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Asheville's Ashvegas column: Woman finds personal growth through connections with animals

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Written by
By Jason Sandford

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ASHEVILLE — There's really no such thing as a new beginning.

Sure, you can make a new resolution or start a fresh workout regimen. But effective change I've experienced is a gradual progression, not an overnight switch. A change in a date on the calendar is a good marker, but most people I know resolve to make some kind of improvement just about every day. If you're not trying, you're just stuck.

Lately, I've been seeking out people who have been doing just that — gradually moving toward manifesting their dreams. That led me to a great conversation recently with Jana Kellam, a friend at the gym who has been working hard to start her own business. It just so happens that Kellam's work is to help other people achieve their own dreams.

Kellam has just launched Mindsetopia (www.mindsetopia.com), a company devoted to helping people find their passion, then manifest their dreams. And she has a unique approach, aside from the standard listening and coaching. Kellam offers a technique known as equine-facilitated experiential learning.

The sessions involve hanging out with a horse. I'm oversimplifying here, but as Kellam describes it, spending structured time interacting with a horse or just sitting quietly nearby can tell you a lot about yourself.

"Horses are prey animals, and in order to survive, they've become extraordinary perceivers of energy," Kellam said.

That innate radar allows a horse to sense when a human is feeling one way but behaving in another, Kellam said. Identifying that incongruency, as it's known, can be a big eye-opener and help someone improve any relationship, whether it's a friendship, romantic connection or work-related association.

"It's all about listening to these messages inside that we learn to tune out," Kellam said. "It's almost like learning a new language."



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Kellam is a longtime horse lover and has a thoroughbred, Jove. While she said she's had several "aha moments" with Jove and other horses, she knows the idea of experiencing a life-changing moment with a horse isn't for everyone. The daughter of a scientist father and a self-described one-time skeptic, Kellam simply wants to be open to the idea.

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This is the opinion of Jason Sandford. Contact him at 232-5851 or jsandford@citizen-times.com. Find Ashvegas updates online at CITIZEN-TIMES.com/ashvegas and the full blog at www.ashvegas.com.

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