

The *Healing Powers* *of a* **Little Horse** named *Doc*

WITH DIANE PURCELLI AND DOC HOLLIDAY

Doc Holliday is only 36 inches tall and was an orphan. A rough start for a little horse. But today he's a celebrity in some circles and a hero to many. Doc and his owner, Diane Purcelli, of the Shooting Star Ranch in Darby, Montana travel the country visiting hospitals and schools, raising people's spirits and making their day a little better.



An 11-year old Registered American Miniature Horse, Doc came to Shooting Star Ranch four years ago when his owner, who raised him in the house like the loyal family pooch, had to find a new home for him.

Sponsored by Wahl Clipper, Diane and Doc spend a couple of months each year visiting hospitals, schools and horse fairs teaching people about therapeutic riding and offering the hands on therapy that touching and getting to know a friendly little horse can provide. They've been to Ohio, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Wyoming, California and Minnesota.

"He is very acceptable to being around people in close quarters," said Diane. "He'll walk up on our deck. On the way to a muscular dystrophy camp he rode in a patients handicapped accessible van. He's great with kids."

Doc wears sneakers when visiting people inside at hospitals and schools to protect the floor and keep him from slipping. They

were initially designed by the Build-a-Bear Company to fit a large Teddy Bear but turns out they also fit Doc perfectly.

Not long ago they were at a VA Hospital in Tomah, Wisconsin and they brought Doc and another therapy horse, Nevada Joe, another horse she owns who was once a wild mustang. They got rained out so they took Doc Holliday in the gymnasium and continued the demonstration with the tennis shoe wearing Doc. The reaction with the patients was amazing. The vets were so excited about being able to touch and feel Doc that they asked if he could go visit patients on the floor. So they Diane and Doc hopped on an elevator and went around to the hospital rooms visiting patients.

Diane offers therapeutic riding programs at her ranch and has eight horses that work with children and adults with special needs. One of them is Nevada Joe who has been at Farm Technology Days in the Mills Fleet Farm arena. Joe is the NARHA Official Horse

Ambassador, as well as pictured on Wahl Clipper Equine Product line. Shooting Star Ranch is one of 750 programs accredited by the North American Riding Handicapped Association.

Therapeutic Riding is a growing and widely accepted treatment for rehabilitating a range of physical, mental, and emotional disabilities. Conditions served include: cerebral palsy, spina bifida, neuromuscular disorders, post-traumatic brain injury, autism, ADHD, and cognitive disorders. Riders experience increased self-confidence and improvement in strength, balance, coordination, attention span, language and social skills.

For more information:
North American Riding for the
Handicapped Association (NARHA).
<http://narha.org>

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