

# Healing spirit of horses could change hearts

**BOBBI SCHECKLE**

HEALING spirit might not have opened its doors to the public yet but is almost all systems go to refresh peoples' spirits, heal their hearts and change their lives.

Healing Spirit was founded in November 2008 by Adelle Potgieter, who has worked with psychiatric patients at The Restoration of Human Abilities association since 1999.

"I have always had an affinity to animals and believe in the therapeutic value of interacting with animals," said Potgieter who is currently reading for a masters degree in Social Sciences.

The idea for Healing Spirit was born while Potgieter was working with horses in August last year.

"I realised the that having the horses around, talking to them, taking care of them and even just watching them graze had a huge influence on my psyche."

That is when it dawned on Potgieter to bring groups to her small-holding to interact with horses and other animals.

"These visits could directly be linked with workshops on dealing with emotion and coping with mental illnesses like depression."

Potgieter said the main aim of Healing Spirit is to have groups and families visit the tranquil surroundings of the El Mizpal, Ademaine in Withoogte close to Rocklands, to shed their worries by enjoying the fresh air and the wonder of nature.

"We also want to teach visitors valuable life skills like dealing with their own emotions in a healthy and constructive manner to improve the quality of their lives," said Potgieter.

Although Potgieter is not yet a qualified equine therapist, she hopes to add that to her repertoire soon.

"At this time, we do not intend allowing visitors to ride the horses. We will just let them observe the horses and other animals and interact with them," said Potgieter.

She has already attended training in equine massage and energy

healing.

Potgieter says she bought two thoroughbred geldings, both former race horses, and Spirit of Adventure from a family that could not afford to keep him anymore.

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She says they have been using the last few months to focus on getting the horses into a better condition and to build a better relationship with them.

"They have settled in well, have picked up weight and are happy in their little herd. Spirit used to live

in a camp of about half hectare. He has simply blossomed on our 8,6 hectares," said Potgieter.

She added they are busy improving the stables, since they would like to take in more injured or unwanted horses.

Potgieter says Healing Spirit is about caring for horses and asking them to help people, struggling with emotional issues and illness, to recover.

"It is a mutually beneficial situation. One lady who visited the project, said that she felt touched by the acceptance of the horses."

"As soon as we have improved the facilities we want to bring youth groups and people with special needs here," said Potgieter who is eager to open Healing Spirit's doors.



**Adelle Potgieter with Spirit of Adventure who was rehabilitated by Potgieter and will be used as part of the equine therapy at Healing Spirit.**

Picture: Denise Bell