

## Rotary Horse Heroes Project Partners With Vets

BY DOUG MAYMON, ROTARY CLUB OF WESTON

**THE HORSE HEROES PROJECT IS A UNIQUE PROGRAM CREATED BY** Weston Rotarian Keil Hackley.

She is committed to giving back to the community through her love of horses and children. With the help of the Rotary Club of Weston, Keil spearheaded a program called Helping Children Heal at the Plantation General Hospital. Through this project, Rotarians and their family members visited children being treated in the hospital who did not have families of their own.

Keil was able to meld two of her passions, horses and children, into a program named The Horse Heroes Project. Through her contacts within the Broward Sheriff's Office, the BSO Mounted Posse partnered with Weston Rotary to produce a literacy program with Children's Harbor, a nonprofit group servicing at-risk kids.

The program encourages the children living at the foster care facility to read *Black Beauty* and other books to the horses. The nonjudgmental interaction of the horses proved to be very therapeutic to the kids involved.

The Rotary Club of Weston is also very proactive with the veterans of the Alexander Minger State Veterans Nursing Home. Rotarians brought The Horse Heroes Project to the nursing home to interact with the vets. The facility's director was extremely enthusiastic and stated "it is like Christmas all over again."

The day of this event, 35 veterans from the nursing home participated, along with Rotary Club members and members of the BSO Mounted Posse. Colonel Don Maines, who heads the Posse, gave a presentation on how the horses are specially trained for various situations, such as crowd control, search and rescue mis-



sions, parades, and community service, such as "what they are doing today intermingling with our Veterans."

The program was a very memorable one for Keil Hackley, whose own father served with distinction in the United States Army and is interred in Arlington National Cemetery.

"This is what it is all about," Keil remarked. "Seeing the smiles, the looks of joy on the faces of the Vets, the way they radiate while interacting with the horses is priceless and makes it all worthwhile."

To learn more about the Rotary Club of Weston and all that it does to help the community, visit [www.WestonRotary.com](http://www.WestonRotary.com). Meetings are held every Thursday from 7:15-8:30am at Weston Hills Country Club. To RSVP or for more information, email [Sonia.Montana@soniamontana15@gmail.com](mailto:Sonia.Montana@soniamontana15@gmail.com).