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BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Horses, healing and hope *Serenity Show Stable and The Serenity Project* | By Justin Reynolds



Ruth Nicodemus founded Serenity Show Stable in 2014.



Photos courtesy of Serenity Show Stable
Serenity Show Stable, now located at Marchant Farm

When she was a child, Ruth Nicodemus's parents introduced her to horses to help her stay occupied after enduring a traumatic incident.

"It worked, and I fell in love with horses," Nicodemus said. "I always knew from that moment on that horses had been the reason I made it through the traumatic experience."

That bond led her to ride and show horses through her adolescence, and is now at the heart of her business, Serenity Show Stable, and accompanying non-profit, The Serenity Project.

Serenity Show Stable

After many years in the industry, Nicodemus founded Serenity Show Stable in 2014 to teach her unique brand of riding.

"Serenity Show Stable is a full-service show stable offering training to riders of all levels," Nicodemus said, adding that they work with riders as young as four years old to folks in their 70s. "Whether a rider is just beginning or currently

competing with top-level goals, we create a curriculum that you or your child will thrive in. The team at Serenity Show Stable believes that, with hard work and perseverance, anything is possible."

When Nicodemus launched Serenity, she started with six clients.

"The next week, that doubled to 12," she said. "Three months later, I was at 28 horses."

Currently home to 21 horses with the ability to board more, Serenity is located at a brand-new, state-of-the-art equestrian facility on Marchant Farm at 55 Chestnut Woods Road in Redding; the operation moved from Darien a year ago.

"The owners are incredibly supportive," Nicodemus said. "Marchant boasts a huge outdoor ring, a large indoor ring, several grass and sand paddocks, lunging pads, trails, and even hosts several horse shows throughout the year." Shows were most recently held on April 27 and May 11.

Serenity Show Stable also helps clients find horses to buy or lease. In April, Nicodemus traveled to

Florida to meet a client from Westport for this exact purpose.

"Finding the right horse takes hard work, travel at times, and a lot of phone calls," she said. "It's the deep relationships with others in this industry that have helped in the selection process."

Each summer, Serenity hosts a summer camp for riders of all abilities ages eight through 13 (2025 dates are still being worked on). Since Serenity is located on a fully functional farm, Nicodemus is trying to add hands-on, educational experiences with the plants and animals around the property to this year's summer camp.

The Serenity Project

In 2022, Nicodemus and a friend who had recently started a mental health practice co-founded The Serenity Project, an equine therapy program.

"We work with trauma survivors like veterans, to individuals and groups recovering from substance use disorder," Nicodemus explained. "Our programs are scalable

and can combine both traditional talk therapy with a licensed therapist and equine therapy for those looking for a clinical experience. We also simply do groundwork with horses, which involves no riding but lots of holding, leading, and hugging of the horses. You have to experience it if you haven't."

Weeks after its founding, a group gathered outside wearing masks, "just beaming to be doing something". The Project's inaugural event was a success.

"Many participants claimed that they loved the sense of calm they were left with due to their own heartbeat co-regulating with the horses'," Nicodemus said. "Even at 30 feet away, a human's heart will automatically beat in sync with a horse's."

Ted Grogan is the Executive Director of The Serenity Project; he's also Nicodemus' fiancé.

"Ruth has involved me with helping and participating with her non-profit early on when we started dating," said Grogan, who worked in commercial real estate for 26 years before joining the non-profit. "I really knew nothing of equine therapy but had witnessed some amazing healing taking place with the folks The Serenity Project was serving."

Grogan got "hooked" on equine therapy after seeing a horse interact with a woman who lost her husband on 9/11 and her son to an overdose.

"Understandably, the woman was in a very tough place emotionally," Grogan said. "When we entered the ring with a group of people for our session, one of our horses, Amenero, gently pulled away from one of our employees holding the

horse's line. The horse walked directly over to the distressed woman and simply put his head on her shoulder as she broke down. It's the wildest thing I've ever seen. This horse sensed that one woman in a group of about 20 people needed connection and was hurting."

The way Grogan sees it, horses don't judge us, and they don't care about how much money we make or what we do for a living.

"The takeaway from our sessions is for our participants to remember what they did to feel balanced enough to have a horse fully accept them," Grogan continued. "Sometimes, we use meditation, breath work, and even talk therapy to achieve this balance... When put into practice, participants find their engagement with the world and their relationships more serene, genuine, and fulfilling."

On Saturday, June 14, from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at Marchant Farm, The Serenity Project is hosting its fourth annual fundraiser.

"Last year, our first year in Redding, was a big success, and this year we expect an even bigger turnout," Grogan said. The fundraiser will feature musician Griffin House, a silent auction, an equine therapy demonstration, an open bar, and plenty of games for the little ones. It will be catered with barbecue from BJ Ryan's BanC House. "The atmosphere is very fun and relaxed," Grogan said. ■

For more information, visit serenityshowstable.com and theserenityprojectct.org or contact Nicodemus at (914) 755-7562 or ruth@serenityshowstable.com