
 **KAHV'YOO SPIRIT**  
*Equine Assisted Growth & Learning Adventure*





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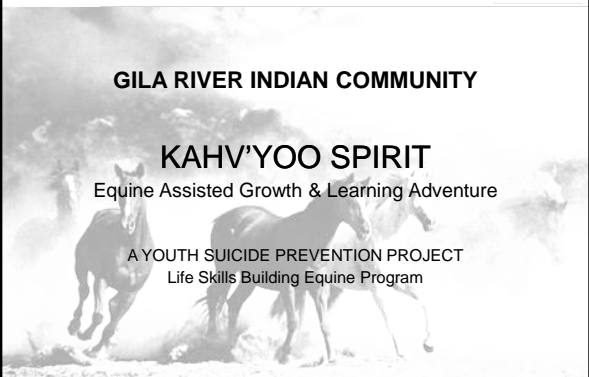
 **KAHV'YOO SPIRIT**  
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**GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY**

**KAHV'YOO SPIRIT**  
Equine Assisted Growth & Learning Adventure

A YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION PROJECT  
Life Skills Building Equine Program



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The Gila River Indian Community includes Native Americans of Maricopa and Pima heritage. The Community is very rural, with seven smaller villages or districts. It covers a wide swath of 600 square miles in central Arizona.

- Population: Approx. 14,000
- Median age: 22.7 years old
- Size of community: 372,000 acres)

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The Gila River Indian Community has a high rate of teen suicide.

A unique, culturally competent program has been developed through funding through SAMHSA, with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to successfully address this alarming situation.

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KAHV'YOO in the Pima Language means "horse." The program is an experiential process where students participate with horses in ground activities.

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The KAHV'YOO SPIRIT Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Adventure program provides youth the opportunity to develop the following protective factors:

- Healthy coping strategies
- Resiliency
- Self-esteem
- Connection to peers
- Connection to family
- Connection to community

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The KAHV'YOO SPIRIT program is also about character building. Students who participate in the KAHV'YOO SPIRIT program express and demonstrate an increase in their self-confidence and sense of belonging.

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Horses are prey animals, and especially sensitive to the nonverbal cues of human participants.

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Horses are large. Horses are powerful. As participants work with the horses, they often overcome their fears, developing confidence and trust along the way.

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 **Gila River**  
HEALTH CARE



Equine Assisted Growth and Learning is listed as a Best Practice Program in the First Nations Behavioral Health Association Catalogue of Effective Behavioral Practices for Tribal Communities.

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 **Gila River**  
HEALTH CARE



Student participants are challenged by the experiential process to find ways to solve their own problems and take responsibility for how their behaviors impact others. It provides the opportunity for young people to become socially connected, and have fun!

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 **Gila River**  
HEALTH CARE



The program is built of twelve exercises, that are increasingly complex in terms of task and relationship.

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The students engage in ground exercises with the horses, but task completion is not the goal. We are watching the process...HOW they manage their frustration, success, anger and accomplishments.

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Evaluation is ongoing. We are gathering data from pre/post tests that focus on a different dimension each session.

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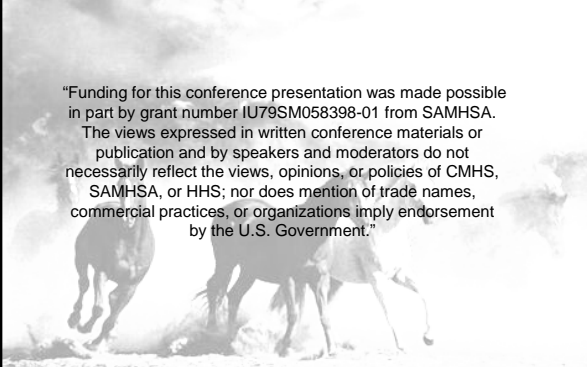
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**SAMHSA : Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services  
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