



M. Bernard Hanks Equestrian Center Dedication

David W. Miller, PhD.

Thank you, Dr. Christopher, for pronouncing yet another one of your warm and heart-felt prayers. It is most fitting for the pastor of Abilene's First Baptist Church to be a part of this program. The honored name for this facility, M. Bernard Hanks, came to Abilene in 1897 when his father was called to be the pastor of First Baptist Church. Bernard was only 13 years old at the time, but immediately he went to work as a journalist at the Abilene Reporter News, later becoming its editor, and then joining Mr. Houston Harte of San Angelo to form a very successful Harte-Hanks international communications company from which the Shelton Family Foundation had its beginning.

The more I learn about Marshall Bernard Hanks, the more I realize how perfect it is that this equestrian facility should bear his name. Bernard loved horses, initiating the inaugural formation of the Abilene polo club; and, Bernard loved helping those who could not help themselves, as is the case with the children who come to live with our loving house parents.

With the dedication of this structure, we are embarking on a new and powerful form of counseling techniques, called Equine Therapy. With Equine Therapy, our own certified Equine Assisted Psychotherapist, Mr. David Perkins, Executive Vice President of both our Basic Care and Family Care programs, along with the able help of our 20 year employee and horse professional, Lora Jones, will design activities between our children and their assigned horses. Through these creative activities, children will learn about the physical and emotional needs of horses; and, after intentional dialogue with the therapist, the children will learn how to relate those same emotional conditions to their own needs and feelings. It is in the midst of this interaction between horses and children that emotional adjustments take place in ways that could not happen in any other manner, changing their lives forever, and confirming the adage that it is "amazing what the outside of a horse will do for the inside of a child."

Sincerely from the hearts of the 9-member Board of Hendrick Home for Children, our valued employees and the wonderful children we serve, we thank Mr. David Copeland and the full Board of the Shelton Family Foundation, and the workmanship of Mr. David Beard and the Thomas Hicks Construction Company crew and their subcontractors, for making this state-of-the-art equine center available for both our Basic Care and Family Care children. Paid in full by the Shelton Family Foundation, the facility, built for 150 children as a part of our 2020 Vision Strategic Plan, features an office, conference room, two feed rooms, saddle room, ten stalls, a horse clinic, and horse showers. The facilities are nice enough that one college student suggested that if we added a computer hook up, we could rent the horse stalls out as dorm rooms. In addition, the complex features a 150 yards by 100 yards heated arena that will provide consistency of equestrian activities never before available to our children during our 70 year history. Mr. and Mrs. Tomas G. Hendrick, founders of Hendrick Home and the owners of 7 famous horse and cattle ranches in New Mexico and Texas, if alive today, would count this day as yet another unbelievable milestone in their linear dream for children, a dream that has perhaps exceeded their own imaginations of what their estates would mean in the lives of God's little ones. So, thank you Marshall Bernard Hanks, thank you Shelton Family Foundation, and thank you Mrs. Lora Jones, our horse director, who never fainted from reminding me of the need we have had for such an Equestrian Center.