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ROTARY HORSE HEROES PROJECT PARTNERS WITH OUR VETS

Ever since she was a child, Keil Hackley has loved horses. As she got older, Keil also developed a sense of wanting to give back to the community. Now serving as the senior partner of international immigration law firm Hackley & Robertson, she was able to bring that desire to fruition via multiple programs through the Rotary Club of Weston, the Weston Bar Association, and the British American Chamber of Commerce, among others. She spearheaded programs with the Plantation General Hospital entitled Helping Children

Heal. This project included Rotarians and their family members visiting children being treated in the hospital who did not have families of their own.

A couple of years ago, Keil was able to meld both of her passions into a viable entity entitled The Horse Heroes Project, where through her contacts within the Broward Sheriff's Office, the BSO Mounted Posse partnered with the Weston Rotary Group to produce a literacy program with Children's Harbor, a nonprofit group servicing at-risk kids. The project entailed the children reading *Black Beauty* and other like books to the horses. Interacting with the equine creatures proved to be very therapeutic to the kids involved.

The Rotary Club of Weston is also very proactive with the Alexander Ninger State Veterans Nursing Home, the club's mission being we honor and serve those who have proudly served our country. The idea

to bring The Horse Heroes Project to the nursing home was broached to the facility's director who was extremely enthusiastic and stated "it is like Christmas all over again".

The day of the event had thirty-five Veterans participating from the nursing home with the Rotary and BSO Mounted Posse members. Colonel Don Maines, who heads the Posse, gave a two hour presentation on how the horses are specially trained for various situations, such as crowd control, search and rescue missions, parades, and "what they are doing today intermingling with our Veterans".

The program was a very poignant and memorable one for Keil Hackley, whose own father served with distinction in the United States Army and is interred in Arlington National Cemetery. "This is what it is all about" Keil remarked, "seeing the smiles, the looks of joy on the faces of the Vets, the way they radiate while interacting with the horses is priceless and makes it all worthwhile". Yes, it most certainly does.

