

Kalayah Sturges
Capstone Journal Entry
September 27th, 2020

Today, giving thoughts to my capstone project I spoke to Tamika Terry, DCF Social Worker about children who are neglected/abused, in foster care, and live in impoverished neighborhoods. This conversation gave me insight on how COVID has been traumatic for many families and children around the world. COVID closed down schools and programs that were safe places for children, provided positive environments and services for children. Ms. Terry discussed how virtual telehealth has been very difficult and not personable for many families and children. I began to research therapy methods; animal therapy piqued my interest. The two most common animals used in therapy are dogs and horses. Immediately, my experience of riding horses came to mind. As a City of Hartford resident, I experienced a very empowering program on the Northend of Hartford, Ebony Horsewomen Equestrian Program. Riding horses provided me with a sense of safety, calmness, stress free, reassurance, nurturing, and peace.

I desire to focus my capstone project on Awareness of Animal Assisted Therapy: therapy used to help children who are suffering from trauma or abuse to relax, minimize stress, and offer a sense of safety and unconditional acceptance that puts therapy at ease. "Therapy at ease" when I think about this, I think about the stigma of therapy in the minority neighborhoods.

I have identified Ebony Horsewomen- Equestrian Therapeutic Program as my capstone community service project. Ebony Horsewomen's "mission and goal are to use equine-assisted therapy and equine-assisted growth and learning to empower youth toward their successful lives, deter destructive behaviors, to build leaders and increase academic achievement". The program helps children confront any fears or insecurities they have while encouraging youth to learn how to maintain control, work through their feelings, and move towards healing in spite of any underlying lack of confidence or hurdles in life.

With the new changes and guidelines due to COVID; horseback riding would give children in person contact for therapy while following the safety and precautions of COVID. Having been a prior camper at Ebony Horsewomen, there are barns that are outside and heated as well as a riding trail. The barns are open space which would accommodate 6 feet distance and children would be able to ride horses with masks on.

