



# HUSPA

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## PLANTATION

*Story and photography by Nancy McGregor*



“LET US TAKE YOU TO ANOTHER PLACE AND TIME.  
LET US SHOW YOU WHERE SIMPLICITY LIVES  
*and how life goes on*  
DESPITE THE HARD TIMES.”

**W**ords like these could be the motto of the Huspa Plantation Equestrian Park in Sheldon, S.C. It is an old place that somehow seems to be filled with old souls. It is a place that has seen tragedy and loss but somehow always seems to respond with beauty and growth.

Huspa Plantation was named after the creek that runs beside it, which in turn, is named for an Indian chief from the Huspa tribe of the Yemassee Nation. The plantation was owned by the Fuller family for generations, and was a large working plantation until after the Civil War. Then, a family member who had been a doctor for the Confederate Army returned home and split the property among his freed slaves who had stayed to help the family after Sherman's destruction. Nick Jones, who is a descendant of the original Fuller family, bought the remaining 350 acres in the early 1970s. His great-grandmother told stories to young Nick about the property and the Civil War's devastation. During Reconstruction, a Victorian home was built here in the late 19th century and stood until 1976, when it was yet again destroyed, this time by fire. Resolute, Nick rebuilt. Now in his 80s, he still lives on the property and still rides most mornings.

Huspa Equestrian Park is, in many ways, something more than a new business. It was first conceived more than 20 years ago and, over the course of time, has evolved into a special place for both humans and animals. It also is a place of peace, remembrance and healing.

We often hear of dogs and cats being abused or abandoned, but abuse covers many species. While Huspa Equestrian Park isn't a rescue

facility and can't act on cases of abuse, they do what they can for neglected, abandoned or older horses.

This open-hearted healing doesn't stop with horses. The plantation provides a sanctuary for the wounded—man and beast alike. Along with a donkey and many breeds of adopted dogs, there often are disabled veterans here on appreciation events. The equestrian center provides a special ramp to help the vets get astride a horse, and they extend every service, including crabbing and fishing, to the veterans that visit with them.

It's all a little different from the usual view of the equestrian world, with its pristine formality. After all, riding well is an art form. There are traditions, uniforms, modes, levels and protocol. Sometimes, though, because of all that, the horsey set can seem a bit on the prim side. The joy of simply riding might seem to get a little lost, when, from the polo fields to riding the hunt, one must understand the proper form of it all.

Huspa speaks to something more fundamental and simple in all of us. To understand it, think back to a time when you were a kid and stuck in the backseat on a family road trip. Hot, tired and cranky, you'd stare out the window, endlessly asking if you were there yet. Once in a while, though, a pasture behind a wooden fence would flash by. There would be horses in the field and, somehow, it would arrest your attention. It was a place you wished to go. As it rolled out of sight, there might have been a sense of wistfulness left behind, as if maybe you missed out on something important.

Today, the remembrance of those days can take you back in time, but the good news is that the Huspa Equestrian Park is that place and, finally, you can go there.





This Equestrian Park isn't like most, where you learn about riding and the proper form. At Huspa, you learn those things but first, you'll learn about horses and, perhaps, a little about yourself. Here, the natural world surrounds you and, chances are, it'll get on you. It'll get on your shirt. It'll get on your pants. It'll get all over your shoes. Mostly, though, it'll gather in your soul. It will light up your children's eyes. And it will somehow heal the things that have left their scars upon you.

It starts when you find the driveway. Go slow in case the donkey, Andy, is wandering nearby. Or the blind horse, Prosperity, might be grazing in the field. If you decide to park here for any reason, do it near a building or a tree. Prosperity has everything memorized and can get around very well, unless someone leaves a car or truck in the way.

Also, be mindful of the many dogs roaming around. They are all sweet-natured, rescue animals. They don't bite, bark or get territorial, but they do love to welcome you to Huspa. They're glad to be here and it's as if they want to share their good fortune with everyone.

There are succinct signs that point you to the barn. It's an old structure and has sheltered many horses and riders in its time. Equestrian

Manager Gini Quade will be around somewhere. She's either training a team, teaching a group of children or working with one of the horses. Don't be shy. You belong and are welcome. She'll soon be here to answer your questions, find the right horse for you or help your child be brave in the face of these gentle giants. Gini had her first riding lesson at age 5, and horses soon became a lifelong passion. She earned a bachelor's degree in equestrian studies from Lake Erie College in Painesville, Ohio, and has competed in dressage and jumpers. She also has worked as equestrian manager at Palmetto Bluff's Longfield Stables.

Huspa Plantation Equestrian Park offers many things: trail rides, lessons, holiday events, ladies' nights—plus, boarding, training and all that you'd expect in an equestrian park. But, here, there is one more thing that you get. The adopted dogs get it. The donkey gets it. The blind horse gets it. The wounded veterans who risked so much for each one of us get it every time they ride in an event here. It's the gift of healing you'll receive. You can take it home and, if you let it, the grace and simplicity of Huspa will live with you for a long, long time.

*Huspa Equestrian Park*  
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