



# Flying High Farm

## Mental Health Services for Youth

Autumn 2006  
Volume 4, Issue 3

# Pixie's Flying High!

Flying High Farm incorporates the therapeutic magic of animals toward optimizing one's emotional growth.



2006–2007 school year.

There is yet another addition to Flying High Farm! Pixie, a 21 year old, 13.1 hand pinto mare joined us this month. Pixie was given to FHF by Barbara Sharpe and her family. This sweet mare (a mare is a female horse or pony) is getting acclimated to her new friends, and Penny and Duncan seem to be warming up to her.

Equine-facilitated psychotherapy (EFP), mentioned earlier, defines horse-related activities that are incorporated into one's clinical treatment. Activities associated with EFP include, but are not limited to, interpreting horse behavior, grooming, haltering, leading, riding, etc. EFP is not the same as therapeutic riding because (1) the focus is not on the riding, but on the behavioral, psychological or emotional issues of the child and (2) the session is conducted by a licensed mental health professional who is also a registered therapeutic riding instructor.

EFP can help with many of the following issues:

- Empathy
- Sequencing

**I**n the last issue of the FHF newsletter Sarah Charest, FHF graduate social work intern, introduced herself. She joins Christine Randle, LICSW, twice a week utilizing Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy in her work with several children. Sarah is in her final year of social work graduate school and is completing her internship at FHF through the

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- Goal-setting
  - Choice-making
  - Problem-solving
  - Sensory stimulation
  - Pro-social attitudes
  - Enhanced social skills
  - Development of trust
  - Improved self-esteem

If you think that EFP might be appropriate for your child, contact Christine Randle, LICSW and Registered Therapeutic Riding Instructor at 978-582-7103 or visit the FHF website at [www.flyinghighfarm.com](http://www.flyinghighfarm.com). ☺

### FHF accepts:

- Aetna
- BCBS
- Fallon
- Magellan
- PacifiCare
- Tricare
- UBH
- ValueOptions

# Ponies Help Provide Love & Companionship

By Carolyn Steigman  
February 26, 2004



What child wouldn't love to have a pony of their very own?

For a child with a disability, a pony sometimes can make a vital connection when nothing else can.

Melissa and Randy Willard, directors of the nonprofit organization Personal Ponies Ltd., have seen that connection on the faces of the more than 970 children who visited their farm, Life's Little Adventures, in Wooster, Ohio.

Personal Ponies provides, by the pair, miniature draft Shetland ponies to disabled children to provide the unconditional love and nonjudgmental companionship so many children crave but are unable to find with people.

Although each pony will be a companion to a different child, because they are herd animals, Shetland ponies must be stabled in pairs or they develop emotional problems.

"Ponies are content to stand for half an hour and let themselves be groomed," Melissa Willard said. "Children like to whisper their problems to the ponies, and the ponies love the soft talk."

The ponies are small, about 36 inches at the shoulders. "They're cute and fuzzy, not an elegant breed, but they're perfect for our purposes. For 2,000 years, they have been bred to be a child's companion," Willard said.

Willard's ponies are not broken for riding or pulling a cart, but easily can be taught to perform the task.

"Therapeutic riding is good," Willard said, "but a lot of kids can't participate."

Children confined to a wheelchair can see eye-to-eye with a Shetland pony, and the Willards take pains to match the temperament of the particular pony to the needs and abilities of each child.

They have successfully placed ponies with children who live with autism, Tourette's Syndrome, attachment and bonding disorder, Down Syndrome and various kinds of physical challenges.

One local girl who hopes to have a pony is 7-year-old Lian Ellifritt, who lives on Cleveland's Near West Side. She was adopted from China when she was only 17 months old. During that time, she was not held or cuddled. Her clothes never were changed and she was never bathed. She arrived in this country malnourished and had only two teeth. She couldn't pull herself up into a sitting position or walk.

She since has been diagnosed with a disorder on the autistic spectrum called pervasive development disorder. She is also diagnosed with obsessive/compulsive disorder and has an



attachment and bonding disorder that hinders her from forming a secure emotional bond with her mother, Julia. Lian is on medication and receives counseling at Beech Brook to help her deal with her aggression and rage.

Julia's strategy to help her daughter has been to build on Lian's strengths, which include a strong love of animals. With animals, Lian can open up and allow herself to be nurturing and caring in a way she never could with people.

She fell in love with a pony named James and would like him to join their family. He would come with a pony friend, Max, who would be owned by one of Ellifritt's neighbors, who also has a child with a disability. ♡

Source:  
[www.personalponies.org/index.html](http://www.personalponies.org/index.html)

# Common Misconceptions about Horses

**True or false: A pony is a baby horse.**

**False. A pony is not a baby horse.**

Contrary to what many non-horse people think, a pony is not a baby horse. A pony, no matter its size, is a full-grown animal.

The measurement unit for horses is “a hand” and one hand equals four inches. A horse or pony is measured from the ground up to its withers (the withers is the bony bump at the bottom of the pony’s neck—right in front of where the saddle would be).

A pony must be 14.2 hands or less (14 hands plus 2 inches). This means that a pony must not be taller than  $14 \times 4 = 56 + 2 = 58$  inches. Duncan is 14.1 hands and Pixie is 13.1 hands, so they are both ponies. Penny is 15.3 hands, is she a pony? 🐾



This is a baby horse. A baby horse is called a foal.

This is a pony.



## Equine Facts: Horses in the Winter



Humans have a tendency to think that if they are cold, their horses must be cold. Not necessarily so. Nature provides the horse with a very effective thermal blanket in the form of a coat that increases both in length and density as the days grow shorter. A horse’s winter coat is also naturally greasy,

which helps it repel snow, ice and sleet.

In addition to this thick winter coat, horses have the ability to fluff out their coats in cold weather, thereby trapping a layer of air in the coat, which provides them with an insulating layer.

A horse’s ears are a good indicator of whether or not she is cold—cold ears mean a cold horse or pony.

Horses also need to eat more hay in the winter because the extra weight they gain will help them stay warm. In addition, staying warm in the winter uses up extra calories so horses have to eat more food to be sure they do not lose any weight, because this can put them at risk of getting ill.

Horses need fresh water throughout the winter just like during the warmer months. Some people think that when a horse eats snow it is the same as drinking water, but this is not true. Horses need clean, unfrozen, not-so-cold water available to them at all times. If they do not drink enough water, they can get sick.

If the water is very cold, horses probably won’t drink it or won’t drink a lot of it. Offering warmed water will encourage horses to drink more water. Insulated buckets or bucket heaters are helpful in icy conditions. Metal buckets, however, are useless below freezing.

Here at Flying High Farm, Penny, Duncan and Pixie have insulated buckets in the winter to make sure they drink enough water. 🐾



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## Word Search

The word "Stable" is written just once in the word search below. Can you find it?

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