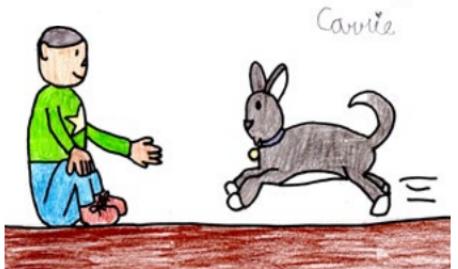


A child's drawing of a girl with orange hair, wearing a pink shirt, petting a white and brown horse. The horse is wearing a blue halter. The drawing is done in black outlines with colored pencils or markers.

Carrie

Friends For Tomorrow, Inc.

My hands are trembling. I feel perspiration spread over my back. My legs bounce in an attempt to release the nervous energy. My heart races and my breath comes shallow and quick. What will the day bring? What will be asked of me? What if I cannot do it? What if people laugh at me?



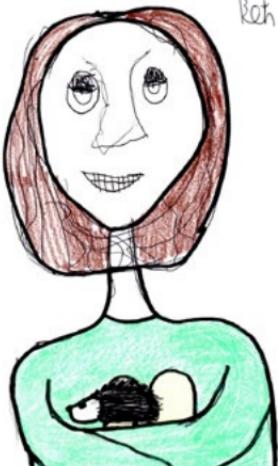
Anxiety is the leading mental health problem facing children today. This is a daily reality for many of the students of Friends For Tomorrow (FFT). Compounded with social and emotional challenges, such as poor expressive and receptive language skills, trouble understanding non-verbal cues, and executive function challenges, our students can feel higher levels of anxiety than the average child. Left untreated, anxiety can lead to a host of other issues, including loneliness and isolation.

At FFT, our trained staff and volunteers offer consistency, positive reinforcement, patience, familiar activities and kindness. Each time students come to our farm, they have the opportunity to experience success as they learn new skills and practice being in the moment with the people and animals around them. What they learn with us can be generalized from the farm to their daily lives. Their new-found skills can also serve as a bridge to peer groups and others who share a love of animals.

Eight-year-old Tess comes to the farm each week and, before saying “Hi” to any FFT staff member or volunteer, she buries her face in her horse, Katie’s, mane and hugs her tightly. Tess’s heart rate slows and begins to beat in sync with Katie’s. Tess can eventually breathe a little deeper. Tess struggles to make eye contact with people and is unwilling to answer questions or participate in conversations, but next to Katie it becomes easier. This is a place where she can slow down, let down her guard and feel accepted.

During one Hooves, Paws & Claws class, 11-year-old Jeff chatters on in repetitive and unrelated phrases. He wrings his hands and his feet tap the ground. Finley, the Labradoodle, enters the room and Jeff bounds over to greet him. His instructor helps him “read” Finley’s body language. By taking deep breaths and quieting his body Finley welcomes his approach. Soon, they are together lying on

Beth the floor, while Jeff quietly pats Finley. Both are at peace. Jeff reports, “Finley gets me.”



Our goal is to create a comfortable and familiar place for our students with support from staff and animals that do not judge. We encourage our students to “be” with the animals and let the animals’ calm, centered energy spread to them. Within this safe environment, we support our students to venture out of their comfort zones and help them learn and practice new skills and strategies for coping with anxiety.

Please join us in continuing to offer a safe haven for our students to find reflection and acceptance with our animals and staff and in turn, with themselves.

On behalf of the Friends For Tomorrow family, I share my deepest appreciation for your generosity this year. Your support helps us create the safe haven that allows our students the space and time to just “be”, with the soft and calming energy of our animals. The gift of peace and acceptance is one that, together, we bring to each and every one of our students and their families.

Sharing all warmest wishes,



Diane B. Lesneski Auger, Founder



Artwork was done by our talented students Carrie Shirley and Beth Downs.

*To learn more about our programs, please visit our website at:
www.friendsfortomorrow.org.*