



HopeFoil Fact Sheet  
Revised December, 2004

## The HopeFoil Project at Flying Change

### Premarin foals

The estrogen replacement drug Premarin is derived from the urine of pregnant horses. In barns located primarily in Western Canada and North Dakota, thousands of mares live in strict confinement for more than half the year, tethered in narrow stalls and wearing urine collection devices. As a 'by-product' of the process, as many as 50,000 foals are born annually. Most of these unfortunate foals are sent to slaughter; however, a few are being adopted out in a humane effort by caring rescue groups.

### Meeting the needs of foals and adolescents in crisis

Flying Change, a charitable nonprofit organization, has adopted eight Premarin foals for the HopeFoil Project, a new equine-assisted psychotherapy program that pairs rescued foals with teens in crisis. To implement the program, Flying Change is partnering with some of Atlanta's most recognized mental health agencies, including The Bridge, Hillside Hospital, and Laurel Heights Hospital.

In the HopeFoil program, teens will attend weekly therapy sessions in which they groom, feed, and develop a caring relationship with their designated foal. The teens will learn to nurture, protect, and parent themselves through giving healthy affection to traumatized foals, and the foals, which have experienced minimal positive human contact prior to the program, will learn to accept and trust people.

### How the HopeFoil program works

The heartbreaking stories of the foals and their mothers evoke powerful feelings of empathy, allowing issues regarding grief, hopelessness, loss, deprivation, and desperation to emerge. As teens identify with the foals' experience of being lost and alone in a harsh environment, the narratives they give are rich with metaphor. They speak the language of emotional hunger, and they begin to find nourishment in the bond formed with the foals. Open play and demonstrations of affection can take place and feel safe. Through each other, foals and teens begin their healing process.

Although the foals benefit from handling, the focus of the HopeFoil program is the building of teen self-esteem and resilience. To raise a foal requires teens to develop and exercise:

- |                        |                                  |                                    |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ✚ Emotional control    | ✚ Creativity and problem-solving | ✚ Goal-setting and self-evaluation |
| ✚ Responsibility       | ✚ Self-confidence                | ✚ Nonverbal communication          |
| ✚ Patience and empathy | ✚ Leadership and self-confidence | ✚ Healthy boundaries               |

All of these are life skills the teens will also need for success in the world of people. Ultimately, the care and nurturing of rescued horses provides teens with capabilities that translate into healthier, happier, more meaningful relationships and emotional resilience in everyday life.

### For further information, contact:

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