

TRIBUTE TO EMILY AHO OF JAFFREY

Ms. HASSAN. M. President, I am proud to recognize Emily Aho of Jaffrey as June's Granite Stater of the Month. Aho has stepped forward and provided emotional support for health care workers on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting our state's commitment to the idea that every individual can make a difference in times of critical need.

Aho is the executive director of the Newfoundland Pony Conservancy in Jaffrey, a non-profit organization that provides a safe living environment for the endangered Newfoundland pony. Up until December 2019, Aho was also a registered nurse until some physical ailments made it difficult for her to work in a hospital.

Shortly after her retirement, COVID-19 began to spread rapidly throughout the United States, and Aho found herself feeling helpless as she watched her loved ones succumb to the deadly virus, including her father, a World War II veteran who was a guard during the Nuremberg trials.

After her father's death, Aho went searching for her father's old photos and memorabilia and found them in the closet where she also kept her materials for equine-assisted learning. Her discovery of those materials was an inspiration and a reminder that despite her loss, she had much to give.

Through a partnership with True Hope Therapeutic Horsemanship, Aho helped establish the Heal the Heroes program, which provides free therapeutic sessions with ponies and horses for health care workers who have experienced heightened mental and physical challenges amid the pandemic.

The health care workers visit Aho's conservancy once a week for four weeks, where they learn to communicate and connect with her Newfoundland ponies. Due to social distancing guidelines, the program can only take two people in one session and all the equipment is properly sanitized to avoid spreading the virus. After four weeks with the Newfoundland ponies, the participants graduate to True Hope Therapeutic Horsemanship, where they continue therapeutic work with horses, both ridden and unriden.

This pandemic has impacted people and organizations throughout our state, including non-profit organizations like the Newfoundland Pony Conservancy that Aho operates. But despite her own financial struggles, Aho still found a way to give back to her community and provide support to those on the front lines of this crisis. Aho's empathy and commitment to improving the mental wellness of her fellow community members exemplifies the best of our state - and what it means to be a Granite Stater. I am honored to recognize her.