

USU Extension Grant- Final Report

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Project Title: Horses for Heroes Military Trail Rides (Ride Utah!)

Project Beginning Date and End Date: June 1, 2016 – December 31, 2016

Total Requested: \$10,000

Project Summary:

Nearly 1 in 4 active and retired military personnel exhibit signs of stress ranging from PTSD to depression. Each branch of the military has developed internal resiliency programs to increase psychosocial support and the ability to bounce back from stressors. Current research has shown clinically significant benefits from therapeutic horse activities with military personnel, veterans, and family members. Utah State University Extension has developed a therapeutic equine program called Ride Utah! that provides military personnel and their guest a 1-2-hour trail ride, lunch, and a professionally moderated group discussion focused on military family issues. Ride Utah! is hosted in each county by USU Extension and collaborates with community members and military support groups. The results from the participant completed Conner-Davidson Resiliency Scale's demonstrate that Ride Utah! is harnessing Utah's natural beauty and resources into a successful program that is improving participant's emotional wellbeing and strengthens communities.

Project Results:

Collaboration

Twelve equine trail rides were sponsored around the state of Utah this past summer. In each ride USU campus faculty, county faculty, state military organizations, and local military units worked together to facilitate each event. Collaboration with county extension offices was vital for the success of these rides. With the understanding that this was a pilot program, only a few county offices were contacted to sponsor the initial trail rides. Davis, Sevier, Garfield, and Washington County Extension Offices participated. Utah State University Campus faculty sponsored several rides in Cache County. During these rides the USU Extension did the following: designated an event coordinator and ride supervisor, set ride dates, determined the ride location and ensured it was appropriate, provided some of the horses and tack for the participants, arranged the meal, provided chairs and table, and cleaned up the site following the event. Utah State University campus faculty provided expertise and training in trail ride safety, equine behavior, how to increase efficacy working with military personnel, first aid and CPR, handled advertising and sign ups, and contacted licensed therapists to attend and facilitate the group discussion. Local military units, Utah National Guard, Veterans Affairs, and campus military offices were asked to help with additional advertising and recruitment of participants, provide licensed therapists for local group discussion, and offer support for local individuals. The success of Ride Utah! is dependent on collaboration between campus faculty, county office faculty, community members, and local military units. Without the help of each entity, the program will not be effective.

Outcome, Outputs, and Impacts

During the course of the twelve rides, 128 individuals participated and 92 people volunteered. Among the participants 82 were military personnel and 46 were participant invited guests. The dates and locations of the rides are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Date	Location	Date	Location
6/9/16	Eden (Davis Co.)	8/4/16	Eden (Davis Co.)
6/15/16	Cove (Cache Co.)	8/8/16	Wellsville (Cache Co.)
6/17/16	Richfield (Sevier Co.)	9/30/16	Wellsville (Cache Co.)
7/14/16	Panguitch (Garfield Co.)	11/11/16	St. George (Washington Co.)
7/20/16	Wellsville (Cache Co.)	11/11/16	St. George (Washington Co.)
7/22/16	Uintah Mnts. (with the VA)	11/12/16	St. George (Washington Co.)

Individuals were asked to voluntarily participate in a survey to help determine if the activity increased resiliency (resiliency being defined as the ability to cope with stressors in life). The survey utilized was the national recognized Conner-Davidson Resilience Scale. The survey consists of 10 statements in which participants rate themselves on a scale of 0-4, before and after the ride. Results from the Conner-Davidson Resiliency Scale Survey are listed in Table 2. Out of a possible 40 points the average for the pre-ride was 30.5 and the average for the post-ride was 34.2, showing an average increase of 3.7 points. A two tail T Test gave a p-value of the mean of 0.002, indicating that the difference in the pre and post survey scores is significant.

Table 2

	Pre-ride Score	Post-ride Score	Difference
Mean	30.5	34.2	3.7
Min	16	18	-4
Max	40	40	22
T Test P=			0.002
Standard Deviation	7.2	5.6	4.9

Program evaluation questionnaires were also utilized following lunch and the group discussion to evaluate the event in its entirety. A total of 70 evaluations were completed. The average scores on a scale of 1 - 5 (1 being poor and 5 being exceptional) are as follows:

Table 3

	Mean	Min	Max
Overall rating of the ride	4.96	3	5
Overall rating of the meal	4.82	3	5
Overall rating of the group discussion	4.74	1	5
Overall rating of advertising	4.34	1	5

The scores for the overall ratings are positive, indicating the program was very well received. The lowest rating was for the group discussions. This may be a result of the counselor not connecting with the group, or participants being reluctant to share personal feelings in a group setting. The advertising evolved over the summer. Initially social media was utilized, however participants contacted in this way lacked commitment. When military support groups became involved in advertising, individual participation increase significantly and included a waiting list. If time and resources would have allowed, enough individuals were interested to fill two more rides.

Participant’s and counselor’s comments indicate a stronger sense of community resulting from the rides. One counselor stated that individuals going through an “experience” together strengthens and bonds them. The trail ride provides an opportunity for individuals to create contacts, begin new friendships, and strengthen existing relationships.

Scholarly Materials

A program guide for Ride Utah! has been written. The program guide is a step by step guide on how to plan, prepare for, and execute a trail ride with military. The sections of the guide outline the qualifications required by individuals leading the ride, as well as where and how to access necessary training that is available online and on campus. The program guide will be published at USU and become available to Utah State University Extension Faculty, and other state and national organizations. A journal article for the Journal of Extension is being edited for submission. A fact sheet on Trail Ride Equine First Aid has been submitted for review.

Extramural Funding

During the course of the program, efforts have been made to secure extramural funding. An abstract has been submitted to the eXtension Foundation, Inc. for initial review for a grant application. Donations of a trailer, horses, and volunteer time have made this program possible. A list of in-kind donations is included in Table 3.

Table 3

Logan Coach Horse Trailer	\$5516
Horses for the rides	\$10,150
Discount on helmets from IFA, North Logan	\$160
Volunteers: 268 hours at \$23.92/hour	\$6,410.56
Volunteer Therapist	\$546.96
Totals	\$22,782.56

Presentation Plans

I will be presenting Ride Utah! at the Utah Horse Council’s 2017 Horse Expo. This event is scheduled for March 17-19 and is held at the Salt Lake County Equestrian Park in South Jordan, Utah. Ride Utah! will also be presented at the 2017 National Urban Extension Conference, May 8-11, 2017 in Bloomington, Minnesota. An abstract has also been submitted for consideration for an oral presentation at the 2017 National Association of County Agricultural Agents Annual Meeting/Professional Improvement Conference being held in July in Salt Lake City.