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■ HOME AND REC SHOW

'Human whisperers' teach people

CHRISTINE HOSLER
Tillsonburg News

At Spirit's Whisper, roles are reversed and horses teach people.

In a world overrun by the need to always be on the go, Spirit's Whisper wants you to take a little time for internal reflection at the persistent nudging of a horse's nose.

Or several noses, depending on the situation.

Kristi Rockley is the proud owner of Spirit's Whisper, an equine-guided learning facility located at 55807 Jackson Line in Bayham.

At the moment she has six horses at the farm, and every one is very much its own being with its own story.

"They've been coming together, it's funny now, looking back, because as the building process was going it was like not yet, we're not ready for you," said Rockley. "But we're (the horses) coming!"

During a session people interact with the horses, and are guided through a series of groundwork exercises where they are taught to listen not only to the horse, but to reflect on what that means in themselves.

"They're the ones training us," said Rockley. "They mirror what's inside us, so they bring out what is within us that needs to be looked at for either healing or letting go of."

But this horse retreat is for everyone and anyone, with each experience distinctly different, based on the individual and the horse. Rockley says it works for all walks of life, from corporate business looking for a leadership retreat, to individuals looking for self-reflection.

"The hardest thing with this whole environment that we're trying to create here is to articulate it," said Rockley. "Because it's an experience. And it's going to be a different experience for everyone who comes."

Rockley herself is no stranger to leaps of faith. Before starting Spirit's Whisper she was a police officer and trainer for close to 20 years. But while the transition was difficult, Rockley says there are a lot of elements she's brought from her



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Top: Jet and Kristi Rockley of Spirit's Whisper share a silent moment out in one of the fields at Spirit's Whisper. Spirit's Whisper is an Equine Guided Learning Facility in Stratfordville.

she's brought from her policing career into her life with the horses. The career change was unexpected, and has been a road filled with constant acts of faith and trust on Rockley's part.

"I found I couldn't combine the two worlds of that environment and not knowing where this environment was meant to go," said Rockley. "The timing was, it was time to get out. So I honoured that, and trusted that, and filled one pocket full of faith and one full of trust

and jumped off the cliff and went okay now what?"

Which, for a lot of people who come to Spirit's Whisper, is something they also have to face.

But for those who are ready, Rockley says it's an experience like no other.

Those seeking more information on the experience will be able to check out Spirit's Whisper at this year's Home and Rec Show inside Tillsonburg's Special Events Centre this weekend.



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Left: Niles, a 5-year-old Clydsdale, stands quietly beside Kristi Rockley, owner of Spirit's Whisper. The Equine Guided Learning Facility is in Stratfordville.