

Clunes to help horses change inmates' lives

By **RENE GERRYTS**

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TV STAR Martin Clunes has agreed to help an Askerswell single mother-of-three who is changing young prisoners' lives through her horses.

Harriet Laurie has studied natural horsemanship for years and seen how the principles and philosophy helps both troubled horses and the humans who practise it.

When lawyer friends asked her to work with an American prisoner, who had been released after 17 years on death row, she agreed.

The success of this led to Harriet using her horses and the techniques on inmates at Portland Young Offenders Institution.

Former South Dorset MP and now Lord Jim Knight agreed to be the first patron of TheHorseCourse and now Martin Clunes has agreed to join him.

The Doc Martin, who admits his own horses soothe him when he is wound up, said: "I think this is terrific.

"I am quite new to horses myself and I was interested in the reaction of the guys to the horses and how they made them feel.

"Horses are great teachers and it seems a great use of horses for what could otherwise be another discarded person.

"It is another great example of equine assisted therapy."

Harriet took time off her job as a design and marketing consultant to do the first course over seven sessions with four prisoners last year.

After completing the first course many inmates went on to sign up for educational opportunities and for the first time ever a prisoner gave the governor a lesson.

Now some of the 20 prisoners who have done the course are coming back to help teach it.

Prison staff have been amazed at the transformation.

Governor Steve Holland said: "We are constantly looking for fresh and innovative ways



HORSE SENSE
Harriet with her horses at Portland Young Offenders Institution. Inset, TV star Martin Clunes

Star to be a patron of Harriet's project

to engage with prisoners and help them make adjustments to either their attitudes or behaviour.

"There are certain prisoners who are difficult to reach.

"I've been astounded at how much progress can be made with this sort of lad using natural horsemanship techniques."

YOI head of training Mike Summers added: "I would say it's the biggest change in an individual over a two-week period that I've ever witnessed."

The prisoners said the course taught them how to control their emotions and has given them confidence in their ability to learn.

Harriet said: "They get a whole new understanding of their own emotions.

"My horses are specially trained to give very clear feedback on body language and attitude - to get the tasks done, the

prisoners have to be calm, focused and communicate clearly, or the horses will not co-operate - which can be quite scary.

"Over seven sessions we build new habits of behaviour which lead on to greater self control and the willingness to engage in vocational or academic training.

"If we don't change these guys while they are in prison, they will come out the same, or worse than they went in."

Harriet has secured initial funding from the Shackleton Foundation and is through to the second round with a major UK trust that would enable her to take the idea to other prisons in the country.

Bournemouth and Southampton Universities are putting together an evaluation report of the project which will be out shortly.

Beware of scam lottery call

A CONMAN told an elderly Bridport woman she had won the lottery in an attempt to trick money out of her.

Police are warning people to be on guard after the 81-year-old was targeted over the phone.

PC Mike Brown, of Bridport Police, said: "An 81-year-old female from the Bridport area was contacted over the phone by

a male telling her that she had won the National Lottery and that she needed to pay £550 into a bank account.

"The male gave details of the sort code and account number.

"He stated that once the money had been paid into the account the lady would receive £1,050 paid back into her account."

PC Brown added: "I would like

to warn other residents to stay vigilant and not to part with any money in the above circumstances.

"I would urge residents to take extra care when dealing with cold callers and obtain full details to verify that the company is legitimate."

The man called the pensioner on September 8.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Witnesses wanted after raid on home

BURGLARS have stolen jewellery and electrical items from a house at Melbury Osmond.

Police say two men entered the home at about 11.30am on Friday, September 9. They fled with a laptop, cameras and a distinctive dolphin ring.

Witnesses and anyone with information can call the police on 01305 222 222 quoting incident number 9:173.

Driver hits house

A PENSIONER was checked over by paramedics after hitting a house with his car in Beaminster.

Police said that the elderly man was taken home by ambulance crew after the collision at 11.35am on Monday, September 12 in East Street.

Police said that firefighters were called to help the man out of his car and that there was minor damage to the vehicle.

Crash blocks A35

THE A35 was blocked on Thursday afternoon after a white Volvo car transporter was in collision with a silver Ford transit van just after 3pm.

Police and ambulance attended the accident which happened near the old Texaco roundabout.

The driver of the van suffered slight injuries, said a police spokesman.

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