

**To: Spring Reins of Life 501c3**

**Date: April 29, 2014**

Having experienced the sudden, unexpected and tragic loss of my husband in June 2013, I was desperately seeking to find a grief therapist for my two girls. I found it extremely difficult to find children bereavement therapists that were not the traditional "talk" therapists for my two girls then ages 7 and 9. I inquired through both mine and my late husband's companies employee assistance program (EAP) and neither company could not refer any alternative bereavement therapy other than the traditional counselors. I even asked a good friend of mine who is a high level executive at Pfizer and even he could not refer anyone to me. I was at a loss and knew I was looking for a needle in a haystack.

My children loved animals so I started googling animal grief therapy methods. I came across *Spring Reins of Life*, a non-profit after reading about the co-founder who is a 9/11 widow, I connected with her story and struggle to find a non-traditional approach to bereavement for kids. At first, both girls were hesitant to work with the horses but within minutes, they adjusted the most striking and gentle horses, Dane and Spring. I will share an experience that made me a believer in this non-traditional approach.

My 7 year old was afraid to enter the pen, but with the gentle coaxing and unending patience of CC and Ro, she found the courage and went in. Once in, she immediately grew more and more confident in guiding the horse on her own. This type of therapy amazed me as I saw my girls start to deal each week with the emotional loss of their dad, using no words but only expressing their feelings through these gentle creatures. Another experience was with my oldest daughter who was deeply traumatized by the loss and would not speak about it to anyone. She only would have major emotional outbursts and crying fits. One day, she had a tumultuous, emotional week with major ups and downs, that week when she went to equine therapy, she was still had a lot of pent up emotions. As she entered the pen and tried to lead Dane, the horse ran swiftly around the pen, prancing up and down with major spurts of energy, and then he settled down and went right over to her. My daughter recognized how he felt and CC talked to her about letting extra energy out, maybe the horse could show her how to do that. We could see a "mirroring of my daughters emotional state" and I told her she had a very tough week. Both girls looked forward to going every week and made remarkable progress in being able to comprehend what happened and were able to take steps when ready to "talk" about their experience with me.

Non-profits that offer these services are so important. I work for a major corporation and work closely with non-profits, having this program is so important to families like mine and I am grateful they meet the needs of kids grieving. There are not many programs like this and they do an excellent job in taking the children where they are at in their grief and gently using the horses to help them cope using structured exercises at each session.

Thank you CC and Ro, and thank you to the horses. We are indebted to you and this program!

**Carolyn Alessi**  
**Sr Public Policy Advocate**  
**Nestlé Nutrition U.S.**  
**Mother of Isabella (10) and Sofie (8)**