

all the pretty horses

By Dianne J. Moore

Jan Clare, property caretaker at Horses Help, a therapeutic horseback riding program for individuals with physical or mental disabilities, was writing grants when she grew frustrated that good organizations had to fight for the same money. "I thought that whatever businesses do, non-profits should do to get attention," explains Clare. "And if they don't have the money to market themselves, they need to make themselves stand out or become noticeable in some way." She mulled over how she could draw attention to Horses Help so

they might acquire more grant money.

An exceptionally imaginative individual, Clare had been interested in many community art projects, such as Chicago's display of 300 decorated cows placed around the city in 1999. She contemplated the idea of painting life-sized, fiberglass and resin horses, decorated and designed as bold, dazzling, outrageous works of art, then displayed publicly. When she decided to go ahead with the project, she named it Kaleidoscope Horses.

"I love kaleidoscopes," Clare explains. "They are magical. They change with a wonderful burst of color. Just about everyone has looked through a kaleidoscope when he or she was a kid and was delighted by it. The horses are a kaleidoscope of colors. They are fun. They bring out that child in each of us. Many people have totally forgotten what that feels like."

Specialty companies that build water slides and products for DisneyWorld make the horses. On average, they weigh between 125 pounds and 150 pounds. For starters, Clare ordered 25 horses. When the first one arrived, she decorated it with 5,000 brand new pennies, creating the look of a shimmering copper blanket gracing the horse's back.

"I started sticking pennies on it and created it within 48 hours." She named it Pennies from Heaven, and it made its debut in the 2004 Fiesta Bowl Parade. Reconstructed into a bank, the horse will visit all events to assist Horses Help and other nonprofit organizations raise funds. The monies donated to Kaleidoscope Horses are channeled into public school art departments. "I take the focus off fundraising by calling it 'fun raising.'"

The first artists appeared as Clare was unloading the first shipment. "Bobbie Haughton, a member of the Arizona Artists Guild, drove up, started laughing and said she wanted to help," Clare says. "Within three weeks, she had put together all the artists groups in the Valley." Both Bobbie Haughton and C.J. Rider, president of the Mesa Art League were recently nominated at the Arts & Business Council's awards breakfast for their major involvement with Kaleidoscope Horses. Also, 16-year-old volunteers at Horses Help contributed, along with some of the staff.

In sponsorship with Westcor, the horses were displayed in malls across the Valley. Erin Conway painted a horse she named Where'd Van Gogh, sponsored by the Epilepsy Foundation. Vincent Van Gogh had epilepsy, and so does Erin. Two of Van Gogh's paintings—Starry Night and an iris painting—inspired her work. Erin spent her evenings and weekends at Arrowhead Towne Center mall, painting her horse and educating people about epilepsy. She wanted the horse to draw attention to the fact that epilepsy requires more public awareness and needs not to frighten people.

Artists use not only acrylic paint but also metallics and various textures. One horse decorated in such a way, designed by Caldonia R. Corbitt who hails originally from Oklahoma, is Neon Lightnin'.



Kaleidoscope Horse, *Pennies from Heaven*, in parade route



Where'd Van Gogh



Neon Lightnin'



Alegria Mexicana



65 Roses Unplugged

"It actually glows," states Clare. Even more important is that those with autism respond to this horse. The Southwest Autism Research and Resource Center sponsored this horse because it reaches the kids. "Art and heart are the same," explains Clare. "If you can't express yourself, these colors, particularly to children, are a bridge to love and joy. The center also wants five horses as permanent fixtures in their 18,000-square-foot building. That is a first." She adds that not only autistic kids but also children in general like to touch the horses' noses and hug their legs.

The only demographic horse to date is *Alegria Mexicana*, which means the song and joy of Mexico. The artists, Guadalupe "Lupe" Cavanaugh and Terry Damato, painted the horse with symbols of Mexico, such as the country's map, cock fighting, break-dancers and the happy skeleton face that is part of Mexico's version of Halloween. The older generations, such as parents and grandparents, looked at it or touched it reverently. Some pointed out their hometown. "The Mexican Consulate joined forces with us, and we have only begun," explains Clare. "When people have that volunteer heart and like to have fun, it spreads like wildfire."

Another remarkable horse, and the only black-and-white one, is *65 Roses Unplugged* designed by Clare with a permanent marker for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. "Because it's so black and white, guys love it," she says. Interestingly, all horses sponsored by the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation use a theme of 65 roses because saying those words three times fast teaches the kids how to pronounce their disorder. Try it. Say "65 roses" three times fast and see if it doesn't sound like cystic fibrosis.

When golfers tee up at the forthcoming Randy Johnson Golf Tournament, they might get a hole-in-one if they keep their eye on a Kaleidoscope Horse. Explains Clare, "There will be a horse at every hole. Who has ever seen a horse at every hole on a golf course? That's fun."

Another horse — *65 Van Gogh Roses* — is a signature horse to be autographed by golf celebrities at the tournament. Later, it will travel to a Diamondbacks baseball game and a Suns basketball game for more celeb signatures. Utilizing the horse as a fundraiser, the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation intends to auction this treasure on eBay.

Future plans include displaying the horses in some libraries across the Valley. One Maricopa County library employee, who adopted the artist name of Innis, adorned *Pony Tales* with storybook pictures from "Cinderella," "Little Red Riding Hood" and the "Genie in the Bottle," and other fables. "Even children who don't speak English approach the horse and point to the fairy-tale characters," says Clare.

In upcoming months, look for the horses at the Arizona State Fair and the 2005 Fiesta Bowl Parade. At the end of the year, those not auctioned and sold will be returned to Horses Help, sanded down and recycled for next year, ready for new artists and new designs. Next year, Clare Clare hopes to have more student artists.

Kaleidoscope Horses is not just a business card for Horses Help, a fundraiser for organizations or a subsidy for school art programs, but potentially a source of creativity for all people. "I placed the horses in public venues," explains Clare, "hoping that when people looked at them, it would spark their own creativity."



Pony Tails



65 Van Gogh Roses



The artist uses a felt marker to create 65 Roses Unlugged



The artist finishing 65 Roses Unlugged

They might think, 'Oh, my gosh, I use permanent markers, maybe I could do that.' Or 'I don't like that horse, but I love this one.' Once creative thoughts start to flow, they can be applied to daily, practical decisions such as 'How can I pay my bills?' or 'How can I do something different?' or 'How can I find a new job?' or 'What is it I really want in my life?' The possibilities are endless."

The success of this project is synchronicity, insists Clare. "The right people show up at the right time for the right dream. Artists are not paid. Next year, I hope, they will be. They buy their own supplies, volunteer their time, and some drove hundreds of miles to do this. When I wonder what will happen next, someone shows up unexpectedly, and it's done. It's synchronicity or divine intervention or the Universal plan, whatever you want to call it."

The bottom line for Kaleidoscope Horses is smiles. "Every good thing in life starts with a smile," asserts Clare. "When you smile, it doesn't matter what your social status is. It doesn't matter if you're Hispanic, in the K.K.K., autistic, black or from another planet. If you're in a room with someone and you both smile at the same thing, like one of these big, beautiful horses, at that moment there is no difference between you. I dare you to look at one of these horses, even an unpainted one, and not smile."

"If I had a nickel for every time someone told me that this wouldn't work, I wouldn't need sponsors," she quips, laughing uproariously. People couldn't imagine her vision, so the first word she heard, even from community outreach representatives, was "no." "My response was, 'OK, I will keep talking until you say yes.' Or 'I will come in and chain myself to a chair until you say yes.' They are taken off-guard by my passion, and because my response is so ridiculous, they laugh. With a heart of passion, I can't hear the word 'no.' It doesn't exist for me. It's just the first two letters of 'not now.' Passion and determination work. And that is wise advice for life." ■

For information on sponsoring a horse, send email to khponsors@theablestable.com or logon to their website www.theablestable.com

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