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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: (Bristol CT) May 8, 2023

SHEPARD MEADOWS EQUESTRIAN CENTER USES ARPA FUNDS TO TRANSFORM EQUINE-ASSISTED SERVICES WITH A NEW LEARNING CENTER

BRISTOL, CT – Shepard Meadows Equestrian Center, Inc., a nonprofit organization that provides equine-assisted services located on a 26-acre farm on Hill Street in Bristol, was awarded an American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant from the City of Bristol to help build an indoor learning center. Shepard Meadows was founded in 2004 and incorporated as a nonprofit the following year. Since its inception, Shepard Meadows has provided programs to promote personal wellness through horse therapy. They began with limited programs on a semester basis in the spring, summer, and fall and were then able to add additional winter unmounted horsemanship programs and a five-day summer equine experience in recent years. Their mission is to support the growth and well-being of all individuals, including those with special needs, veterans, youth, and adults.

Shepard Meadows' grant award in the amount of \$250,000 was used to fund the building of a learning center with a private therapy room which will enable them to meet community demand for services safely and professionally. Shepard Meadows was one of several nonprofit organizations to receive ARPA funding through the City of Bristol to support the public health and economic impacts of the pandemic. This funding will enable them to meet the demand for additional programs and services which is transformative in responding to and mitigating the impact of pandemic-related social-emotional and mental health issues alongside services that address learning loss in school-age children. These programs are unique and innovative and are based on experiential learning incorporating nature and equines.

"Over the past several years our programs have grown in response to community needs, with over 2,000 sessions last year. We are small and we are flexible; we can create programs easily and design them to meet individual or small group needs, but our facility limited us. This project allows us to continue to grow and welcome members of our community to the farm. We offer a unique healing environment and in partnership with our therapy horses, we change lives," stated Shelly Whitlock-Pope, Ed.D., Executive Director of Shepard Meadows Equestrian Center, Inc. "The new barn and learning center is absolutely beautiful and we look forward to sharing it with our community. There are no words to express how grateful we are to the City of Bristol for helping us with this project."

City of Bristol

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The City of Bristol received approximately \$28 million in ARPA dollars. A 15-member ARPA Task Force, comprised of appointed members from the community, was formed to help determine how these funds will be distributed to benefit the Bristol community.

“The City of Bristol utilized an innovative process to allow businesses and nonprofits to put forth transformative projects in vying for the City’s allocation of ARPA funding. Shepard Meadows new learning center on their property will allow them to meet the demand for equine-assisted services which will have a transformational impact for many individuals in the Bristol community,” stated Mayor Jeffrey Caggiano.

In addition to providing equine-assisted services, Shepard Meadows is open to the community to hold events, corporate/business meetings, and gatherings in the newly constructed learning center. If organizations are interested in combining the nature-field tranquil environment of our farm with an equine experience to promote team building, problem-solving, increase communication skills or personal awareness and/or growth, we have the talented and certified staff to lead your group.

Photos attached.



Mayor Caggiano, City staff, Shepard Meadows staff and Board of Directors members were given a tour of the newly constructed learning center funded with an ARPA grant from the City of Bristol.

From left to right back row: Liz Lefrancois, Board Member; Dr. Shelly Whitlock-Pope, Executive Director of Shepard Meadows Equestrian Center; Larry Gonzalez, President of the Board; Sean Dunn, Chair City of Bristol Energy Commission; Mayor Jeffrey Caggiano; Roger Rousseau, City of

Bristol Purchasing Agent. Front Row: Justin Malley, Executive Director Economic and Community Development Department; Diane Waldron, City of Bristol Comptroller; and Emily Eschner, Program Director of Shepard Meadows.



From left to right: Mayor Caggiano; Diane Waldron, City of Bristol Comptroller; Roger Rousseau, City of Bristol Purchasing Agent; Justin Malley, Executive Director Economic and Community Development; and Shelly Whitlock-Pope, Executive Director of Shepard Meadows Equestrian Center, Inc. pose in front of the entrance to the new learning center funded with an ARPA grant.

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