

## People & Places



Brad Carlson/Capital Press

From left, Mike Weems Sr., Johnny Urrutia and Dr. Traci Patterson at Idaho Horse Therapy in Nampa on Nov. 12.

# Horse Therapy helps client deal with pain

By BRAD CARLSON  
Capital Press

Spending nearly two weeks at Idaho Horse Therapy substantially reduced the intense pain Mike Weems Sr. suffers. He has a condition called Complex Regional Pain Syndrome.

"I'm much, much better than I was," he said afterward. "The program is phenomenal in so many different ways."

The Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA) certifies equine specialists such as Johnny Urrutia, who founded Idaho Horse Therapy a decade ago. Veterans and others dealing with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder are among his clients.

Urrutia about a year ago moved IHT — which has professional staff, and about 40 trained horses at various southern Idaho sites — from Shoshone to Nampa. He said the move positioned the non-profit corporation closer to Boise Veterans Affairs Medical Center, more military veterans and various

**"I WAS AMAZED WITH THE EXPERIENCE WITH JOHNNY'S HORSES," WEEMS SAID. "THEIR SENSITIVITY IS SO ACUTE. THEY SENSE THE PERSON."**

Mike Weems Sr.

therapists and other health professionals who work with IHT and its clients.

"A horse is always reading your energy," said Urrutia, a lifelong horse enthusiast who previously worked as a high school math teacher, professional rodeo cowboy and recording artist. "You and I are reading each other's energy, but we are not as good at it."

Horses excel at "reading" people quickly and thoroughly — and in turn connecting deeply — partly because the spoken word does not get in the way, he said. A horse can help someone quickly calm and brighten his or her state of mind.

Weems, 69, a bowling-center owner, deals mainly with acute, prolonged physical pain.

He caught his left hand in a heavy shipping-and-re-

ceiving door on his small farm near Bellevue, Idaho, in late July 2016. Doctors reattached two fingers, but there was nerve damage. The pain that followed was much more severe and long-lasting than expected.

A physician in Sun Valley diagnosed CRPS, which the National Institutes of Health says is a chronic condition believed to be caused by damage to, or malfunction of, central and peripheral nervous systems. Prolonged excessive pain characterizes it.

Weems consulted with medical providers and more recently Urrutia, whom he has known since the two were in high school 40-plus years ago. Urrutia connected with Traci Patterson, an Irvine, Calif., physician who treats chronic pain with a multimodal approach

that is non-invasive and drug-free.

Patterson, herself a former CRPS sufferer, flew to Idaho in November to work with Weems and Urrutia at IHT.

Traditional treatment of chronic pain often is symptom-focused and ineffective, Patterson said.

"When we are using a multimodal protocol, we are treating the whole person," she said.

Patterson, through her Advanced Pathways practice, uses various mind and body treatment modes to help chronic-pain patients balance their autonomic nervous system, and break cycles of pain and fight-or-flight responses.

"When we do that and can start working with him (Weems) as a whole, we can essentially help him regain function-able levels of pain," she said.

Urrutia said horses

"have a way of helping us meet that coherence, when you are out of a dominant sympathetic state — our fight-or-flight mechanism."

Weems said his pain dropped 70 to 80% during his stay at IHT based on Patterson's treatments, the work of Urrutia and staff, and his experiences with horses.

At home, he plans to use specialized breathing and other exercises Patterson prescribed. He will return to IHT, and a separate Nampa medical office that measures pain levels, as needed. His son, Mike Weems Jr., is a Boise restaurateur.

He was raised on a Gooding, Idaho, farm, where his family had horses. He didn't realize it then, but "the emotional connection you make with them is remarkable," he said. "And Johnny is the first person who could illustrate that connection."

"I was amazed with the experience with Johnny's horses," Weems said. "Their sensitivity is so acute. They sense the person."

## CALENDAR

Submit upcoming ag-related events on [www.capitalpress.com](http://www.capitalpress.com) or by email to [newsroom@capitalpress.com](mailto:newsroom@capitalpress.com).

### MONDAY-THURSDAY DEC. 2-5

**Growing for the Future Online Virtual Conference:** Online at <https://nfu.org/growing-for-the-future/> NFU's Growing for the Future is a unique online, interactive virtual conference focused on the issues that today's farmers and ranchers face. The free, four-day event includes farmer-to-farmer webinars, live Q&A sessions, a discussion board, an online resource center, and free giveaways. This year's conference will cover topics ranging from cooperatives to insurance, business planning, energy efficiency, accounting and more. Contact: Hannah Packman, [hpackman@nfudc.org](mailto:hpackman@nfudc.org), 202-554-1600

### TUESDAY-THURSDAY DEC. 3-5

**Idaho Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting:** Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. The primary business of the annual convention is to set policy and elect leaders of the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation. Participants will also hear from Farm Bureau leaders and are updated on developments from the past year. A series of workshops follows covering a range of topics. Contact: [www.idahofb.org/](http://idahofb.org/)

### WEDNESDAY-THURSDAY DEC. 4-5

**Organic Grower Summit:** Mon-

terey Conference Center, 1 Portola Plaza, Monterey, Calif. Organic growers, producers and processors event for education, information and networking with production supply chain and support services providers. Sponsored by California Certified Organic Farmers and Organic Produce network. Contact: [www.organicgrowersummit.com](http://www.organicgrowersummit.com)

### WEDNESDAY-FRIDAY DEC. 4-6

**Washington Small Fruit Conference & Lynden Ag Show:** NW Washington Fairgrounds, 1775 Front St., Lynden, Wash. The conference focuses on the latest research and developments in small fruit farming. The latest relevant research information is delivered first hand by the scientists performing the research. Contact: [www.wsmallfruit.com](http://www.wsmallfruit.com)

### California Cattlemen's Convention: Peppermill Resort, 2707 South Virginia St., Reno, Nev. The organization will gather for its 103rd annual convention. Contact: <https://calcattlemen.org/event/convention2019/>

### SUNDAY-WEDNESDAY DEC. 8-11

**California Farm Bureau Federation 101st Annual Meeting:** Portola Hotel and Spa, Two Portola Plaza, Monterey, Calif. Join fellow farmers and ranchers as we discuss and develop policy, recognize the county Farm Bureaus at the core of our grassroots structure and individual members who have demon-

strated that working together during this past year is how we will continue "Building Our Future." Contact: <https://cfbf.com/am2019>

### TUESDAY, DEC. 10

**Changing Hands:** A Free Succession Planning Workshop. 1-4 p.m. at Salishan Resort in Gleneden Beach, in conjunction with the Oregon Farm Bureau Convention. RSVP to Nellie McAdams, [nellie@oregonagtrust.org](mailto:nellie@oregonagtrust.org), 971-409-6806. Happy hour to follow.

**University of Idaho Snake River Sugar Beet Conference:** Best Western Plus Burley Inn & Convention Center, 800 N. Overland Ave., Burley, Idaho. This is the annual sugar beet growers' conference. Contact: Erick Weninger, 208 423-6677, [erikw@uidaho.edu](mailto:erikw@uidaho.edu)

### TUESDAY-THURSDAY DEC. 10-12

**Oregon Farm Bureau Annual Meeting:** Salishan Resort, 7760 North Highway 101, Gleneden Beach, Ore. Members of the Oregon Farm Bureau meet once a year for grassroots discussions on issues important to agriculture. Contact: [tiffany@oregonfb.org](mailto:tiffany@oregonfb.org), <https://oregonfb.org/>

### THURSDAY-FRIDAY JAN. 9-10

**Oregon Mint Growers Annual Meeting:** 8 a.m. Salishan Resort, 7760 North Highway 101, Gleneden Beach, Ore. Make your plans to attend the 71st annual meeting, where you'll hear the latest on the mint industry. Contact: <http://oregonmint.org>, 503-364-2944

### WEDNESDAY-FRIDAY JAN. 15-17

**Northwest Agricultural Show:** 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Wednesday, 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Thursday and 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Friday. Oregon State Fair and Expo Center, 2330 17th St. NE, Salem, Ore. The 50th edition of the Northwest Ag Show will feature over 120 exhibitors and partners and seminars and workshops covering a variety of topics important to farmers and ranchers. Admission on Wednesday and Thursday is \$5 for adults, \$3 for seniors, and free for children 12 and under. Admission on Friday is free, courtesy of the Oregon Ag in the Classroom Foundation. Contact: 503-364-4431 <http://northwestagshow.com>

### FRIDAY-WEDNESDAY JAN. 17-22

**American Farm Bureau Annual Convention and Trade Show:** Austin Convention Center, 500 E. Cesar Chavez St., Austin, Texas. This is your opportunity to help set the agenda for the leading voice of agriculture. Participate in educational workshops to advance your leadership skills, expand your business acumen and gain deep insight into the trends and realities impacting food production. Contact: <https://annualconvention.fb.org/>

### SUNDAY-TUESDAY JAN. 19-21

**NFU Women's Conference:** Catamaran Resort Hotel and Spa, 3999 Mission Blvd., San Diego, Calif. This conference will not only prepare

attendees for success in agriculture, but it will also provide them with their own network of women farmers and ranchers they can reach out to throughout the year. Contact: Hannah Packman, [hpackman@nfudc.org](mailto:hpackman@nfudc.org), 202-554-1600. <https://nfu.org/womensconference/>

### MONDAY, FEB. 3

**Oregon Blueberry Conference:** 8 a.m. Salem Convention Center, 200 Commercial St. SE, Salem, Ore. This is the Oregon blueberry industry's annual meeting and features a variety of presentations and other informational sessions. Contact: <http://oregonblueberry.com> 503-364-2944

### THURSDAY, FEB. 20

**Idaho Hay and Forage Conference:** Canyon Crest Event Center, 330 Canyon Crest Drive, Twin Falls, Idaho. The association's annual conference and trade show will be in a new venue this year in Twin Falls. Contact: 208-888-0988, [www.idahohay.com](http://idahohay.com)

### FRIDAY-SATURDAY SEPT. 25-26

**Pacific Northwest Christmas Tree Association Trade Show:** Sheraton Portland Airport Hotel, 8235 NE Airport Way, Portland, Ore. This is the annual meeting and trade show of the Pacific Northwest Christmas Tree Association. Contact: <http://www.pnwcta.org>



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### Index

Markets ..... 9  
Opinion ..... 6

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