

SPC Outreach Reaches Out Again



Sattar Khan and our volunteers

The four-week long Equine Assisted Therapy Programme was well received by trainees from TOUCH Centre for Independent Living (Bukit Merah) with word spreading to the organisation's branch in Ubi.

SPC welcomed trainees from TOUCH Centre for Independent Living (Ubi) at our premises to learn about horses and polo. This time, we played host to two groups in January and February consecutively, and like previous sessions, it took place in the afternoon on Fridays, for two hours.

Before the start of each session, trainees assembled at the Chukka Bar with SPC staff assisting them with their nametags. Two of our Outreach volunteers, Koh Pei Bei and Gina Lim took the lead introducing the day's programme, including acquainting the trainees with our Outreach volunteers.



Learning about a horses' diet at the feed room

During the first session, a summary of the day's curriculum and for the following weeks was explained.

Safety around the horses was also emphasised during every session before the trainees proceeded to the stables or the covered arena where some of the activities were conducted.

The tour at the stables gave trainees the opportunity to view the horses' living environment. The trainees were in awe to see the rows of horses residing in their stables, and learnt about the dietary requirements of our horses at the feed room and viewed facilities such as the wash bay, hospital room and automated walker.

Soon after the stable tour, our Outreach volunteers demonstrated the appropriate way to feed the ponies using chopped carrots in the covered arena. Many of the trainees were thrilled to be able to have a hands-on feeding and petting experience with the ponies.

Ponies Esperanza, Tapadita, Pajarita, Angelica, Strawberry, Mayday and Bandit were part of the Outreach team too. Each week, they took turns to accompany the trainees in their learning journey.

The programme for week two comprised of activities such as grooming, leading and grazing a horse. At one of the wash bays, different grooming tools were shown to explain their functionality. Working hand-in-hand, Gina and Bandit encouraged each trainee to use a tool to groom Bandit. While on the field, the second group attempted to lead and graze a horse. This session aimed to build confidence in the trainees when near horses.



The much awaited pony ride



Eagerly awaiting their turn



At the stick and ball session

Suspense awaited the trainees when they were informed of a pop quiz they had to attempt after the polo demonstration during the third week's programme. The first session began at the covered arena with Sattar Khan, SPC polo professional demonstrating different gaits of the horse and four types of polo strokes, while Pei Bei provided explanations of each. Cheers, applause and happy faces followed whenever Sattar performed a very long shot from one end of the arena to the other.



Gina Lim, volunteer teaches a trainee to groom Bandit



Coming up close with Sattar Khan and Pajarita



Trying to complete the quiz at the stables

Pieces of the quiz papers were handed out to the trainees during the later part of the day. The colourful illustrated questionnaire comprised of topics taught from the first week until the third. Our Outreach volunteers then led the group to the stables where answers to most of the questions were found. Some of the trainees were quick with their answers while several of them needed a tip or two. The trainees were required to complete the quiz in thirty minutes, thereafter returning to the Chukka bar where they shared their answers with Pei Bei.



Beautifully hand-crafted gifts from the trainees to the volunteers



Team work during the quiz



Attempting to graze Tapadita at the field

Before the trainees settled in at the Chukka bar for the final session on the fourth week, several of the trainees were very eager and spoke enthusiastically amongst themselves about their maiden ride. Rules and safety around horses were emphasised once again before they headed to the covered arena.

On the field, cones, foot mallets, soft balls and helmets were prepared for the trainees. At the right side of the arena, our volunteers demonstrated safe methods to mount and dismount a horse, whilst at the opposite end, the trainees listened attentively to the correct techniques to play stick and ball.

The riding session was fun as always. Most of the time, the trainees were seen enjoying their rides - posing for pictures and jumping for joy after completing their rides, and sharing with their friends on how amazing it was.

Read about volunteers, Neha and Kerry's involvement in the SPC Outreach programme in Page 14 of this issue. They share with us about their experiences during the programme, on giving back to the community and on how they have looked beyond their own interests.



Attempting to mount a horse