

April 2023



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 Miracle Horse (Oakley's Story Continued)

by Micheline Barkley

In February, I told you about Oakley and what he had been through with stranglers. Praise God for his goodness. After Oakley had recovered, his owner had a life change that was not conducive with the demands of having a horse, so she had to find Oakley a good home. Enter Calen Smith.

At a time when we were praying for more male mentors, Calen Smith showed up. He was 23 and had just finished seminary school in California. Calen came home to PA for the summer to visit with the intention of going back to California into full-time ministry.

While at seminary school, Calen was required to serve a number of hours in ministry outside of the school. The first year, Calen did his service on University trips. You would go to various college campuses and evangelize. Calen discovered this wasn't where his heart was.

Right before his second year of college Calen's sister asked him to go to her barn with her and help with the horses. He really didn't want to but he went anyway. While he was at the barn, he was standing in the pasture when a horse approached him. When the horse engaged with Calen, he rewarded him with some scratching of his head. Calen was drawn in by this interaction. It was as if the horse was saying, "I'm a huge thousand pound beast and could be anywhere, but I chose to be with you." This ignited his heart. The feeling was reminiscent of the way he used to feel when he was 8, taking riding lessons and had horse posters on his bedroom wall. Come to find out later this horse was not a people person but he wanted to know Calen.

Calen completed his 2nd year. But during his third year, he had to find another ministry to serve. There were 100 ministries to choose from, everything from a "bar" ministry to "homeless" ministries. Nothing seemed to make him excited to serve. Calen loved God and knew that God gave him a heart to serve but there was something missing. That's when Calen found Exodus Farms in Redding, California. They were a ranch ministry like RYYR. Exodus Farms required horse experienced people, Calen had none. There were 4,000 students at his school with 100 ministries to apply to. Needless to say, Exodus Farms got a lot of applicants, but as God would have it, Calen was accepted.

There was a lot Calen had to overcome. Because school didn't start until August, he had missed the training period at Exodus Farms. So, he got the "crash course" version. Calen found it difficult building relationships with the kids because you got a different kid every session. He knew virtually nothing about horses and with the missed training and just some basics, he had to shoot from the hip. It was nerve racking at first but something started to click and the spark became a passion. Working with kids using horses. But just when things were starting to fall into place. After completing his third year, he came home for the summer and a friend told him about RYYR but he was busy working each summer for tuition so he simply forgot to check into it. During his final year, COVID hit and Exodus Farms was closed so he could not continue his serve there.

Calen graduated and came home for the summer to "visit" with the intention of going back to California with hopes of finding a full-time youth ministry in which he could serve. He had a taste of the passion from serving God in a spectacular way at Exodus Farms, he said to himself he wasn't staying home in PA without a ranch, God brought him to RYYR. While he was home, RYYR "popped" into his head (I love how God works.) Calen called and did a barn tour with me. After that, he was hooked. I threw him into group mentoring and much like pouring fuel on a fire, you know what happened. Everything clicked for Calen. He really began to settle into his role as a mentor. Whether in group or one-on-one sessions, the more he was there at the ranch the more his heart knew before his mind was ready. "I loved it because I was needed, appreciated and trusted." That was at first, but then he saw how valuable he was to the young men and boys who needed a strong, God fearing, God loving male role model. He loved serving in church youth groups but nothing is more fulfilling than working with kids at the ranch.

Calen met Jesus when he was young. He did all the right things, he participated in a youth group, he went to church. As he got older, he started to go down another path, one that would take his priorities away from the God he loved. After Calen graduated from High School, he went on a retreat and his heart was convicted and he redirected his life for Jesus. He felt the call to serve. His passion comes from Jesus. "I can't change the kid. But I'm amazed at how God uses the horses to change the kid. This ministry is so impactful." During that summer, Calen experienced a lot of stress because of major life changes that were beyond his control. One afternoon, he came to the ranch and rode Oakley. While he was on Oakley's back, Jesus spoke to him in those moments and it gave Calen the peace he needed to stay and we are so blessed because of it.

Calen has to work outside of the ranch to support himself but his dedication to the ranch is unwavering. He tells a story of a boy he has mentored for some time. Henry had such intense fear when he first came, riding a horse seemed virtually impossible. Henry had been abused and raised by his drug addicted mother. He eventually came to live with his grandmother who enrolled him in our mentoring program. He had serious fears. Calen had to figure out, "God, what does this boy need?" God showed Calen that in order to overcome his fears, Henry had to believe in himself. It took many weekly sessions and on the last one, it took a full 30 minutes before Henry would finally get on the horse and just sit there. But he did it! Calen had to be patient so that Henry could take little steps before he would believe in himself for the big stuff. Teaching a boy to overcome fear of a horse seems like such a little, insignificant thing but when applied to all the future fears in

this boy's life, he can look back to see what he was able to do and he can do it again. Calen's impact will be life long for this child, and that's what drives him to keep mentoring kids.

Back to Oakley. Oakley's owner, Emily, just wanted Oakley to have a good home and be loved. Calen had started at the ranch the summer before Oakley got sick. He had spent a lot of time working with and caring for Oakley; they had already formed a bond. Naturally, Oakley belonged with Calen. Emily did not sell Oakley, she gave him to Calen. Calen found out the hard way, that the most expensive horse is a free one. Shortly after receiving him, Oakley developed ulcers in his gut from all the powerful antibiotics that he had to take for the strangles. In addition, he had damaged a suspensory tendon in his back leg. This required special vet care, medicine, special shoeing, special diet and yes, more stall rest. After many months, recently, Oakley is back on turn out, in the field with the other horses. You can tell he's happy to be back out. What he's not happy about is the grazing muzzle he has to wear. We gave him the diet that the veterinarian had prescribed, she was concerned that he might lose weight, however, the opposite happened. At his final check up, he was 200 lbs overweight! So for now, the terrible grazing muzzle stays on. Too bad it's not that easy for humans haha!

We all have our own desires and the world easily influences that but when we earnestly seek wisdom from the Lord, he reveals to us our purpose and calling. True contentment and joy comes from hearing and following that calling. We are so grateful to God for how he saved Oakley and for how he guided Calen to the ranch. Without these amazing horses and amazing volunteers, there is no way we can be the hands and feet of Jesus.

Ever seen an itchy Shedasaurus?



This is the time of year when our horses shed their winter coats. You can imagine how itchy that must be! Fortunately, we have wonderful volunteers like Anna Majors that gladly brush and scratch all their itches. Look at this face, just contorted with satisfaction. Can you just hear Cassidy if she was talking, "Oh, yes....right there! Oooooo maybe over a little, ok now down a little more.....Aaaaahhhhhh!"



HORSE SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

We've had multiple inquiries about sponsoring some of our horses and have created a variety of sponsorship opportunities. There are opportunities for small, affordable monthly sponsorships, up to a full year of sponsorship. Would you prayerfully consider choosing a horse to sponsor?

Please email micheline.barkley@ryyr.org for additional information. Thank you!



A New Creation

by Rebecca Kennedy

Last year we made an intentional shift with our programs to heighten the focus on relationships above our tendency to fall back on basic horsemanship and riding training. Horses to humans, person to person, and most importantly each person to God! A big part of our relationship with God is knowing who HE says we are, no matter what the world around may do to distract or disappoint. This story is just one of many interactions that happened as we refocused our view.

One warm day last summer, I walked into the barn to see a young girl (I'll call her Hannah), who *loves* Juliet, intently working on one side of her horse while a few mentors painted on the other. They were painting words: the mentors describing how they saw Hannah - with no peeking until the painting was done!

Faithful, confident, sweet, smart, fun and many more - Juliet was *covered* in positive, life-giving words for Hannah to identify in herself and see her value in the eyes of her mentors and God! Once the painting was complete, this young girl was invited to come and read, and experience the love of her mentors and God, and His beautiful work in her life.

Here's a couple mentors' reflections on the moment:

"I found it fascinating that for a few of the words we wrote, it seemed to take her a while to accept the compliment of herself (she showed this by being a little deflective, as if she may not have believed it). But with the more time spent at the horse and the mentors explaining why we saw those positive attributes in her, she appeared to be able to accept them. The activity is designed to enhance self-worth, and I believe it did just that!"

"This was such a special moment. I loved getting to point out the positives that we saw within her and the chance we had to encourage her. Not only did it help her think about the positives she saw in herself, but also gave us the opportunity to talk about how we saw her."

The amazing part is Hannah's favorite horse, Juliet, has her own testimony of God's transformative work. Juliet came to RYYR from another rescue organization in January 2016. She was a show horse experienced in Western and English classes winning many ribbons and contests. But she and Romeo, who since has been adopted out to a loving forever home, had to be removed from their owner's custody when they were severely neglected. They were eating the bark of the trees in the lot they were stuck in. When they first arrived at RYYR, their names were Lollipop and Cody. They were very attached to each other, perpetually calling out to one another from their stalls and pacing in the stalls as well, thus we renamed them Romeo and Juliet. Over time, both experienced consistent love, care, and companionship through the volunteers, horses, and kids, and found security and confidence to move beyond the identity of their bond with each other and take on new roles as program horses, passing on the love they'd received to kids in need of encouragement.

Meeting Juliet now, you would never guess the hardship she experienced - she looks entirely different than when she was first rescued! Her gorgeous dappled palomino coat, patience with children, and willingness to follow anyone who shows her gentleness are remarkable. She was given a new name, and a new life by God's grace. We are offered the same, to be adopted into God's family and made a new creation by His power!

And guess what Hannah was painting on the other side of Juliet? She insisted that, while the mentors painted words describing her, she was going to do the same for them! Passing on the grace and goodness she received - just as Juliet has done, and following God's words to us:

"So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." 1 Corinthians 5:16-18 NIV

Juliet in 2015



Juliet in January 2023



What kids have to say about the ranch:

A teen boy who came to the ranch last summer was excited to know he could come back every month after that. When we picked him up, he jumped in the van so excited and said, “Man, waiting for this once a month Saturday is like waiting for Christmas!”

County Program Saturdays:

Our summer program with county youth services runs for 10 weeks June-August, and while this time has been impactful for many youth, we quickly realized some of them were seeking more - to build long term connection with their horse, continue conversations with mentors, and learn and grow in responsibilities at the ranch! We now make a point of offering transportation and lunch to this group one Saturday a month year-round for any interested in returning. Some have continued to show up since as far back as 2018! A handful of volunteers faithfully facilitate the afternoon, and various church groups and individuals provide lunch.



The conversations and practice of living as a community, working through disagreements, helping and flexibility based on current needs, listening to griefs and joys, and exploring how God is present through all these things have been amazing. The continuing growth in these young people’s lives, their curiosity about horses and faith, and desire to connect and serve are an encouragement each month!

YOU can help!! Contact Becca @412-585-0383

Provide **LUNCH** for 20 people — Become a **DRIVER** — **VOLUNTEER** for 3 hours on a Saturday

Calling on Prayer Warriors!

We have recently installed a Prayer Box at the ranch for people to ask for prayer for any requests they may have, anonymously if they choose or with names. If you are a faithful pray-er and are willing to add these to your personal or a bible study/prayer group list to bring before God, please let us know via office@ryyr.org! We will email monthly updates for people committed to receiving and praying for the ranch, volunteers, and children/families.

What I Learned from You.....continued

by Micheline Barkley

In the last newsletter (February), I shared comments from a young man that I had mentored seven years ago. If you missed it, you can read it at this link: <https://www.ryyr.org/news>

We've stayed connected and he's shared his heartache. His life has been especially rough the past months. After a jail term and attempted suicides, he is working hard to get his life back together. We are doing what we can to help him. He is not looking for pity, he knows the mistakes he's made and has taken responsibility for them. He's struggling and just trying to do the right thing, every day. It's hard, especially when you're sober. He says it's worse than ever. He is "stuck" on how wrong his life has gone. He's taking assessment of the wreckage of his past life and it's painful when you see the damage you've done.

He read my book and said, "You have an amazing story to tell in your life but the only story I got to tell is about how I'm looked at as a bad person, a monster." Even though he has changed, people still see him as the "old him." He's not one to "believe much in God" but I keep sharing and encouraging him. I wish I could make him understand the power that takes hold of you when you give your life to Christ. When I learned who he was, it healed me, humbled me and changed the way I thought and in turn changed all my actions, creating the new me. Knowing him made me love him so much that out of that love, I wish to serve him and somehow pay him back. He does not require any payback but similar to when a child loves their parents, they will only want do what will be pleasing and honoring to them. I told him I was in his shoes when I was 22. Spent my early life trying to fill the void but nothing I did, nor the drugs or alcohol could fill it. Thirty plus years later, I can say it was a long, hard road from self destruction to a purposeful, joyful life. Not a perfect one, just a much better one. It didn't happen overnight and I didn't do it alone. God never gave up on me, he just kept calling me. I told this young man, "You say I have an amazing story to tell but if I had taken my life when I was younger, I would not have been around to experience it (my life) and now tell my story. Though you feel very old and tired, you are young and you have a story. The question is, will it be an inspiring story of redemption or will it be a sad one of hopelessness and despair? The choice is up to you. And I see you are well on your way to making it a better story."

God can redeem any life, no matter how far gone it may seem. God can change us, I'm living proof, but we have to be willing participants and choose a relationship with Him. Would you all please pray for him? I did not give you his name, but God knows who he is.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17 KJV

SPECIAL DONATION REQUEST:



We love to give the kids small value gift cards to reward them when we catch them doing good. When they've done something without being asked or when they've been more thorough or thoughtful and especially kind, we give them a thanks and a gift card to show them we noticed. Some of these kids don't get encouragement so this is just a small way that we can do that. **Small value of \$5 or \$10 to places like Subway, Chick-fil-a, McDonald's, Dairy Queen, etc.** If it makes life easier, you can send us a donation and we can go get them. Thank you!

Our 1st SPORTSMAN'S BASH was a SUCCESS!

Thanks to our generous sponsors and attendees!



THANK YOU SPONSORS!

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SAVE THE DATE!

11th Annual Golf Outing

June 17, 2023

At Fox Run Golf Course

Register now at RYYR.org!!

3rd Annual Purse Bingo

July 15, 2023

Tickets will be available mid May



FEELING GENEROUS?

Check out our Amazon wish list: [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

If you live locally, some items on our Amazon wish list are cheaper when bought locally and brought to us (i.e. bleach, buckets w/ screw on lids, etc.)

OR donate through Paypal [@ryyr2010](https://www.paypal.com)

Prayer & Praise Requests:

- For RYYR leadership as we bring in new partners and people to fill much-needed support roles - for the process of creating structure that enables unity of mission and vision
- For new and returning mentors as we seek the Spirit's guidance during training in preparation for summer
- For the hearts of the children who have applied for the mentor programs and day camps this summer to be softened and ready to hear what God speaks through us
- Praise for healing so far, and prayer for the continued healing and wisdom for Oakley, Luna, Liberty, and Don Peffer

THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR SUPPORT AND PRAYERS!

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!