

to me 

# Affinity Ranch

August 2024



"Unbridled Possibilities"  
Pictured: Salida

## Message from the Executive Director



Dear Friends of Affinity Ranch,

I am Shannon Forslund, and I am honored to introduce myself as the new Executive Director of Affinity Ranch. It is with great enthusiasm that I step into this role, eager to advance the mission of Affinity Ranch and to showcase the *"Unbridled Possibilities"* we create each day. I am profoundly grateful for the dedicated staff, valued clients, and committed volunteers who enrich our work and make it possible.

As a mother of children with special needs, I discovered Promise Ranch Therapies and Recreation while seeking support services for my own family. The growth, love, and support we gained as clients was incredible. We met people who have become lifelong friends, horses that have left imprints on our hearts and fell in love with the peace, calm, and freedom the ranch naturally provides. An opportunity to join Promise Ranch professionally arose and I jumped at it. Soon after I began working for Promise Ranch the decision was made to combine forces with Praying Hands Ranch. Bringing these two like minded organizations together strengthened us both. We gained more invaluable team members and more cherished animals. We operated side by side out of the same facility for a year before officially becoming one organization, Affinity Ranch.

Over the past year and a half, I have had the privilege of collaborating with our exceptional staff, engaging with our clients and their families, and working alongside our dedicated volunteers. While the science behind the programs we offer is substantial, what I witness every day is "magic". I see volunteers giving of their precious time because they genuinely LOVE the people and animals they serve. I see our staff going above and beyond to ensure our animals and clients are well-loved and cared for. I see caregivers driving from all over the Denver Metro area to bring clients to their appointments. I see lifelong friendships created between volunteers and clients. I see our supported employees acquiring new skills, gaining independence, and finding purpose through their work. I hear caregivers say "We finally have a place that understands our needs, we feel like we belong." I see generous donors giving of their hard-earned money to support our efforts. I see partner organizations working tirelessly alongside us to improve the lives of those they serve. I marvel at what has been built and the opportunities that lie ahead. In a world full of uncertainty, change, and fault

finding it is a gift to come to “work” every day and witness the kindness of others around every corner.

As we approach our annual fundraiser on August 23, I would like to extend a personal invitation to you and your friends who may be interested in learning more about our work and supporting our mission. This event promises to be an inspiring and enjoyable evening, filled with opportunities to make a meaningful impact. As a non-profit organization, fundraisers are essential to sustaining our operations. Come experience the “magic” for yourself. You can purchase tickets [here](#).

Next time you are at the ranch please make sure to stop in and say hello. I would love to meet you!

Sincerely,

Shannon Forslund  
Affinity Ranch  
Executive Director  
[Shannon@AffinityRanch.org](mailto:Shannon@AffinityRanch.org)

## Supported Employee Update

Affinity Ranch's supported employment program is currently undergoing a major redesign. Though this news may be surprising, we see great potential in our program's ability to meet individual interests and teach the fundamental skills on a curated desired path. The supportive environment here at the ranch can build self confidence and aid in future transition into the community.

Starting soon, we will be transitioning from a community-exclusive job coaching program, to a hybrid and facility-based program. This will allow individuals to learn more about their own career interests, as well as develop the skills and experience needed to be successful in their chosen fields.

The satisfaction of all our employees is what we seek, so to ensure this, our team will provide regular check-ins for our individuals and assess their satisfaction with working at the ranch. This will ensure we are delivering on the goals our individuals are wanting to achieve and at any point, if an individual expresses a desire to find a job in the community, we will implement a transition from the ranch to a business in their area of interest.

This change will allow the ranch to employ individuals with meaningful purpose. This will also provide helpful support to our facility while teaching the necessary skills to be accomplished and supported in an individual's own journey.

Contact [Josh](#) if you have any questions.

## Changes at The Ranch

**New Certified Instructor** - Megan Wing has officially completed her Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor training. CONGRATULATIONS MEGAN!!!

**New Roof** - We had new roofs installed for Arena A, Arena C, the Hay Barn, the Old Stable and the house. No more leaks!

**New Animal Partners** - We have gained a handful of new horses over the past few months. Sugar, Banjo, Dora, and Friday. They are all wonderful additions to our herd.

**Small Animal Enclosure** - Our friends from Comcast came out and kicked off our new small animal enclosure project. They tore down all of the fencing around the paddock on the hill, it is now ready for grading and installing our new goat, sheep and chicken habitat.

**Cabins** - You may have noticed we have some cabins on our property. These cabins were generously donated to us. They will be repurposed to create new storage space, new programming spaces around the property, one will even be turned into a chicken coop.

**WIFI** - A new internet system has been installed and we now offer WIFI access for volunteers and guests. Information for the Guest WIFI is posted in both arena lobbies.

## July Volunteer Hours

**We love our volunteers!** In July, 150 people volunteered 1382 hours

## Volunteer Spotlight

broken out as follows:

Barn Help: 350  
Board Members: 24  
Fundraising: 1  
General Help: 197  
Horse Handler: 693  
Horse Partner: 3  
Instructor Trainee: 8  
Office Work: 64  
Orientation: 39

We are always looking for new volunteers to work with the clients, help out around the barn, or work in the office or on a committee (like fundraising). The Ranch has a lot of maintenance that always needs done, so if you have a special skill (plumbing, electric, fencing, etc.) we can always use the help. You can volunteer **online** or if you have a question, contact our Volunteer Coordinator at [Volunteer@AffinityRanch.org](mailto:Volunteer@AffinityRanch.org).



Did you know that Phil Auteri has been a volunteer here since 1998? Phil is pictured above with Seneca.

[READ MORE ABOUT PHIL HERE](#)

### Upcoming Events

**August 23** - Join us for our major fundraiser Jeans & Jewels Gala: A Murder Mystery Dinner with show, Cash Bar, Raffle Games, Paddle Raise and Party Music. [Click here for more information](#)

**September 29** - Adam's Camp Celebration At The Ranch

**December 8** - Holiday with Horses



### Employee Spotlight



Meet our new Physical Therapist Sarah Puckett. Sarah will be combining Physical Therapy with Equine Assisted Therapy to provide a new service to the ranch.

[READ MORE ABOUT SARAH HERE](#)

### Ways to Donate



Do you shop at King Soopers? Did you know you can sign up for Community Rewards and a portion of your purchase will be donated to Affinity Ranch with no cost to you?

Just login to the King Soopers website and scroll to the bottom of the page and click King Soopers Community Rewards. In section 2, Click "Link your Card" to an Organization and then click Search and enter Affinity Ranch. Then click Enroll.

### Wish Lists

We have the following Wish Lists online if you would rather pick how your money is spent:

[Amazon](#)

[Chewy](#)

### Did You Know?

### Volunteer Groups

Affinity Ranch is currently home to 22 horses. Each horse eats about \$200 worth of hay per month, totaling around \$4400 per month, not including supplements and treats.

We just want to call out our Volunteer Groups in July. These folks came out with a specific task to do, and they rocked it! Thank you so much for your help around the Ranch:

If you wish to donate to our feed bill or in any other way, click the button below:

- Boy Scouts
- Colorado Academy
- COMCAST
- Rotary Club of Parker
- Trinity Lutheran School

[Make a donation to Affinity Ranch](#)

## Sensory Tip Sand Play: Not just for fun!

Sand is a wonder medium for integrating in all types of therapies and activities. There are even providers now that specialize in sand play therapy.

As children grow we provide lots of sensory exposure and play opportunities for their development. For those that have developed into older youth, teens and adulthood, people still can benefit immensely from sand... can you imagine that?

Those that struggle to express themselves or speak may express emotions through interactions using sand or objects incorporating sand. One might use a colored sand or mold something meaningful to express a thought or feeling. It's possible a young child or adult that doesn't know the best words to match an emotion or feeling might provide a special window into their heart of thoughts through finger tracing in a light sprinkle of sand. Maybe an individual went through a terrible traumatic experience and is uncomfortable expressing feelings with words but smashing a molded sand sculpture feels right and opens the door to healing.

Through freedom of expression in a sand box, large sand pool or lighted table top with thin sand sprinkle, an Individual can draw or use mini figures to play out an event or express a particular theme. This can all be extremely therapeutic and help someone who may not benefit from traditional talk therapy.

Another way to benefit from sand play is using it for sensory integration and building fine and gross motor skills. Placing a small amount of sand in a clear bag and squeezing or shaking it to find small hidden object often is a fun quiet game. There are many individuals that use sand much like a ball pit and seeks deep pressure by laying in it and maybe burying their hands or feet and wiggling free. Additionally, building fine motor skills occurs when manipulating mixed or wet sand to build something of interest. Gross motor skills can also be developed further by walking across a pathway of sand, maybe including stepping stones or walking barefoot. So many opportunities to level up to a new experience.

In conclusion, sand, like many natural things, is such a powerful tool to help an individual in many different areas. I suggest exploring it no matter what age or ability you are! You never know what benefit you will gain when trying. ❤️

### Tip:

Sanitation of play sand (not mixed sands):  
50/50 ratio of water and white vinegar - spray regular sand lightly on the top layer and mix it all around evenly. Then, leave it to dry and use again.

### Edible sand:

Crush graham crackers! Put a bunch in a food processor and pulse until all crumbled.

Put the crumbs in a container and play. Dispose of when finished playing.

### Making Sand you can shape:

Remember the ratios of 5:3:1

- 5 parts of your base material (Sand; the smoother and more refined the better. You can find lots of colored craft sand at stores now)
- 3 parts cornstarch (this makes the material soft to touch and fun to play with)
- 1 part oil (vegetable or canola works great and this is your binding agent to be able to shape your sand)

You can use the ratio in any measuring tool! Scale the recipe to fit your needs. Use a measuring cup or a bucket and both should work just the same if you keep to the ratio listed here consistent.

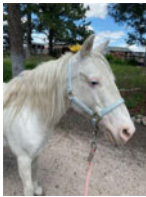
Enhance your homemade moldable sand with essential oils: Add a few drops of lavender into the oil when making it. Remember "less is more" when adding fragrance.

**Meet some of our family!**

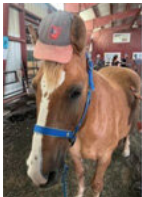
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