

Returning soldiers finding solace in horseback riding

Posted: Aug 15, 2012 5:26 PM MST

Updated: Aug 20, 2012 5:26 PM MST

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GLENDALE, Ariz. -

Thousands of soldiers are returning from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan wounded, both physically and mentally.

There's a new program here in the valley that aims to help heal those soldiers through equine therapy.

This is Bentley, a quarter horse that may just be what the doctor ordered. He's one of a dozen therapy horses at Thunder Mountain Ranch in Glendale.

"It's helped me so far cause it's just real calming and peaceful," says Iraq War veteran Michael Proscia.

Michael Proscia found no calm and peace in Iraq. He was wounded in the line of duty, and awarded a purple heart, but he needed to heal inside and out.

"First of all a veteran doesn't want to admit they are mixed up in the head. I didn't want to see a shrink."

The soldier ended up at the Horse Rhythm Foundation. A horse is now his shrink.

"Horses can pick up on how you feel, they understand you I guess," says Proscia.

Sahika Riley knew it would work. She started Horse Rhythm two years ago. She is a physician assistant and an avid horse rider.

She knew to get along with a horse, those soldiers have to be calm

"It teaches the girls and the guys when they come back to soften their communication skills, verbal and non verbal, and then that's the problem when they are over in war they are so hyper vigilant, they need to transition back into society," says Riley.

All the horses there are trained to work with vets. Trainer Brandy Lyons gets them use to wheelchairs and crutches.

"I wanted a horse that didn't have a lot of fight, didn't get nervous or upset, a forgiving loving horse," says Lyons.

She's training more horses for the program. More war veterans are signing up for the unique therapy.

The non profit organization can use some volunteers to help with the horses and the veterans.

Online: www.horserhythm.org

NOTE: Bentley came from Triple R Horse Rescue, , Cave Creek, AZ and was trained by Brandi Lyons