



Humans & Horses: Not So Different, Kids Learn

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Story submitted by Pamela Becker

What happens when you bring together kids, a pony, and a skeleton named Stanley? An evening of wholesome fun and curiosity.

Shirley Dubay, owner/instructor at Riding with Rhythm in Williamstown, hosts an educational horsemanship class just for kids, Hands on Horse (HOH). The focus of the classes is to teach kids about the horse and ownership if that is in their future.

With the help of Beauty, a Welsh pony, and Stanley the skeleton, kids took part in a hands-on lesson about the horse and human skeleton.

While proportions are vastly different, overall, our skeleton and the horse's skeleton are a lot alike.

Draped with a black cloth, Beauty modeled portions of the horse skeleton.

Six-foot-tall Stanley served as the human counterpart.

Using cutout pieces of the different bones, the kids had to locate and fasten the piece to the correct bone.

The class unofficially began with a startling shout, "I see a monster!," referring to Stanley the skeleton who happens to be very tall and very friendly.

May's HOH was simply called the Massive Match Game. Only knowing that the game involved a big skeleton and the pony the kids had no idea what was in store for them.

Dubay began with an explanation of how our body skeleton is similar to a horse.

What?

First, Dubay demonstrated by bending over from the waist and letting her arms hang towards the ground. Soon, all the kids were pretending to be horses with a neigh and whinny added for good measure.

The Massive Matching Game, is a color-coded activity, matching puzzle pieces to both the pony and the human skeleton. For example, the pieces for the ribs on both sets of ribs were pink.

HOH is a see, say, and do class.

Wiggling her fingers, Dubai asked, "Who has phalanges?" The kids yelled, "We do!," all wiggling their fingers.

The kids worked in pairs while matching the bones to Stanley and Beauty.

Dubai asked the kids, "Point to your skull. Now point to your partner's skull."

Together, the kids would place their puzzle piece(s) on Stanley.

Once all the bones were placed on Stanley and Beauty, they learned that the hock of a horse is the same as the ankle bone on a human. Humans have a collarbone, but a horse does not. Instead that area is supported by muscles on a horse. Therefore, horses have 205 bones to our 206 bones.

As one boy pointed out, "We have tarsals. Tarsals are toes. Both begin with the letter 'T'."

Why learn about the horse skeleton?

Knowing the anatomy of the horse is what allows us to understand the movement of the horse and become a better rider.

All the kids had a great time and enjoyed working together during the Massive Matching game. Hands on Horse is a class for kids with emphasis on hands-on learning.

Children are naturally drawn to horses. In today's society, where children spend more and more time in front of a screen, horses may be one of the best tools ever for fostering healthy, well-adjusted children.

Would you or your family like to learn more about horses and riding but do not own one? Riding with Rhythm has horses to fit your experience. Call Shirley at 859-907-4729 or check out her website www.ridingwithrhythm.com.



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