

March 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.*

I WAS BORN HIGH ON HEROIN

-by Micheline Barkley

Said the young man sitting in front of me. He didn't care if we used his real name, but I think it best to just call him Ed because I think he looks like the young singer, Ed Sheeran. Ed's mother was a lifelong addict. The longest she had ever been clean was a month. She had been to rehab so many times he quit counting. He lived with his mom until he was about 3 months old, when a guy from his mom's drug addict life came into her apartment and hit her in the back of her head with a hammer. So, his grandmother stepped in to raise him.

Oh, how he loved her and she, him. His grandma was super short, funny, very forgiving, and was the kindest person he ever knew. Think of the kindest person you know and then times that by 100; that's how kind his grandmother was. Growing up with such a wonderful person in his life, you would never think that he would want to take his own life, not once but twice. He had contemplated a third try but that's where the ranch came into play. We'll get back to that later.

Ed admitted that he was a bully in elementary school until about 4th grade when someone called him fat. It was then that he understood what he was doing to others. There was a girl that Ed was very cruel to, her name was Holly. She was bullied often by many kids. One day, in the hallway at school, she was being accosted by Ed's good friend. As she's being tormented by Ed's friend, she eyes Ed coming down the hall towards her and thought that Ed was going to compound the problem by torturing her as well. She thought he was going to shove her into a locker which is something he did frequently. Ironically, Ed walked up to his friend and shoved him away and essentially told him to take a hike. This surprised Holly greatly. They sat down and started to talk. She asked him why he did that, and so he explained. Shortly after that, Ed moved in with his dad.

Ed was raised by his grandmother until he was about 12 or 13. This is when he started becoming more than his grandma could handle. Until then, he was a good boy, very respectful. Ed remembers one time when he was so mad at his grandma because she had punished him by taking away his PlayStation. He said, "I hate you." As soon as the words came out of his mouth, he instantly regretted saying it. It was shortly after that when he moved in with his father, new town, new school, and a totally different life. Where Ed had moved, the kids were not kind and respectful. He was called fat, stupid, and every other name in the book. And it wasn't just the kids, it was the teachers too. One night he was "jumped" by five boys from his new school. All because he made the mistake of being friends with a girl. They stomped on him and beat him mercilessly. They kicked him in the throat as he lay bleeding on the school football field. If it were not for a homeless man

that happened to be there, Ed would have died that night. His tongue was swollen and lying back in his throat so he could no longer breathe. The homeless man chased the thugs away. He was a nurse in his past life and happened to have a clean latex glove which he quickly put on and reached into Ed's mouth and pulled out his tongue so he could breathe again. What are the odds that this homeless man would be there? It wasn't a regular hang out for homeless people. I believe God sent this man to save Ed.

Hebrews 13:2 *“Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.”*

Grandma had been sick and was admitted into the hospital on December 23rd because she had pneumonia. Then, while she was at the hospital, tests revealed that she had a tumor on her lung, but they would deal with one illness at a time and the pneumonia was the more critical issue. On Christmas Day, the doctors raved about how much she had improved. Ed, his dad, and grandpa had been at the hospital all day, from 6am, with no lunch or rest, so with this good news, they opted to go home to sleep and eat. He told Grandma, “I love you.” She squeezed his hand in response because she was intubated, she could not speak. The moment they set foot in the house; the phone rang. His grandma had died. It was the only time Ed ever saw his grandfather cry. Ed had a Christmas tradition with his grandma. He hated coffee, but on Christmas Day, every year, he had one cup of black coffee with her. When he heard the news, he didn't know what to do, so he fell back into their tradition for comfort, and he made a cup of black coffee. He wouldn't open any of her presents. He was numb. It didn't seem real. After he moved from his grandma's, there was a gradual decline of his mental state, but her death escalated the decline. “She was the only person who truly loved me.” Ed told me, and the look in his eyes told me just how much.

Ed's dad wasn't a bad man, but he admitted that he was not a good parent. He didn't know how to be a dad. He always treated Ed like he was a friend. When there were altercations between Ed and his dad's girlfriend, his dad did not defend him. His dad always chose the girlfriend over his son. This broke Ed's heart. Ed's dad never knew what to do, but he would stand on the outside of Ed's bedroom door and whisper, “I love you son.”

Ed had dated a girl for two years, but it ended with the girl telling him he was worthless, stupid, ugly, and fat. With the bullying going on at school; his mom being in and out of his life, then the girlfriend heartbreak; and his grandma being gone; he fell into such a deep sorrow that he felt he could not pull himself out of the abyss. Every day was so hard. He didn't want to get up. He didn't have the physical strength. He didn't want to live anymore. He had nothing to live for.

After Grandma's death, he and his dad moved back to his old school district. One day, while he was walking to school, he decided he would end it all. He jumped in front of a car going 40 mph. The ambulance came; the paramedic had to shock his heart 3 times to bring him back. When he woke up, he had no broken bones and no internal injuries. He couldn't believe it. He was still alive. After that, Ed tried different things to make himself feel something other than the sorrow. He was planning another suicide attempt. After making bad choices, Ed wound up on probation for possession of drug paraphernalia, and he was assigned to a probation officer. This P.O. made it a part of Ed's program plan to come to Ready Yourselves Youth Ranch. He came willingly, but thought that it was going to be a hard labor type boot camp. He had visions of a bunch of rough old guys in jeans with cowboy hats & boots chewing snuff. He imagined a 70-year-old ranch hand in suspenders, cooking canned beans in a cast iron skillet over an open fire!

When he pulled up the first time, he was confused. What he saw was a bunch of women, one young and quite a few older. Weird. Instead of yelling at him and telling him where he went wrong, we showed him kindness and acceptance. We didn't judge him because of his history, and we didn't project to him what we thought he should be in the future. We just loved him right where he was. Ed says “Getting on the van every Tuesday was the best. All the pain, anxiety, ADHD, and emptiness stayed at home. Smiling is something I did NOT do during those dark days, but I would get to the ranch, and I couldn't stop smiling. I only missed one day, and when I came back the next week, all the mentors were so concerned that I was absent. Also, one day, I was feeling down, and everyone could tell. Three of the mentors individually pulled me aside at different times, all that same day and made sure I was ok. I felt so loved. It made me want to keep going. If it weren't for the ranch, I would have tried to kill myself again that summer.”

Ed wanted to work with another horse, but we thought Oreo would be a better fit. While he was brushing Oreo, I could see the bonding begin. I asked Ed, "So, is this the one?" and he replied with a definite, "Yes!" From that day on, the mutual love and respect between Ed & Oreo grew. Because Oreo was an ex-barrel racing horse, he remembered his job very well. After that last barrel, run home as fast as you can and he tried to do that every time. But Oreo had COPD so running hard would aggravate the COPD. Ed knew that and had to learn how to rein Oreo back (but not hurt him) when Oreo just wanted to run full out. This took discipline but Ed did it. At first, there were a few times when Oreo took off, surprising Ed and giving him a feeling of fear AND elation! The strange combination of feelings was so invigorating for Ed. It was the boost he needed. Balance is crucial to stay on a horse and Ed learned it well. He eventually was able to ride Oreo bareback and not fall off! Without a saddle to hang onto, that is quite the accomplishment.

After summer, Ed started dating Holly. This was the same girl that he had bullied but rescued years before. They have been together ever since. Ed's perspective is more positive now-a-days. You could say he is more hopeful and he looks forward to visiting the ranch regularly to see his "adopted Mom" (me). He never, ever, fails to give me a good and proper bear hug, which melts my heart.

Romans 5:2-4 ".... rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope



I DON'T THINK I CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Charmaine Smith, at 73, is our oldest volunteer. I don't think she minds me saying so because she feels blessed that God has given her the health to serve Him. At 71, she rode her first horse at RYYR. She rode our "grumpy old man", Calvin. And he's a big horse too!

Charmaine's daughter, Shannon, is my best friend of 26 years. I suckered Shannon into coming to help with the horses one winter when I had a mass exodus of volunteers. That was four years ago. I knew I could keep her there longer if she had her own horse. With the help of Shannon's husband, we arranged for to get the horse she loved the most. Z is a sassy, beautiful ex-ranch horse and still lives at the ranch as Shannon's baby. Shannon's still volunteering at the ranch and has taken on a lot of responsibilities to help keep our horses healthy.

For the last 18 years of her working life, Charmaine was a housekeeper. She was married to her husband, Bill for 38.5 years and had two children, Shannon & Heath. Charmaine loved Bill very much. We know this because she prayed for him every day after she became saved in the mid-1990s. Her first marriage had failed and left her a single Mom with a little girl. Bill was her best friend's brother. Bill loved her AND her daughter Shannon. Bill legally adopted Shannon and he was a good dad and a loving husband. In the early 1990s, Charmaine started to attend Al-Anon to get support. In the Al-Anon meetings there was discussion about the "God of your understanding." Charmaine thought, "I should get to know this God." She started watching Sunday morning preachers on TV and one preacher even said, you should find a good church to attend. Interestingly enough, she drove by Oak Hill Alliance Church twice a day, every day that she worked. So, she decided she would start attending there, and she's been there ever since.

Charmaine went to church as a child but didn't grow deep, spiritually. Well, she made up for lost time at Oak Hill Alliance Church. Her relationship with Jesus grew exponentially. This was a good thing as she would need God's super natural strength to withstand the stuff that life would soon throw at her.

Bill was diagnosed with bladder cancer in 2009. This made him re-assess his life and his views of God. It was so incredibly heartwarming for Charmaine to read the Bible with Bill every night, and it was she who led Bill to the Lord. God had answered her fervent prayers and the answer was yes. Bill grew in his relationship

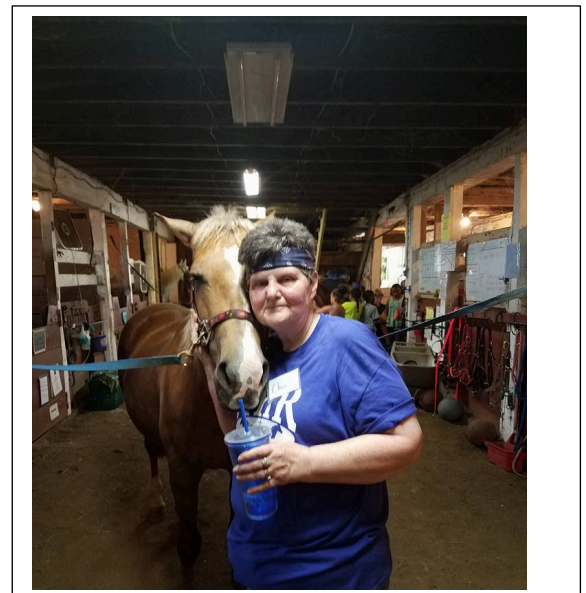
with Jesus. Towards the end of his battle with cancer, Charmaine walked into his room and heard him reciting the 23rd Psalm. She had no idea that he knew it. Every night, he said he would “wait for the Jesus bus” and every morning, he’d say, “The Jesus bus didn’t come.” That is, until one day in July of 2012, when the Jesus bus took Bill home. Charmaine’s relationship with the Lord gave her strength to get through the last days of caring for her sick husband. However, she didn’t know how much more strength she would need after Bill died. “It was scary. After 38 years, he was just gone.” But God provided in the way of her church family. They brought her food, helped her financially, they mowed her grass and to this day they still help her.

Charmaine’s son Heath had a lot of demons, but Charmaine prayed for him without ceasing, and in 2007 he accepted Jesus Christ as his savior along with his daughter. His problems weren’t over, he continued to struggle, but he knew he had the power of Christ, living IN him.

One evening in May of 2016, Charmaine was at home watching T.V. Around 7:30pm there was a knock on the door. When she opened the door, there was a police officer standing there. She was confused as to why he would be there. “Are you Charmaine Smith and is Heath Smith your son?” To which she replied, “Yes.” With a sober look, the officer said, “He’s died in a motorcycle accident.” Charmaine felt like the floor just fell out from under her. She felt like she was in a nightmare and that she would wake up soon. None of it felt real. Charmaine first called her daughter, Shannon, and then her pastor. She knew she was going to need all the support she could get. She said to the pastor, “The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” She was hurting, but she also knew that God was in control and that she could find peace in accepting that THIS was God’s will. He would give her the grace for each day.

In 2017, I had mentioned to Shannon that we needed mentors and Shannon said something to Charmaine. Charmaine figured it would be like helping with a VBS. Mentoring these kids was so much more involved than she could have ever imagined. She really didn’t think she could make a difference but her hope was to try to save just one child, maybe a boy, from what her son, Heath, went through, then she would feel like she had accomplished something. She got to see how the kids from the time they started at the ranch, and how different they were at the end. She heard their stories, developed trust in a relationship with each child, and forged a bond. That’s when she knew she was having a profound effect on quite a few of the kids.

The summer of 2019, during a day camp, a horse stepped on the corner of Charmaine’s shoe. She couldn’t move and was having trouble using her other foot to re-gain her balance. Down she went. It was her “Grandhorse”, Z, that had stepped on her foot! As God would have it, there was a volunteer in attendance from out of town, who happened to be a retired nurse! God is so good. Unfortunately, Charmaine did fracture her back, but we joke about how the surgeon “glued” her back together with cement glue! For the rest of the summer, Charmaine was “chomping at the bit” to get back to the ranch. She missed the kids, but God wanted her to rest. Charmaine is hoping to come back and mentor this summer, however, she is caring for her elderly mother who had fallen and broken her hip. Would you pray for her mom’s (Hazel) recovery so that Charmaine can mentor this summer? Thank you all so much.



HELP! WE NEED PORT-A-POTTIES



In the summer months, we have such an influx of kids at the ranch and we only have 1 bathroom. Some days we have as many as 80 children visiting the ranch at one time. Not to mention the adults supervising them. The past two years, we have rented these port-a-potties as needed, however, the cost was enough for us to own one! If you have wanted to contribute to the ranch in a tangible way, this is it! How proud would you be?! Just kidding but we do seriously need two of these. We have priced these with a “flush” option and a sink. With shipping, the cost for each is \$1,400.



WANT TO VOLUNTEER BUT CAN'T DO PHYSICAL LABOR?

There are so many ways to help! Here are some suggestions

- you can request & gather donations – we make our needs know online and in our newsletters
- pick up a hoagie or t-shirt order, be a driver to pick up and drop off kids in our van
- bake or cook for fundraisers and for the kids who come in the summer
- man an information or ticket booth at one of our fundraisers
- Maybe you know some organizations that are looking for a non-profit to donate to? Talk to them and send us the information and we'll follow up.
- You could be in charge and run your own small fundraiser for us. Here are some ideas: carwash/ coin collection drive / have a group yard sale / collect and recycle aluminum or metal scrap

GRANT WRITING HELP

Wow is all I can say! We received such wonderful responses to my request for grant writing help. Thank you to everyone who responded!

CALLING ALL CRAFT VENDORS!

We are in need of craft vendors for our Horseapalooza event May 16th. If you know anyone interested, they can email Jennifer.Wilds@ryyr.or or call/text her at 724-31-4024

ONLINE STORE

We now have an online store hosted by Venetie's Sporting Goods in Ellwood City. If you would like to support us, just click on the link and place an order! The online store offers some really cool stuff we've not had before. Please check it out! Orders are taken all month and closed at the end of each month with items being complete about two weeks afterwards.

ryyr2020apparel.itemorder.com



SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Anne Lehman of Lehman Design for donating her talent to create our fundraising materials! Thanks Anne!

In our last newsletter we did not have the correct dates. Please see the last page of this newsletter for details but here is a little more explanation on the ticket purchase for Dinner on the Farm:

Friday, May the 15th – DINNER ON THE FARM 6:30-9:30pm

Advanced ticket purchase is required for this event. Seating is limited to 150 tickets \$50 per person/\$90 per couple. The event is geared more towards adults and older children and includes a delicious meal, facility tour (if desired) and a hoe down afterwards. You can mail a check and we will mail you confirmation or you can visit our website www.ryyr.org click on Join the cause then click on the "donate" button input the amount (\$50 per person/\$90 per couple) & click "next" On the next window, under "Notes" type in the number of people & Dinner on the Farm

CORPORATE SPONSORS PLEASE?!

Corporate sponsors are needed in order to keep things cheap or free for the kids coming to the Horseapalooza event. You know anyone who owns a business? Maybe you can hit up your boss! We have \$500 and \$1,000 sponsorship with some advertising benefits. If not, how about donating a gift basket? We're not proud, we'll take anything they're willing to donate! For Chinese Auction Baskets or questions on Corporate Sponsors, please contact Jennifer.Wilds@ryyr.org or call/text her at 724-312-4024

**WE WILL NEED VOLUNTEERS TO MAN THE HORSEAPALOOSA EVENT.
PLEASE CONTACT LESLIE DUPONT AT Leslie.Dupont@ryyr.org or
you can call/text her at 412-292-1274**

We also need the following services so if you know anyone who can offer services free or cheap:

- A DJ for Friday May 15th, 6:30-9:30 PM Dinner on the Farm (line dancing)
- Entertainment – maybe a balloon guy or some other form of kids entertainment for Saturday May 16th
- Bonfire – need someone to take charge of the bonfire

HOAGIES ANYONE?

Yes, it's that time again! This month, we will be selling J&J Catering hoagies. If you've ordered these before, you will definitely remember these 18-inch fresh bread hoagies loaded with meat & cheeses. Yum! All our volunteers will have information and prices. Or if you want to place an order solo, just email Veronica.Belinger@ryyr.org and we'll place the order. You can pay when you pick them up at the ranch! Here is what we will have to offer:

- \$7.50 **Traditional Italian***- Hard salami, bologna, chopped ham, yellow & white American cheese.
- \$8.00 **Turkey & Cheese***-Oven roasted turkey breast, topped w/ yellow & white American cheese.
- \$8.00 **Beef & Cheddar***-Roast beef topped w/ sharp cheddar cheese.
- \$8.00 **Italian Pizza**- Italian salami & pepperoni topped w/shredded mozzarella & provolone. Topped off with our homemade Italian pizza sauce packet.
- \$8.00 **Baked Ham***-Virginia Baked ham, Turkey Breast, Roast Beef and Swiss cheese.
- \$9.00 **Deluxe Italian***-Genoa Salami, Ham Capicola, Baked Ham, pepperoni & provolone cheese.
- \$9.00 **Cold Cut Combo***- Virginia baked ham, Turkey Breast, Roast Beef and swiss cheese.
- \$7.00 **Peperoni Rolls** (2 – 6in rolls)- sliced peperoni, mozzarella and provolone cheese baked into bread dough.

*These hoagies come with a separate bag of lettuce, tomato & onion.

ORDER DEADLINE - March 13th 5pm

HOAGIES WILL BE READY FOR PICK UP - AFTER 12NOON ON March 23rd



Save the Date

-ANNUAL GOLF OUTING-
June 20th at Ponderosa Golf Course



Follow us!

Please continue to pray for our ministry; and as always, Everyone is welcomed to come out and visit our ranch just call or text us at 412-585-0383 for a Barn Tour appointment.

Come and visit our website at www.RYYR.org, share our video <https://vimeo.com/392571914/5c6f4c7d20> and don't forget to follow our Facebook page for all our event updates!



ryyr.org

HORSE APALOOSA

to benefit Ready Yourselfs Youth Ranch

FESTIVAL AT THE FARM
• 162 Meehan Lane, New Brighton, PA •

MAY 15, 2020

6:30 PM - 9:30 PM

★ ADULT BBQ ★

**LIVE MUSIC ★ SILENT AUCTION
RANCH TOUR**

**TICKETS: \$50 individual • \$90 couple
Purchase online at: ryyr.org**

Or mail check to: RYYR, 115 Meehan Lane, New Brighton, PA 15066

Questions? Contact Jennifer at 724-312-4024
or Jennifer.Wilds@ryyr.org



MAY 16, 2020

NOON - 10:00 PM

★ FAMILY DAY ★

**VENDORS ★ BBQ FOOD & DRINKS
BARN TOURS ★ HAY RIDES
KIDS ACTIVITIES ★ RAFFLE
AUCTION ITEMS**

