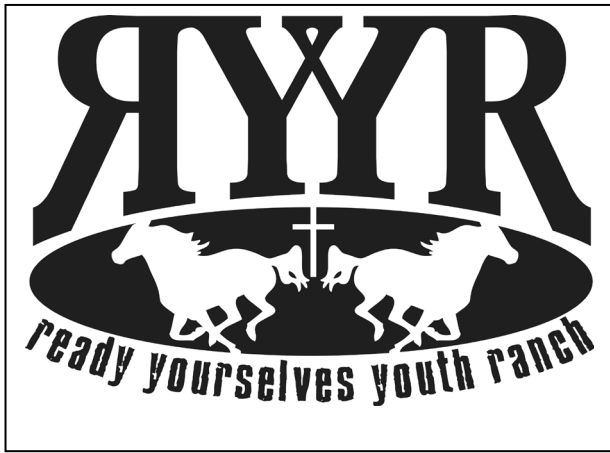


January 2020



*Our Vision...For every child to experience redemption.
Our Mission...LOVE the child, SAVE the horse, enable children
and their families to realize the HOPE they can have in Jesus Christ.*

THE BREAKFAST CLUB

-by Micheline Barkley

We were recently invited to speak about the ranch at a “Veterans Breakfast Club.” This one was hosted by Christ United Methodist Church in Bethel Park. The Veterans Breakfast Club began in 2008 when two Pittsburgh business men, Todd DePastino and Dan Cavanaugh arranged for 30 World War II veterans to gather and share their individual war experiences. This meeting brought back many memories and strong emotions. With an intense desire from everyone for more of these meetings, The Veterans Breakfast Club was born.

These breakfast Club meetings have hosted World War II, Vietnam, Korean, Dessert Storm and post 9-11 vets. The meetings enlightened, encouraged & healed so many people (not just the veterans.) As a matter of fact, a large portion of the attendees are not veterans. Some are children or relatives of veterans and some are historians and war buffs. At this meeting in Bethel Park, I was given the opportunity to do a five-minute informative public announcement about the ranch, however, the Director, Todd did not know that I had a personal connection to the Vietnam War. After sharing a brief summary of what RYYR does, I felt a prompting by the Holy Spirit to be a witness to what God had done in my life. With that, I spoke openly about being born in Vietnam, the destitute life my family lived when my father abandoned us there. I told of how my family was sponsored to America by a church in Virginia and how we had narrowly escaped just a few days before the fall of Saigon. I told vets that everything they did in service mattered and thanked them. When the event was over, I was encouraged & hugged by so many Vietnam Vets. I was also invited to speak again at two more Breakfast Club meetings in Beaver & Sewickley.

But the most touching moment was when I met a veteran named Ben. He told me that he was one of the pilots flying refugees out of Tan Son Nhat Airbase. This was the very same place that my family flew out of when we left in April of 1975! He could have been the pilot that flew my family’s freedom plane! There is no way to be sure but to think of it made me feel so humbled and honored to be in the presence of such honorable men.

If you would like more information about the Veterans Breakfast Club please visit www.VBC.org



MEET OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS

This month we are highlighting one of our most beloved mentors, Marilyn Christy. Marilyn is a native of Greensburg, PA but now lives in Zelienople. Marilyn became a mentor three years ago, after retiring from a career of social work. She was a social worker most of her life, helping to protect the elderly and then a Nursing Home Administrator in Pittsburgh for several years after that.

Marilyn's passion for horses started back in the 70's. After finishing college and getting her first job, she started taking riding lessons. Three years later she purchased her first horse Peanut, a 10 year old Quarter Horse Thoroughbred mixed gelding. Owning a horse is a lot like owning cats, you can't have just one! In no time Marilyn owned four horses, was married and living on the farm where the horses were boarded. Soon children came and everything was wonderful until she suffered a devastatingly painful divorce in the 90's.

It was then when a co-worker invited her to church. This is when she received her salvation and God restored her heart. But as every believer knows. Life doesn't become magically easier when you believe in God. We all suffer trials of all sorts. Marilyn's suffering lasted two years. While she was a Nursing Home Administrator, her life was threatened by a drug addicted relative of a resident in the nursing home. She would never forget the darkened eyes that drilled into her and the eerie voice that spoke directly to her and said, "I WILL kill you." The police and multiple attorneys were involved but the fear kept Marilyn trapped in her own home for two years. She was afraid to go outside, afraid to be around people, she became a total shut in until her daughter-in-law picked up a ranch brochure and gave it to her. Marilyn kept that brochure for a year and did nothing. She was paralyzed with fear. When she finally picked up the ranch brochure, she called me (Micheline) and I was so excited to meet Marilyn! After all, how often do you get a volunteer that has horse experience, loves kids and the Lord AND has free time?! She came out and saw the barn, met the horses and heard the stories of hope and restoration about the kids that were coming here.

It was that day that Marilyn says, "It all made sense." She was referring to horses helping humans to heal. She loved riding the horses but she also had a love for children and RYYR was the bridge to connect the two. She had a passion for horses but after having children and working 60+ hour weeks, she had disconnected with horses. Just being there at the barn brought back her passion and mentoring gave her a purpose! This ranch was intended to heal children but the by product is that it has changed the lives of so many adults and volunteers involved. What a bonus!

With her passion re-ignited, Marilyn couldn't resist having her own horse. In 2018, she bought a beautiful OTTB (Off the Track Thoroughbred) Mare. Literally, she was purchased on the day she ran her last race. Shaina is very young with lots of energy but once she is given a few minutes to get that "spunk" out of her system, she is an affectionate horse and will seek you out for scratches and treats of course!

When I asked Marilyn how she goes about mentoring each child because their needs are all so different. She said she simply listens to her kids and hears their needs and uses her gut instinct to guide them in horse work. Sometimes it's riding, sometimes it's grooming, sometimes ground work and sometimes it's just play with the horse. Marilyn has learned to massage the lessons according to each child and what they are dealing with. Being a mentor has given Marilyn a purpose and joy in her life. But it can be sad sometimes. Marilyn mentored a young lady who took her own life in 2019. She was devastated. Marilyn's heart was broken but she knows that, in time, God will mend her broken heart and heal the young lady's family. In the meantime, she will continue to listen to kids, love on them and share the hope of Christ. We are so blessed to have Marilyn.

WELCOME HOME LAZARUS !!!!!



If any of you followed our ranch Facebook page, you know what happened as we brought Lazarus home. But for the rest of you, I will chronicle the details of the MIRACLE that I witnessed!

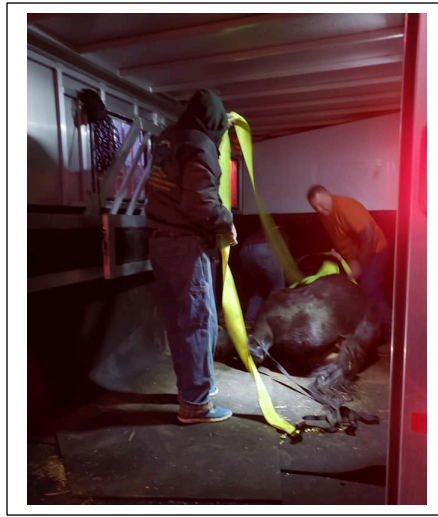
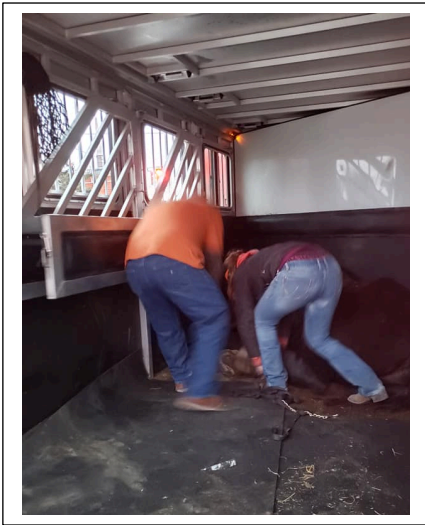
This miracle started with our prayer and search to replace our beloved Pansie. We found a 13-year-old ex-Amish Belgian horse named Blaze, located 3.5 hours away. The person advertising him made him sound perfect for our program. We launched the fundraising campaign. The deal went south as the seller required full payment up front (without us even looking at or touching the horse) along with a few other red flags. I'm not a genius but I've lived long enough to go with my gut instinct so we did not pursue Blaze. We then drove two hours away to visit "Pete," 19.1 hands high 15-year-old Belgian. Again, he too was an ex-Amish horse. After checking him out, we decided he was just too big and a little too antsy for kids. Then we found a Percheron Gelding. This guy was also an ex-Amish work horse, somewhere between 15-18 years old. After Rebecca checked him out twice, we had the veterinarian check him as well. Once we got the go ahead, we arranged to pick him up on Sunday January 5th. The two-hour drive to Sugarcreek Ohio to pick him up was uneventful except for the two old farts (myself and Matthew of course) had to take multiple restroom stops LOL.

When we arrived, we checked him over. He was mellow and sauntered out of the barn with me for some fresh air. As I walked him around the parking lot to stretch his legs before the two-hour trip he was very alert and peppy. In my head, I had named him Leviathan, just because he was big, I'd call him Levi for short. The horse hesitated slightly before loading but willingly stepped on no problems. With a full bag of hay for him to munch on, we closed the doors and were on our way.

About 30 minutes into the ride we felt him shaking the trailer once and thought he was just shifting around, balancing himself. As he was so big, we could not close him between slats in our 3-horse slant load. He is an ex-Amish horse so this was probably only the third or fourth time he had ever been trailered in his life. The

second time we felt him shifting around we decided to find the nearest spot that we could pull over and check on him. At the next light there was an abandoned house with a medium-sized paved parking area so we pulled over at this intersection. When Matt peeked in the window of the back door, what he saw was both heart-wrenching AND alarming.

Levi lost his balance and had fallen down. He was also wedged at the very front corner of the trailer. He was not on his back but he was cast. We began to tug and rocking back and forth and push and pull him to give him a momentum to get up but he didn't have enough room to throw his head & body forward and get up. After ten minutes, several people stopped and offered to help. One gentleman by the name of Dan gave us a heavy-duty tow rope which we started to try to work around Levi's body to hoist him up. A young lady by the name of Brittany who runs a 38-horse barn had stopped and was giving us instruction. Without any success we then decided to call 911 and after being patched through to three different people they finally connected us to the Minerva Fire Department. Within 15 minutes, the fire department was there.



With the help of quite a few strong firemen we thought for sure we'd be able to get Levi up but he was exhausted, covered in sweat and daylight had turned into night. It turns out that one of the firefighters, Kevin Ray owned a small farm nearby. It was decided that we were going to transport Levi, while he stayed laying down, 5 minutes down the road to, Kevin's farm, so we would have more space to drag him out of the trailer onto the ground and give him more room to get up.

By the time we arrived at the farm, it was dark and started to get cold. It was only in the 30's that day. When we pulled the truck into the driveway, it was already dark and the temperature was dropping. We decided to unload him where there was a slight uphill slant in the driveway. Gravity would help them slide Levi out of the trailer onto the ground. We placed rubber mats on the ground on top of the gravel to avoid further injury. Using the tow strap and some lead lines, they pulled him out of the trailer onto the ground.

Woohoo! This was great, I thought, now that he had more room, he would be able to get up. But he had been down and scrunched up long enough and we thought maybe his legs fell asleep, became numb or he had pain in his legs? He was underweight and did have a runny nose so we thought, maybe he was just tired and weak from being sick and possibly dehydrated. So, we gave him hay & water and time to rest in between bouts where we rocked him and tried to get him up. He ate the hay and drank some water and we thought that was a good sign. Over the next two and a half hours we did this. We rotated this poor horse downhill thinking it may help him, we even attached the straps to a skid loader with forks but the forks would only go so high and he was a big horse. We were afraid he would smack his head when he tried to stand up. I had tried to call some local Veterinarians. Some didn't do horses and the others were closed. Meanwhile the fire department had contacted a local Vet Hospital, Red Star Veterinary Clinic. It would be 20 to 25 minutes before the vet arrived. Believe me when I tell you it felt like an ETERNITY.



We continued the tug, pull and rocking to help Levi stand up but 10 minutes before the vet got there, Levi decided he was done and no matter how hard the guys tried to prop him up on his belly instead of on his side. Matt stood behind Levi's head and used his leg to help hold up Levi's head. When I looked up into Matt's face, he slowly shook his head and the panic started to set in. Eventually, Levi just laid flat out on his side and began to close his eyes. I cannot describe how desperate the scene felt. The look in Levi's eyes, his mouth hanging slack, his continual groaning sounded the alarms in my head, "My God, he's going to die! No! No! No!" I became frantic and started crying and pacing. I had been praying since it all began but I felt like God wasn't listening to me. I took to social media for help. I made a post on a Tri-state horse group and begged for anyone in the area to help. Then the Veterinarian showed up.

My hope was renewed. Dr. Jamie Kauffman checked the horse's vitals and said that they were all good which was a good start. She gave him a shot of steroid and painkiller in hopes of giving him some relief if he was in pain. Again, we tried several more times but every time he'd get his front legs out and try to hoist himself up, he just couldn't do it. One of the firemen asked the vet, "Do you have any other ideas?" Dr. Kauffman blurted out, "Not unless someone has a cattle prod?" An elderly woman who was at the scene said she knew someone who could bring one in five minutes so we told her to call him to bring it. The vet started talking to me about "options." And I started to cry again. I didn't want Levi to suffer but I didn't want to quit yet. She said, "As long as the horse is willing to try, I'll do everything I can to help him." The man with the taser was there in minutes. I know it sounds mean but we were DESPERATE. They started pressing the taser into the horse's hind end, it didn't even phase him. He didn't even flinch. Again, they pressed the taser into his flesh every few inches. And still nothing. It was dark, and so cold, my fingers were numb, everyone was tired, frustrated and covered in mud. I became angry at God. I was standing there, my back to the scene, face up to the heavens, and in my tear-filled voice, I screamed "You took Pansie last year! You directed us to THIS horse (I was sure of it!) so why would you make us come all this way to get this horse if he's going to die????!! You CAN'T let this happen!" I had come to the end of myself. I had lost my hope. I was truly defeated and as I turned around, the taser came to Levi's shoulder and he SHOT UP onto his feet! It was surreal. I thought I was dreaming. No way this could be happening! I had watched this horse try to get up 20 times over the course of 3 hours, he was done, he had given up! How was this possible? And in a split second, I realized that God had just performed a miracle and I saw it. I became a lunatic. I know everyone at that scene thought I was just bonkers but I didn't care, I was dancing around yelling, "PRAISE THE LORD! PRAISE THE LORD! PRAISE THE LORD!" I fell to my knees and thanked him repeatedly. Matthew who had been holding the horse's lead line said, "Come and take him." I hugged this big beautiful beast as best as I could because I am short. I scratched him and I loved on him and lead him away from the scene to a small fenced in area by the barn. I took his halter off to relieve some of the soreness he had to have been feeling from Matt pulling on his head (to help him get up.) He slowly roamed around the penned in area while we got him some water.

I left Levi to talk to Dr. Kauffman, complete paperwork and pay her for her services. I thanked her repeatedly. Dr. Kauffman was doing her job but her compassion and bedside manner was very comforting through the whole ordeal. While I filled out the paperwork, I told her my idea of naming him Levi but now I needed something more appropriate like "Arise" or something like that. She smiled, looked at me and said, "Lazarus." That was it! Jesus raised his friend Lazarus from the dead. Why did I think anything was impossible for him?

We decided that we would stay in a nearby hotel to give Lazarus a good night's rest. We unhooked the trailer from the truck and left it on the farm. It was hard to drive away knowing we had to leave Lazarus there. I was worried but I knew that God didn't save him to let him die overnight.

You should have seen us when we walked into the hotel. We were covered in mud and probably didn't smell good either. That poor housekeeping staff! Needless to say, I had a hard time falling asleep. I was exhausted but the rush of the miracle that I had witnessed had jolted my brain and I could not stop running everything through my head. Oh but Lazarus wasn't home yet, God wasn't done and we needed another miracle.

The next morning, I took Lazarus out of the pen and let him graze in a grassy area while Matt hooked the truck back up to the trailer. We didn't rush anything. Horses that have suffered a trailer trauma will not willingly load without problems. They panic, reel backwards away from the trailer and at their weight, it's hard to stop them. We've experienced all these things with other rescues. Sometimes leaving us with pulled muscles and rope burn on our hands. Even if they do load on the trailer, they are nervous, dance around and it's really easy to get hurt. So, we prayed some more and did what we knew. I walked Lazarus around the truck and trailer several times. His nostrils flared but his eyes didn't get big and he didn't pull back. I let him have more grass. We did this quite a few times. I then walked him up to the back of the trailer with the doors propped open and stood there for a minute. He made several attempts to pull his head back but I discouraged it with some verbal noises and pulled his head back to look inside the trailer. I pulled hay out of the hay bag and fed him some. We repeated the.... him looking away, me correcting him, feed him some hay. After a while, I would tug the lead line a little and ask him to step forward and he did. Eventually, his legs were touching the trailer. History had told us that this was going to turn out bad. The dreaded moment had come to ask him to step up onto the trailer. Matt was at his hind end, with his arms spread wide on Lazarus, and he began to pray. When Matt was done I then tugged the lead line a little and Lazarus put both front hooves on the trailer and just stood there, waiting for instruction! Most horses would have run away or jumped on the trailer and nervously danced around. He just stood there! After I got over my shock, I tugged a little more and Matt pushed his butt a little and he just calmly stepped up and stood there quietly while I attached the lead line to the trailer. We quickly stepped down and closed the trailer doors and again I was repeating, "Praise the Lord! Thank you, Jesus!" and we jumped in the truck. I had experienced another miracle. An hour and a half later, we were home. We were afraid Lazarus would be lathered in sweat because of the trauma and fear but when he stepped off the trailer, he wasn't even damp. Wow, what an awesome horse! I just knew he was the one God intended us to have. There simply are no words to express my gratitude to God and everyone who helped.

As I recounted, when I had asked God why this was happening? I now realized that it happened so God could be glorified!

Please continue to pray for our ministry and as always, you are ALL welcomed to come out and visit our ranch anytime, just call or text us at 412-585-0383.

Come and visit our website at www.RYYR.org and don't forget to follow our Facebook page for all the updates!