical assistance services. Please consider making an online gift at www.elcr.org/donate.

ELCR works through our **Conservation Members and Partners** to raise awareness of issues driving loss of horse lands and to support local actions to keep land open to horses. Please consider becoming an ELCR member today at www.elcr.org/join.

Thank You for Your Support!

Support ELCR

I wish to support ELCR's annual campaign with my gift of:

- \$2,500 \$1,000 \$750
 \$500 \$250 \$100
 \$50 \$25 \$ _____

- I wish to join ELCR as a Conservation Member (\$28)
 I wish to join ELCR as a Business Member (\$100)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

My gift is in honor of in memory of (Name): _____

Please notify: _____

- I would like to make a one-time gift of \$ _____.
 I would like to make a monthly donation of \$ _____ for _____ months by credit card.

Payment Method

- Check enclosed Visa Credit Card Mastercard Credit Card

Send completed form with check to:



**Equine Land
Conservation Resource**
4037 Iron Works
Parkway, Suite 120
Lexington, KY 40511

Name on Card: _____

Account Number: _____

If you prefer to donate online, visit www.elcr.org/donate.

Expiration Date: ____ / ____ Signature: _____