



For immediate release

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Double celebration for Greatwood students

Students attending Greatwood's Certificate Presentation Day on Wednesday, 6 July will be part of a double celebration when the Marlborough-based charity marks its tenth year of delivering pioneering educational programmes for children and young adults with additional educational needs.

Founded in 1998 by husband and wife team Michael and Helen Yeadon as a rescue and rehoming centre for ex-racehorses, Greatwood has become an important local community resource for education authorities, social services and pupil referral units in the region since the introduction of its bespoke educational programmes.

Inspired by the couple's early recognition that working with animals, and particularly horses, can have an extremely positive affect on personal development among those with cognitive, physical, emotional and social challenges or disabilities, the charity has developed four individual programmes accredited by the National Open College Network, and a further four accredited 1st4sport.

Qualifications range from Certificate courses designed to develop life skills and emotional literacy in younger students to diploma courses in skills for employment, training and personal development.

Co-founder and Managing Director Helen Yeadon said, "It's wonderful to be celebrating ten years of the educational programmes. We believe we have created a model at Greatwood that can be emulated almost anywhere where there are horses in need of a home and children with special educational needs.

"Greatwood has provided a second career for many hundreds of horses over the years and now the majority of thoroughbreds that come to us come not because they are in need, but because their owners want them to continue having a purposeful life."

Since 2006 approximately 3,000 children and young people have benefited from the unique resources at Greatwood many using their experience as an aid to reintegration into mainstream education or as a stepping stone towards work, work placements or further training.

Greatwood in the community

Greatwood has proved to be a valuable asset to the local community providing an alternative to mainstream education for children with additional educational needs in the ten years since its educational programmes were launched.

With two dedicated classrooms, a Specialist teacher with more than 20 years' experience in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), a teacher and graduate from the Royal Agricultural College plus a Learning Support Assistant with extensive experience of working with young people with additional educational, social and emotional needs, Greatwood is able to cater for pupils with a wide variety of requirements.

Greatwood receives referrals and support from a variety of organisations and social services within the community.

Endorsing Greatwood's work Andrew Jack, Wiltshire Council's Community Engagement Manager for Marlborough said, "Marlborough Area Board has been very happy to support the good work that the Greatwood Charity does for both the local area and further afield. The area board has been able to help provide grant funding towards specialist educational material for the training courses Greatwood runs for people with additional educational needs.

"The area board has also recognised the help Greatwood gives to young people to get them into employment by helping to fund places on the "Get Going" course which aims to give young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) a taste of the skills needed to work in the equine industry.

"I know Greatwood has had excellent success in helping young people into this field of work and Marlborough Area Board wish them good luck for another 10 years."

Greatwood provides a valuable alternative to the traditional classroom environment for pupils whose educational needs can benefit from equine assisted learning which identifies commonality between the horses in Greatwood's care and some of the children they teach.

Some of the ex-racehorses cared for at Greatwood may have suffered neglect several years after their retirement from racing; often because they have been passed from owner to owner and have fallen into a downward spiral of neglect.

Greatwood uses them as vehicles for teaching, with direct parallels being drawn between the experiences of these horses and the students attending the courses. This is particularly pertinent to those children who may have come from the care system and find it difficult to trust or respect others; as well as engaging in nurturing, caring relationships.

Jackie Smith, Executive Head Teacher at Uplands School in Swindon who was recently awarded with the MBE for her work with children with disabilities, is among those with first-hand knowledge of Greatwood's contribution to the education of children. She said, "We have worked with Greatwood for a number of years and their opportunities and facilities are fabulous.

"The rural atmosphere and the chance to engage with animals allows students who have struggled in mainstream education the chance to re-engage with education and people socially which breaks down barriers and changes lives. What they are doing is invaluable."

Further information about Greatwood and its work is available at www.greatwoodcharity.org