



Dumb Friends League.
HARMONY EQUINE CENTER ♥

Dumb Friends League Harmony Equine Center Regional Training Center Year One Case Study

Background:

The Dumb Friends League Harmony Equine Center™ is a private rehabilitation and adoption facility for abused and neglected horses, ponies, donkeys and mules that have been removed from their owners by law enforcement authorities. Located near Franktown, Colo., the 168-acre facility includes three sizable, well-equipped barns for intake, training and adoptions, 26 pastures and turnouts, two indoor riding arenas and an education center. Their knowledgeable, professional staff and dedicated volunteers provide safe shelter, nutritious feed, top-quality care and training to the equines at the center.

The Issue:

For the most part, adopters are looking for trained horses. Most equine adoption centers could place more horses into adoptive homes if they had more resources to provide training to their horses while in transition. In some cases, horses may just need some minimal finishing training to transition to a new career; and in other cases, horses may need complete training if they have never been ridden. Many equine adoption centers operate on small budgets and not all equine adoptions centers have the budget or the operational infrastructure to have trainers on staff.

The Solution:

Dumb Friends League proposed to pilot and develop programs to increase the placement rates of horses by testing various transfer processes from pre-qualified rescue groups into Harmony Equine Center. The plan included hiring additional trainers and staff to expand their training and adoption programs. Additionally, they planned to pilot various advertising and promotion opportunities to ensure long term sustainability of the program.

In the first year of this pilot program Harmony Equine Center transformed into a centralized hub for training horses and placing them in new homes. Working with pre-qualified rescues and humane societies that are able to place horses through their program but need assistance with training prior to adoption, they offered the option to transfer qualifying horses into the regional training center program. Once the professional staff at Harmony Equine Center deem the horses as viable candidates for adoption (completed training), they can be returned to the source group for adoption or placed for adoption by Harmony staff. Overall, the long-term goal of this project is to reduce the number of horses in transition in the region through a professional training and adoption program.

The Results:

For the 12 months from March 1, 2016 to February 28, 2017, Harmony Equine Center received a total 299 horses. The number of live outcomes during this time frame is 229, this is an increase from their previous annual average of 100. At the conclusion of year one there were a number of horses still onsite undergoing training or awaiting adoption. Only 30 of the horses received during this time were determined as a euthanasia candidate due to poor quality of life or severe behavioral concerns. Included in the overall intake of 299 horses, 145 were regional training center transfers from local equine welfare agencies- 83 of which were successfully placed through the Harmony Equine Center adoption program and 20 were returned to their source facility to be placed for adoption, 17 of which have since been adopted.

	Mar 2015-Feb 2016	Mar 2016-Feb 2017	# Difference	% Difference
Intake	147	299	152	103%
Live Outcomes	101	207	106	105%
Euthanasia/Died	34	32	-2	-6%

Challenges Identified:

As with many first-year pilot programs, several challenges were identified over the course of implementation and execution. Many, if not all, would need to be addressed for year two and subsequent replication of the program in other areas.

1. The need for a universal adoption contract among all participating groups.
2. Differences in philosophies regarding quality of life.
3. Better education for potential adopters about horse ownership.
4. Differences in the definition of adoptability among participating groups.
5. Transparency and forthrightness from partners regarding needs of horses considered for intake.
6. Finding and keeping qualified trainers.

Conclusion:

There is not enough resources or infrastructure in place for every equine adoption agency to maintain an internal, high level, training program. Working collaboratively and utilizing resources available will help address this need and potentially double the number of horses in transition to move through the system in a more effective and cost-efficient manner. As seen in the results of the initial pilot program at Harmony Equine Center, which saw a 105% increase in horses transitioned in just the first year of the program.

Replication of the pilot program will be dependent on identifying key stakeholders with the capacity, ability and adherence to best practices to implement and execute the regional training center model in targeted geographical areas.