

2025 Human Animals Interaction Conference
Sam and Myra Ross Institute at Green Chimneys

Daily Schedule

**People, Animals and Nature:
The Restorative Power of Relationship**

Co Hosted by
University of Denver / Graduate School of Social Work / Institute for Human-Animal Connection

Brewster, New York
April 25 & 26, 2025

(Program May be Subject to Changes)

FRIDAY

- 7:45 **Bus pick-up at Hilton Garden Inn Hotel** in Danbury, CT, drop-off at Green Chimneys Brewster, NY
- 8:00 **Registration Open**
- 8:45 **Greeting** by Green Chimneys; University of Denver Institute for Human Animal Connection (*Gym*)
Welcome, Conference Intent, Program, Sponsor Introduction and Overview
- 9:00-9:45 **Opening Keynote: Understanding the Power of Relationship: Innovations in Human-Animal-Nature Interactions** by Megan Mueller (*Gym*)
- 10:00-11:00 **A Guided Tour of Green Chimneys** by Green Chimneys Staff
Tour the campus, farm, equine program, wildlife rehabilitation center, and the school and gardens to see our model of experiential education in action.

Posters displayed in gym on an ongoing basis

11:15-12:15 **FIRST SESSION**

A. Canine Consent Training for Social Working Dogs and their Handlers by Sara Karlberg (*Gym*)

A dog that feels in control over his life also experiences a greater feeling of safety and has a higher quality of life. To have freedom of choice in everyday life, and perhaps even more importantly as a social working dog, can prohibit stressful situations as the dog has a greater feeling of control. This breakout session will teach you how to train and listen to your dog to show you what he wants when he is ready, and when he is done. You will get all the tips you need to understand how to implement freedom of choice and ask your dog the right questions.

B. Benefits and Considerations of Farm Based Therapy Services by Suzanne Kapral
(*Teaching Barn*)

This presentation delves into the cognitive world of farm animals, shedding light on how they perceive their environment and react to new stimuli, including the introduction of novel objects. By unpacking the potential for anthropomorphism to distort our understanding of farm animal behavior, attendees are provided with a nuanced comprehension of animal welfare principles.

C. Interpersonal Relationship Challenges: How Horses Help Youth by Becky Cobban;
Jessica Aiello (*Indoor Arena*)

Join two Social Workers and their equine partners as they explore and discuss their experiences working at Green Chimneys with adolescents facing interpersonal relationship challenges. Through this interactive workshop, you will have the opportunity to explore, discuss and brainstorm ways in which equines can support and motivate youth in a mutually beneficial way.

D. Camel Herd Dynamics: The Key to Relationship by Doug Baum (*Horse Barn/Outdoor Arena*)

How do camels communicate, correct each other, show contentment, reinforce behaviors and relate to their peers? What expectations do herd members have of each other, and what responsibilities go with being part of a herd? Discover a thoughtful training style from an animal practitioner perspective based on observation and understanding of the animal. Consider how this approach of working with camels is key to successful training, encourages trainers to self-reflect and lays the foundation for a mutually beneficial relationship with other species.

- 12 :15-1:00 **Networking Lunch** Pick up a lunch, chose a designated interest area and meet new friends.
(*Dining Hall/Outside*)
- 1:00-2:00 You are free to visit one, two or more areas. Meet, mingle, ask questions and engage in dialogue. See map for locations.
- **IHAC Spotlight** Learn about the Institute for Human-Animal Interactions (IHAC) at University of Denver and gain some HAI practice tips in our spotlight session. (*Horse Barn Classroom*)
 - **Open Farm/Meet Students** Green Chimneys Staff (animal caretakers, teachers, program facilitators, therapists and interns) explain/demo different nature-based program areas in greater detail in an informal and informative fashion.
- 2:15-3:00 **Keynote - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Animal-Assisted Services Obviously, I'm Not From Here: Embodying a Sense of Belonging With the Help of Horses** by Veronica Lac (*Gym*)
- Dr. Veronica Lac will lead participants through a self-reflective journey to identify what it means to feel a sense of belonging. This interactive presentation will highlight the importance of acknowledging and accepting differences as a way to create more inclusive communities, and provide strategies on how to promote diversity and equity within animal-assisted services.

3:15-4:15

FIRST SESSION (repeat) -

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(*Gym*)

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4:30 **Social Hour: Meet Poster Presenters and Community Building Time** (*Gym*)

6:00 **Bus pick-up at Green Chimneys** Brewster, NY, drop-off at Hilton Garden Inn Hotel in Danbury, CT

Saturday

8:00 **Bus pick-up at Hilton Garden Inn Hotel Danbury, CT, drop-off at Green Chimneys Brewster, NY**

8:45-9:30 **Keynote: Ecopsychological Praxis Towards an Informed EcoJustice Framework** by Derrick Sebree (*Gym*)

As global stakeholders continue to try and make headway with climate policy, there is a need for the development of sustainable community models using relational frameworks. With the layering of systemic inequities and their impact on diverse communities such as Black Americans, the fields of climate and ecopsychology must address the intersection of systemic inequities, such as discrimination and racism, to better understand the role these pervasive forces play in the proliferation of environmental degradation and climate breakdown.

9:45-10:45 **SECOND SESSION**

A. "Freedom," Choice & Agency by Veronica Lac; Nina Ekholm Fry (*Indoor Arena*)

This breakout session will explore ways to incorporate horses into human services settings while considering the horses' "freedom", choice, and agency.

B. Case Review and Discussion by Shauna McWilliams (*Horse Barn Classroom*)

This session is for credentialed mental health professionals who include animal interactions in psychotherapy and counseling. Bring your questions, share your experience and join colleagues in exploring actual cases, review practice-based approaches, and consider outcomes.

C. Introduction/Practice to Forest Bathing by Miyako Kinoshita (*Meet at Building 20/Farm*)

Forest bathing and forest therapy (or shinrin-yoku) broadly mean taking in, in all of one's senses, the forest atmosphere. Not simply a walk in the woods, it is the conscious and contemplative practice of immersing in the sights, sounds and smells of the forest.

D. Working with Guinea Pigs: A New Approach by Skyler Opromolla; Danielle Powers (*Teaching Barn*)

This session will demonstrate a new way of approaching human-animal interaction work with guinea pigs in education and therapy programs. Discover a fresh take on husbandry, training and interaction strategies that allow these animals to choose to engage or not.

10:45 **Transition/Quick Break**

11:00-11:45 **Keynote: Training and Professionalizing for the Future** Nina Ekholm Fry; Kevin Morris
(*Gym*)

Human-animal interactions (HAIs) in human services are gaining mainstream recognition. Continued professionalization and research is necessary for competent, effective, and ethical practice. Education, organization, and regulation of HAIs is discussed in the context of preparing the next generation of practitioners and researchers.

12:00-1:30 **Lunch, Meet Poster Presenters and Community Building Time** (*Gym/Outside*)

1:30-2:15 **Keynote - Adopting a Restorative Mindset in Human-Animal Interaction Work: Connecting to Our Best Selves and to One Another** by Kristin Licardi (*Gym*)

Human-animal interaction services regularly confront us with challenging human behavior and high emotions. The term “restorative practices” generally brings to mind a positive approach to conflict resolution or an alternative to punishment. Though true, restorative practices are rooted in the healing power of connections and includes *proactive* strategies to foster a sense of community, build healthy relationships, and develop a sense of belonging and agency. In this workshop, we will honor the indigenous roots of restorative practices; learn some restorative strategies; and how to foster a restorative mindset in order to connect us to our best selves and to one another.

2:30-3:30 **SECOND SESSION** (*repeat*)

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3:45-4:30

Closing Session - The Restorative Power of Relationship: All Speaker Panel by Michael Kaufmann; Kevin Morris (*Gym*)

We will review impressions of the two days with all speakers and the audience. What were the highlights? What specific ideas were presented for future action? What are closing thoughts from each speaker on the conference theme? What were the moments of learning for presenters, organizers and most importantly participants?

4:45

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