

CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

11/18 Board Meeting
11/24-26 Thanksgiving
Break-No School

DECEMBER

12/16 Board Meeting
12/20-31 Winter Break-No
School

JANUARY

1/13 Board Meeting
1/17 MLK Day-No
School
1/27 Board Meeting
1/28 Professional Day-
No School for
Students

FEBRUARY

2/17 Board Meeting
2/21-25 Mid Winter Break-
No School

MARCH

3/17 Board Meeting
3/18 Professional Day-
No School for
Students
3/24 Board Meeting

APRIL

4/4-8 Spring Break-No
School
4/26-29 Parent Teacher
Conferences-Early
Release Schedule

MAY

5/12 Board Meeting
5/26 Board Meeting
5/30 Memorial Day-No
School

JUNE

6/3 Graduation
6/9 Board Meeting
6/9 Last Day of School
6/30 Board Meeting



mvpride

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Photos by Tulie Budiselich

Closer to the heart

Methow Valley Riding Unlimited's move across the street from MVES enables more students to feel that positive horse energy

By Ralph Schwartz

As a counselor at Methow Valley Elementary School, Tracie Powney has worked with a lot of students over the years. "I might be working with them on a variety of issues, using a variety of methods, including play therapy and talk therapy," Powney said. The counselor has a good feel for just what each child needs, but she admits that she's got some pretty strong four-legged competition in her field of expertise.

Who knew horses could heal a person's heart?

Annie Budiselich at Methow Valley Riding Unlimited knows. Thanks to her and her team, and supportive partners in the community, a lot of the students who participate in the MVRU Let 'Em Ride program know about the amazing power of horses, too.

"Bringing them into this program, I see exponential growth in the students within an hour of working with these horses," Powney said. "I don't know how it works, the science of it, but it really is magical."

Some equine specialists will tell you that horses have a powerful energy field that can sense the thoughts and feelings of the people near them. "Studies have been done that talk about how being in the energy field of a horse can decrease anxiety and lower blood pressure," said Budeiselich, who is better known as Annie B. "Being in their presence can be grounding in this very confusing and challenging world that we live in."

Other horse people might give a more scientific explanation. As prey animals, horses are highly sensitive, so they are responsive to human emotions and body language. However you explain it, the bottom line is the same: Horses are helping students at Methow Valley Elementary School deal with challenging emotions and relationships through the long-running Let 'Em Ride program. This fall, for the first time, student participants could get to know the horses at Methow Valley Riding Unlimited simply by crossing Twin Lakes Road. MVRU moved last winter from Moccasin Lake Ranch to Crown S Ranch.

Let 'Em Ride brings 12 students in grades 2 through 6 to the ranch for five-week

sessions in the spring and fall. Before this school year, the past three sessions had been canceled due to COVID-19. MVRU found a lot of pent-up demand for Let 'Em Ride when the group checked to see who had been referred to the program by Methow Valley Elementary School staff. Annie B. said Powney had 30 students on her list. Let 'Em Ride has room for 12 students plus four alternates. "We are really needed because the kids have been so impacted over the past couple years, with COVID and wildfires and uncertainty in general in our world," Annie B. said.

If the students returned to school this fall with an extra load of stress and anxiety, that only meant their transformation during the five-week program at Crown S Ranch was that much more profound. "This past session of Let 'Em Ride was probably the most powerful, and I've done 25 of them," Annie B. said.

Let 'Em Ride is free to students who are selected for the program, with some of the costs covered by the Public School Funding Alliance and Kiwanis.

In addition to Let 'Em Ride, MVRU occasionally offers Horse Club, which is open to all elementary students. Sometimes the club is geared to first and second graders, and on other occasions it might be third and fourth graders who get some quality time with the horses. Now that MVRU is right across the street from the Methow Valley school campus, the opportunity for students to get a healthy dose of horse time is that much greater.

"We see endless opportunities moving forward, including summer camps," Superintendent Tom Venable said. For her part, Annie B. said Methow Valley Riding Unlimited is still in transition after relocating from Moccasin Lake Ranch. The point of the move was to downsize so the organization could concentrate on giving the community what it

needed most by supporting young people's mental health in these trying times. "Now we're in a position to decide how we re-emerge and how much we can take on," Annie B. said.

Whatever the future holds for Methow Valley Riding Unlimited at its new location, it's definitely going to involve children growing magically within the aura of Annie's horses.

"Horses are a fabulous vehicle to teach about relationships because that's what you do when you enter into a horse's world," Annie B. said. "A good relationship with a horse is based on mutual respect, understanding, consistency, and common language."

"Those are basic skills for building relationships and interacting with people, and social norms, and just having friends, how you cultivate friendships," she added. "A lot of these things are missing in the lives of these kids. For that matter, we could all get better at it."

