

When I attended equine therapy through the Trellis Veterans Support program, I had no idea that it was exactly what I needed.

As a member of the Donor Relations team, I share stories about the care Trellis provides. The day I observed our equine therapy workshop for those who have lost a veteran, I thought I was attending for purely professional reasons. At this time, it just so happened that my grandfather, a proud veteran who served in Korea, was critically ill and in hospice care.

Throughout the equine therapy program, we watched how the horses cared for one another. They were playful and protective, and each had their own role in the herd.

The trainers emphasized that the horses sense when another creature is feigning calm or hiding inner tension. We had to be open with whatever feelings we carried that day, whether we were happy to see the horses, nervous to interact, or holding onto grief or stress. No emotional walls allowed.

Spending time with the horses gave me peace that I didn't know I lacked.

My grandfather, lovingly known as Papaw, had said something to me when I visited a week prior that was still echoing in my head. He had recounted a recent conversation with his lifelong best friend who served in the Air Force with him and was present for many of his life's milestones. He was amazed at how openly his friend expressed affection and concern for his illness.

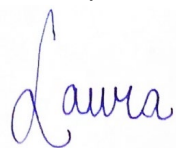
As he reflected on their conversation, Papaw said to me, "It's hard to accept the love others offer to us freely, isn't it?" He loved his friend deeply with the special bond of those who have served our country together, yet it was still difficult to believe his friend could love him back that much.

On my drive home from equine therapy, I thought about the horses, our veterans, and Papaw. The way people care for and depend upon one another isn't so different from the horses, especially in the close bond that veterans share. However, I think we all can learn from the vulnerability the horses have with one another and require from us.

I'm proud to be a part of an organization that supports our community through loss in so many ways and that places a special focus on serving veterans and those who love them. Although I

hadn't expected equine therapy to touch me so deeply, I left with a better understanding of Papaw's words and the work Trellis does – the most important thing we can do is take care of each other.

Sincerely,



Laura Garland

*Laura is the Annual Fund Manager at Trellis Supportive Care and the granddaughter of Elmer Daugherty, who proudly served in the United States Air Force.*

