

Amber Marshall

LIFE & STYLE MAGAZINE

AMBER'S
EXHILARATING
ADVENTURES
IN ARIZONA

HORSIN' AROUND
WITH LITERACY:
HORSES HELPING KIDS READ

MEET MOUZER
FROM HEART-STEALER
TO STOWAWAY

AIR FARCE ESCAPADES WITH AMBER:
LAUGHTER IS THE
BEST MEDICINE

THE
TRAVEL &
ADVENTURE
ISSUE

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Horses Make Good Listeners

On farms and ranches across Canada, horses are hard-working and much-loved members of the family. Among the most beautiful and gracious of horse breeds are the Arabians. On a ranch outside of Edmonton, Alberta, there are a group of Arabians who are taking their role in the community to a whole new level.

The Arabian Horse Reading Literacy Project employs the power of the human-animal bond to motivate young students to develop a love of reading. On their ranch in Sherwood Park, Gary Millar and his family have developed a successful program for converting even the most reluctant early readers into small people with a big love of books.

Gary had dreamed of owning and raising Arabians since he was a little cowboy hanging out with his uncle's horses. Once into his twenties, he was able to make this dream a reality. About the same time, he spent three years as a teacher before turning to full-time work in the business sector. Little did he know that this short-lived career would combine with his long-held passion to change the lives of so many children.

Through Gary's involvement with the Arabian Horse Association, he met two gentlemen who ran the Black Stallion Literacy Program in Florida. Having already developed a Communication and Leadership Workshop utilizing his Arabians, Gary was looking for a way to

extend the powerful influence of horses to a children's program. And so the Arabian Horse Reading Literacy Program was born.

The program works in two stages. The first has an Arabian visit the subject school. Students (in grades 1 to 5) are introduced to the horse, and they have time to touch, pet and be with the horse. They are then given their very own book to keep, and a large horse poster for the classroom. The students then practice reading to the horse poster.

The second stage (Gary refers to them as "connections") has the students visiting the horse farm, where the young people are organized into small groups to work through a series of activity classes. Each activity ends with students reading to a horse, one on one. Such small people approaching such a large animal takes considerable courage, and there is an almost instantaneous connection. The children just love being around the horses and reading to them. The program has a special e-mail account where students and teachers can continue to communicate with their Arabian horse friends.



"Amber provides a wonderful example of a young person involved with horses. The kids get a feel for the magic of a relationship with the horses, the smell of the barn and the connection with the country and nature, and then see it in action with Amber."

- Gary Millar

Gary Millar and his wonderful team of volunteers, made up of retired teachers, horse owners and other clients of his barn facilities, also offer the Angel Wings Project, which allows seriously ill children to visit the farm and spend time with the Arabians. Gary's favourite aspect of Angel Wings is seeing the smiles on the children's faces, and watching the stress of the parents just melt away as their children are transported into the wonderful world of horses.

Amber is very proud to be a friend of the Arabian Horse Reading Literacy Project and the Angel Wings Program, and encourages you to find out more about them at www.arabianhorsereading.com.

