

Sharing an Opportunity to Forge a Special Relationship

Even though Gigi is getting up there at the ripe age of 22, she's still a knockout.

Marley is a younger 14 or 15 and is clearly most interested in lunch.

Sunshine at 16 tosses her head like she's the boss, which she is.

Younger Leo is the most precocious, boundlessly curious and unafraid to go face to face with strangers, if they'll let him.

Despite their various differences, they have one thing in common. They are rehabilitating at a place where they can be...well, just happy horses.

These four are the companions of South Bay resident Hollie Graham who has such a special relationship with horses that she wants others to feel the same sense of calm and connection.

A native of Lindsay, Ontario, Hollie married into the County. Her husband, Peter, grew up here. After meeting in Ottawa and marrying at Archway Connection in Demorestville, they decided to raise their family here. Peter is an artist who also turns his hand to wood-working and home construction. When she is not sprinting after their almost three-year-old, Hollie is caring for and nurturing her horses.

"Horses react to things the same way humans do," Hollie



Hollie Graham with (from the left) Sunshine, Leo and Marley. - Mirror Photo

says, "they mirror back sensitivities."

For that and other reasons, Hollie believes in the importance of caring for her horses in a sense of harmony. That means she interacts with them with respect and understanding. She says her companions will reflect the same back to her.

Hollie says that she has always had a natural affinity for horses. And, as a youngster, she asked for a horse every year, but never got one. In fact, she was an adult before she got the chance to have an upfront and close relationship with horses. After leasing her friends' horse, she finally decided to take a riding les-

son. It was a tipping point and a few weeks later she brought Marley, a six year old former trail riding horse, into her world.

"Marley and I went through a lot together," she said, explaining that as a child and young adult, she suffered from debilitating panic attacks. In the early days of having Marley, those panic attacks sometimes would mean that Hollie would be sitting in the saddle shaking uncontrollably.

"Marley could feel my anxiety and she would react to it...and

not in a positive way," Hollie confessed. It was at odds with her feeling of affinity with horses. So Hollie set out to find a new way of interacting with Marley. One of the ave-

(Continued on page 8)



A special moment with Marley. -Mirror Photo

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