

Connected Horse Receives Community Grant from Three Valleys Community Foundation to Expand Social Prescribing Program

The grant will expand Connected Horse's Social Prescribing Engagement Program, increasing access to community resources that support healthier aging.

PLEASANTON, CA, UNITED STATES, July 7, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Connected Horse Receives Community Health Grant from Three Valleys Community Foundation to Expand [Social Prescribing](#) Engagement Program



Workshops at the Pleasanton Barn

Connected Horse, a nonprofit organization offering equine-assisted programs for people living with dementia and their care partners, has been selected as a recipient of a 2026 Community Health Impact Grant from Three Valleys Community Foundation (3VCF). The grant will support Connected Horse's Social Prescribing Engagement Program,

bringing the therapeutic value of horses and barn themed sensory engagement programs to individuals and families navigating the challenges of dementia in the greater east bay region.

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"This grant from Three Valleys Community Foundation recognizes the work we do and the community we serve," said Paula Hertel, MSW, of Connected Horse."

Paula Hertel

Social prescribing is an approach to health and wellbeing that connects people to non-clinical, community-based activities and support — recognizing that what happens outside a clinic often matters just as much as what happens inside one. Connected Horse's Social Prescribing Engagement Program pairs this framework with the

unique relational capacity of horses, creating meaningful experiences that can reduce isolation, support emotional regulation, and strengthen the bonds between people living with dementia and those who care for them. This grant will allow us to offer:

1. In-Person Weekly Workshops - The barn workshops consist of three weekly sessions and span nine hours total per person. The activities include sensory, mindfulness walks, group support, and equine-guided activities, such as observing the herd, grooming, and at-liberty exercises with horses.

2. Barn at Home Sensory Engagement Program – an individual kit containing carefully curated sensory experience activities to spark the imagination, engagement, and emotional memory. Activities include: smells from the Barn like hay, leather, and oats; views of the Barn including storytelling prompts and photos of the landscape, horses and barn equipment; Artist in Progress including adult appropriate coloring and creative arts and crafts; and Horsing Around which includes physical activities utilizing items from the barn such as lead ropes, grooming brushes, and saddles.

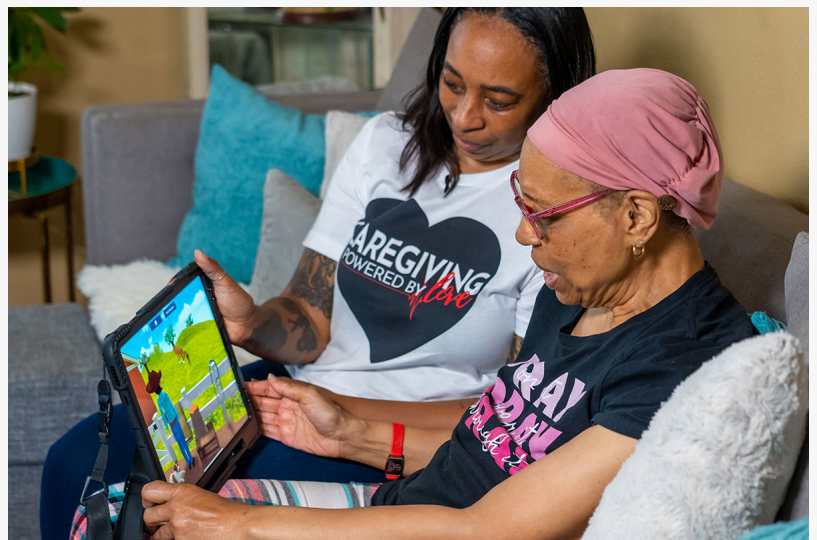
3. Virtual World Barn Access – In collaboration with Mentia Health, this virtual world engagement application is designed to enhance engagement and self-agency using an avatar

participating in the virtual barn. The program gives participants the ability to activate the avatar to clean the barn, listen to music, halter and groom the horse, and watch her play in the pasture with the goats and dogs.

"This grant from the Three Valleys Community Foundation is a meaningful recognition of the work we do and the community we serve," said Paula Hertel, MSW, of Connected Horse. "Horses have a remarkable ability to meet people where they are — without judgment, without pressure. This kind of engagement and presence can be profoundly meaningful. This funding allows us to reach more families in search of this kind of support."

About Connected Horse

Connected Horse is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for people living with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia, as well as the family members and care partners who support them. Through equine-assisted programs grounded in research and



Sensory Engagement Kit At-Home Program



Horses are a vital part of the program

delivered with compassion, Connected Horse creates opportunities for connection, joy, and dignity at every stage of the dementia journey. www.ConnectedHorse.org

About Three Valleys Community Foundation

Three Valleys Community Foundation (3VCF) is a Pleasanton-based nonprofit philanthropic organization dedicated to strengthening the Tri-Valley region through inclusive leadership, thoughtful funding, and collaborative action. 3VCF connects donors with community nonprofits across Alameda and Contra Costa counties, working to improve the quality of life and community health — physical, mental, economic, and environmental — throughout its service area, which includes Alamo, Danville, Dublin, Livermore, Pleasanton, San Ramon, and Sunol. The Foundation's annual Community Health Impact Grants are funded through its Power of Collaboration Corporate Challenge campaign. Learn more at 3VCF.org.

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