



Karey White, manager of the horse program, with Jennifer Morrison and guest.



The spectacular main building, a fieldstone castle originally built in 1858 by Samuel Massey and renovated many times over the years by a number of families who owned the property. Ste. Anne's, which is open year-round, was voted Canada's favourite spa four years in a row.

STE. ANNE'S SPA

New program offers healing, de-stressing through horses

by Jennifer Morrison

There is something about spending some time with a horse that can help the most physically and emotionally stressed person relax. That is what Ste.

Anne's Spa in Grafton, ON, offers as one of its newest features for visitors to its world-renowned spa.

Spa owner Jim Corcoran and his sister Marijo Cuerrier, head of special projects marketing, grew up with horses, but were too intimidated to get close to them. "I wanted to get over my fear of horses," said Corcoran, whose father Carl bought the aging house and property in 1981. "I took some lessons and then boarded some horses on our property for some friends."

Corcoran ended up owning one of those boarders, a Thoroughbred named Sotera Tu (Sophie), who subsequently needed a companion. One horse soon became an entire collection and Ste. Anne's Farm was born. Eventually, Corcoran and Cuerrier phased-in horse care into their spa options and in the last three years, the programs have become very popular. There are four components now to the equine program at Ste. Anne's: morning muck, grooming, evening turn-in, and the latest addition, the Learn to Ride program, managed by Karey White, a certified Equine Canada coach.

"We have mostly big city people who come here to get away from it all," said Corcoran. "Once they come down to the barn, they can't believe how big the horses are and how gentle they can be."

Guests at Ste. Anne's don't necessarily need any farm clothes, should they just want to stroll down the long trails to the barn. "There is something very relaxing about getting up in the morning, not having to do your hair, just throw on a robe and go visit the horses," said White. "I see in the guests' eyes when they come here. I truly believe you get a lot back from looking after a horse."

The programs range from casual contact with the horses to full barn chores for one hour including turning out the horses, cleaning the stalls, sweeping, bringing in the outside horses to feed, and getting the barn ready for afternoon chores. "I think our horse program has great healing benefits," said Corcoran. "It allows you to create a bond with the animal, something bigger than perhaps people have seen before. That can help people overcome fears, real or imagined, and maybe break down some barriers in their lives."

Last April, a favourite mare, Noche, gave birth to a filly, Ciara, who attracted a lot of attention both at the farm and on Ste. Anne's Facebook page. There are now 10 horses at Ste. Anne's Farm, plus half a dozen cattle and a resident barn cat.

"Our entire spa emphasizes nature and its healing powers," said Corcoran. "Getting up close with our horses is part of that package." 🐾

Visit Ste. Anne's Spa and Ste. Anne's Farm at:
www.steannes.com/ste-annes-farm.html