

2025 Human-Animal Interaction Conference

People, Animals and Nature: The Restorative Power of Relationship

April 26 & 25, 2025
Brewster, NY

Hosted by
**Sam and Myra Ross Institute
at Green Chimneys**



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



**Institute for
Human-Animal Connection**
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

FRIDAY

(program subject to change)

Time	Location	Activity	Speaker
7:25	Hilton Garden Inn	Bus pick-up at Hilton Garden Inn Hotel in Danbury, CT. Drop-off at Green Chimneys in Brewster, NY.	
8:00-8:45	Gym	Registration Open Posters displayed in gym on an ongoing basis.	
8:45-9:00	Gym	Welcome Introduce conference intent, program, and sponsors.	
9:00-9:45	Gym	Opening Keynote — Understanding the Power of Relationship: Innovations in Human-Animal-Nature Interactions <i>Description to come.</i>	Megan Mueller
9:45-10:00		Break	

Time	Location	Activity	Speaker
10:00-11:00	<i>Begins at Gym</i>	Guided Tour of Green Chimneys Tour the campus, including our farm, equine program, wildlife rehabilitation center, school, and gardens to see our model of experiential education in action.	Green Chimneys
11:00-11:15		Break	
11:15-12:15		First Session (Pick One)	
	<i>Gym</i>	Canine Consent Training for Social Working Dogs and Their Handlers 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.	Sara Karlberg
	<i>Teaching Barn</i>	Benefits and Considerations of Farm-Based Therapy Services 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.	Suzanne Kapral
	<i>Indoor Arena</i>	Interpersonal Relationship Challenges: How Horses Help Youth 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.	Becky Cobban Jessica Aiello
	<i>Horse Barn /Outdoor Arena</i>	Camel Herd Dynamics: The Key to Relationship 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.	Doug Baum

Time	Location	Activity	Speaker
12:15-1:00	Dining Hall /Outside	Networking Lunch Pick up a lunch, chose a designated interest area and meet new friends.	
1:00-2:00		Social Hour You are free to visit areas around the Green Chimneys campus. Meet, mingle, ask questions and engage in dialogue, including:	
	Horse Barn Classroom	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.	University of Denver
	Farm	Open Farm and Meet the Students Green Chimneys Staff (animal caretakers, teachers, program facilitators, therapists and interns), with student assistance, explain and demonstrate different nature-based program areas in greater detail in an informal and informative fashion.	Green Chimneys
2:00-2:15		Break	
2:15-3:00	Gym	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 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.	Veronica Lac
3:00-3:15		Break	
3:15-4:15		First Session <i>Continued</i> (Pick One)	
	Gym	Canine Consent Training for Social Working Dogs and Their Handlers 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.	Sara Karlberg

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4:15-4:30		Break	
4:30-6:00	Gym	Social Hour Meet poster presenters and community-building time.	
6:00		Bus pick-up at Green Chimneys in Brewster, NY. Drop-off at Hilton Garden Inn Hotel in Danbury, CT.	

SATURDAY

Time	Location	Activity	Speaker
8:00	Hilton Garden Inn	Bus pick-up at Hilton Garden Inn Hotel in Danbury, CT. Drop-off at Green Chimneys in Brewster, NY.	
8:45-9:30	Gym	Keynote — Ecopsychological Praxis Towards an Informed EcoJustice Framework 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.	Derrick Sebree
9:30-9:45		Break	
9:45-10:45		Second Session (Pick One)	
	Indoor Arena	"Freedom," Choice and Agency This breakout session will explore ways to incorporate horses into human services settings while considering the horses' "freedom", choice, and agency.	Veronica Lac Nina Ekholm Fry
	Horse Barn Classroom	Case Review and Discussion This session is for credentialed mental health professionals who include animal interactions in psychotherapy and counseling. Bring your questions, share you experience and join colleagues in exploring actual cases, reviewing practice-based approaches, and considering outcomes.	Shauna McWilliams
	Building 20/ Farm	Introduction to Forest Bathing with Practice Forest bathing and forest therapy (or shinrin-yoku) broadly mean taking in all of one's senses in the forest atmosphere. Not simply a walk in the woods, it is the conscious and contemplative practice of immersing oneself in the sights, sounds and smells of the forest.	Miyako Kinoshita
	Teaching Barn	Working with Guinea Pigs: A New Approach 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.	Skyler Opromolla Danielle Powers
10:45-11:00		Break	

Time	Location	Activity	Speaker
11:00-11:45	Gym	Keynote — Training and Professionalizing for the Future Human-animal interactions (HAI) 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.	Nina Ekholm Fry Kevin Morris
11:45-12:00		Break	
12:00-1:30	Gym/ Outside	Networking Lunch Pick up a lunch, chose a designated interest area and meet new friends or poster presenters.	
1:30-2:15	Gym	Keynote — Adopting a Restorative Mindset in Human-Animal Interaction Work: Connecting to Our Best Selves and to One Another 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.	Kristin Licardi
2:15-2:30		Break	
2:30-3:30		Second Session <i>Continued</i> (Pick One)	
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3:30-3:45		Break	
3:45-4:30	Gym	Closing Session with Speaker Panel — The Restorative Power of Relationship We will review impressions of the two days with all speakers and participants, exploring the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? 	Michael Kaufmann Kevin Morris
4:45		Bus pick-up at Green Chimneys in Brewster, NY. Drop-off at Hilton Garden Inn Hotel in Danbury, CT.	