



# WILD SOULS RANCH

*Therapeutic Equine Youth and Family Services*

When Wild Souls Ranch – an equine-based therapy program for at-risk youth in Fortuna – was established in 2012, the program survived on sweat, tears and dreams. A vision hatched by the organization’s Founder and Executive Director, Savannah McCarty, the program’s mission is providing therapeutic equine youth and family services for foster youth, adopted youth, and youth experiencing challenges. Established as a 501c3 in 2014, Wild Souls Ranch (WSR) raised an operational budget of less than \$7,000 in their first year as an official non-profit organization with only two donated horses and one rented pasture and paddock space at a local boarding facility. Today, McCarty oversees a paid staff of 9 women and a newly renovated 17-acre ranch thanks to their new state funded program and increased financial support from the community. Sustaining a period of inspirational growth – including a re-location and a new ranch in 2018 - McCarty and her team are holding tight to even bigger dreams for WSR’s future.

In Humboldt County, 52.8% of children under 18 live in poverty – a startling statistic that the staff and volunteers at WSR know all too well. The consequences of rural poverty and family instability result in far too many Humboldt County youth being funneled into heavily burdened state programs. Knowing the adversity of the foster care system firsthand, McCarty ardently believes in the healing power of horses for children and teens enduring trauma, abuse, and neglect. In a uniquely designed equine-therapy program, youth work one-on-one with social workers to build emotional skills and identify personal challenges. Outside of sessions, WSR clients learn the fundamentals of caring for the seven WSR horses, and the newest ranch addition, Merle the mini donkey. When clients arrive at WSR in Fortuna, McCarty and her staff have both an equine assisted growth and learning session and barn chores planned for each client. As youth advance through the WSR program and learn basic horsemanship, they earn the opportunity to learn to ride – a transformative experience for any child. While many equine-therapy programs don’t have policies that allow clients to actually get on horses, WSR believes that life-changing relationships emerge when kids learn how to respectfully guide an animal and bond while riding. For at-risk youth with unfair and painful histories, the feeling of being understood and learning to practice safe and appropriate communication is priceless.



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A PLACE WHERE BONDS ARE MADE,  
FOUNDATIONS ARE BUILT, AND SPIRITS ARE HEALED  
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