

February 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.*

My Angel in Horse Hair -by Micheline Barkley

Last month, you read about the re-loading of Lazarus after his trailer trauma. If you will recall, I said that history told us most horses that have experienced a trailer trauma, will rear and reel backwards really fast, away from the trailer. One of those horses in “our” history of loading was a horse named Willow. Her guardian felt that she was going to waste as no one was riding her or doing much of anything so she donated Willow to the ranch. At the time, Willow was a beautiful 8-year-old, Cremello colored quarter horse with light greenish eyes. She was very affectionate and loved attention. She wasn’t tall, about 15 hands, chubby but she was built like a tank. She was strong and untrained/undisciplined so Willow wasn’t doing anything she didn’t want to. When we went to pick her up, it was a frigid day in February. After two hours of trying to load her and her giving me rope burn, we had a local veterinarian come out to sedate her so we could load her. We now know that was not the best way to load her but it got the job done. We couldn’t blame Willow; she came by her fear honestly. Her previous owner simply gave her to a young man. When the young man came to load her in a trailer, he brought a couple of friends and out of frustration, finally put a rope around her neck, backed the trailer up to the barn door and tried to “winch” her on. The rope around her neck choked her and as any horse would have done, she fought to get free and she did. That’s when her guardian intervened and stopped the madness.

Judy and her daughter Abby (who was 12 at the time) had become volunteers around the same time Willow came to the ranch. Judy was scared of horses and when I say that, I mean PETRIFIED. We train all our volunteers how to handle horses but it took Judy quite a while to overcome her fear. Our horses know where their stalls are so we simply open the door and let them in one by one. We hold their stall door open; they walk right in and we latch the door shut. I’ll never forget one time, when Judy was new, we let a horse in and as it was walking down the aisle, Judy ran and hid behind me, grabbed my shirt in her fists and maneuvered me around as if I was a shield protecting her from the

horse. Bless Judy's heart, she volunteered at the ranch because Abby loved horses. Isn't it amazing, the lengths we go to for our children?

Abby fell in love with Willow from day one. Even though she was not their horse at the time, they bought her a new halter and her own set of brushes. They loved on her and Abby spent a lot of time helping to train Willow. This is when Willow was dubbed "The Princess." Abby even volunteered to ride Willow when the time came. And true to her word, Abby did ride Willow but being undisciplined, she bucked Abby off. No one wanted to train her because of this. But this didn't stop Abby. After quite a few months of working with Willow, we decided that she would not be a good fit for the ranch. She would be better in a home with one owner. We already knew who that owner would be. Judy and Abby loved on her with so much time and effort that I knew they would take great care of Willow.

After adopting Willow, Abby faithfully worked with her and actively sought help to train her. Soon Abby was riding Willow in barrel racing shows and taking her on trail rides. Judy and Abby both invested so much time and effort into figuring out all of Willow's problems, all the while loving her unconditionally and training her consistently. Low and behold, most of her physical issues stemmed from Lyme's Disease. With the help of Veterinarian Dr. Rob Kissic of Silver Springs Equine, Willow is in the best health of her life.

Willow like every other horse, has her own personality with likes and dislikes. At one time, she was utterly terrified of a cow. This cow lived where Willow was being stabled. The cow was gentle and easy going but Willow did everything in her power to avoid this harmless cow. Abby had to find different ways to get to the trails, so as to avoid the cow for fear that Willow would bolt at the sight. Willow has also been known to jump a fence or two just because she wanted to be with another horse friend. She's also had days when she kicks up her heels so to speak and jumped over a barrel when she should have just run around it. Another day, while Abby was riding her, Willow jumped over a gate, just because it was in her way. Thank goodness Abby managed to stay on.

Willow's role as a riding horse comes last on her list of jobs. First and foremost, she is a counselor and best friend to Abby. Just three months before Abby & Judy adopted Willow, Abby's father, Dave had a stroke that changed her life forever. The first 12 months were surreal. Judy felt like they were living in a perpetual nightmare that she couldn't wake up from. Dave's brain was severely affected so he wasn't the same person anymore. He had memory loss, partial paralysis, partial loss of vision, bouts of random anger and crying. He said things he would never have said before the stroke. Trying to separate the new Dave from the amazing father and husband was so difficult for the whole family.

About four months after her Dad had his stroke and one month after she adopted Willow, Abby had a severe headache and eye pain in her right eye only. I'll never forget the night Judy called me. She was so scared for Abby that she was mentally paralyzed. Judy couldn't decide whether she should wait until morning to take Abby to the doctor or rush her to the ER at Children's Hospital. Without any hesitation, I told Judy I'd go with her. After almost a week at the hospital, not one single doctor had an answer. Abby was released with medicine. She was already a self-conscious pre-teen but the steroids made it worse as the side effects was weight gain. And ultimately, the medicine did not help her keep her eyesight.

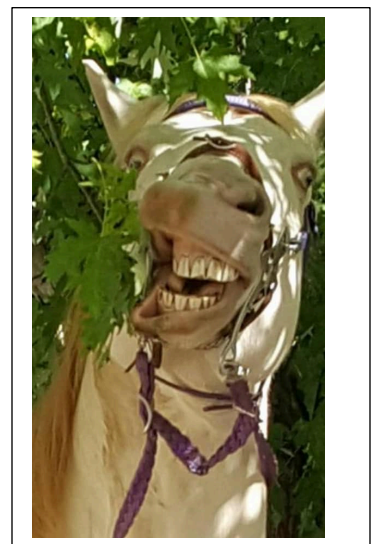
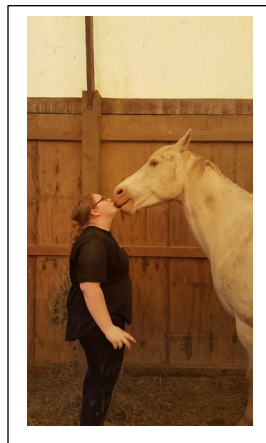
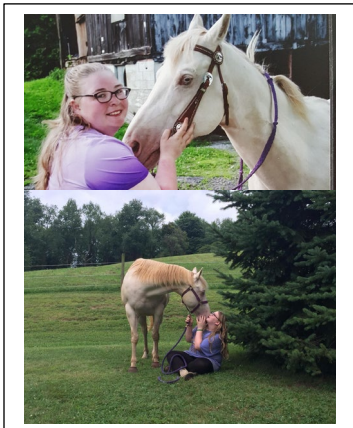
This is all just the tip of the iceberg of adversities that Judy & her family have experienced since. But God is good and has provided in ways that they never expected. Willow was one of those provisions. There have been days when Abby has clung to Willow with endless tears because she was afraid her dad wouldn't make it out of the hospital or because other kids were so cruel to her. They teased her about her weight gain, they called her father "retarded." There was no end to their cruelty.

Willow always seems to know when Abby needs her and stands patiently, absorbing every tear into the hair on her neck. Willow has even comforted Judy on a few occasions when she didn't think she could make it another day or hold the family together by herself.

Willow has also been the comedic remedy to alleviate daily tension. When Willow was diagnosed with Lyme's Disease, Judy & Abby had to figure out how to get Willow to eat the horrible tasting medicine. If you have any experience with this, you know that sometimes you have to get really creative. The easiest thing is to cover it with molasses or apple sauce but that didn't work. They tried all sorts of flavors and thought they would have to resort to mixing the powder with water and giving it to her orally in a syringe. Willow is not one to just stand there and take her medicine. She will fight you tooth and nail. After much experimenting, they finally discovered that Willow will eat ANYTHING if you cover it in banana & peppermint. After a few doses of medicine with the banana/peppermint smoothie on it, you couldn't get into Willow's stall without being mugged by her because she was so excited to eat it. One day Judy peeled a banana and fed it to Willow. She laid the banana peel on the bleacher seat behind her while she held Willow on a lead line. As she was conversing with a friend, she felt a tug on the lead line only to turn around and catch Willow frozen still with half of the banana peel dangling from her mouth. Judy yelled, "Willow, don't eat that!" Before she could even finish the sentence, Willow sucked the rest of the peel up into her mouth and chewed it as fast as she could and swallowed.

About a year after Dave had his first stroke, he had another and lost his eye sight but he remembered Willow. One day, Dave stuck his hand out to give her a treat, however, because Dave could not see, he unknowingly stuck his whole hand into Willows mouth. Willow just stood there, still as can be with Dave's whole hand in her mouth, looking around as if waiting for instruction. Dave eventually withdrew his hand and Willow chewed her treat. Now that's what I call a great horse! Even Abby's brother David, who isn't a fan of horses, knows how important Willow has become to their family. So much so that he does go out to the barn occasionally and checks on Willow. Doesn't seem like a big deal until you consider this is a teenage boy that doesn't like smudges on his shoes.

Judy has told me on many occasions, "I don't know where Abby would be without Willow." With what she has been through, Abby could have withdrawn socially, developed anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and be acting out. Having Willow in her life has given her joy and taught her about trust and respect. Abby has positive self-identity because she is loved and accepted by Willow just the way she is. It's increased her self-esteem as she is challenged and masters a variety of training and riding skills. She's learned non-verbal communication, assertiveness and boundaries. All are powerful tools in dealing with social issues, particularly in school. Through all the bad stuff that has happened Abby has managed to not just to survive but to flourish, thanks to a great Mom and God's gift of an angel covered in horsehair, named Willow.



HERE'S YOUR CHANCE

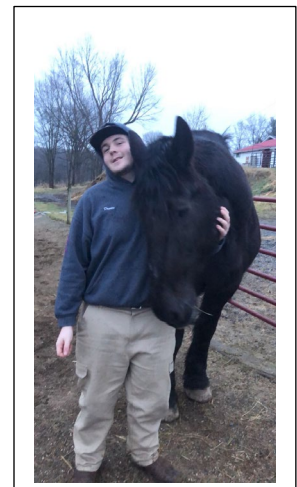
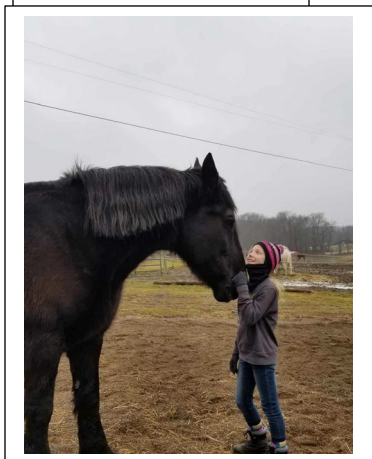
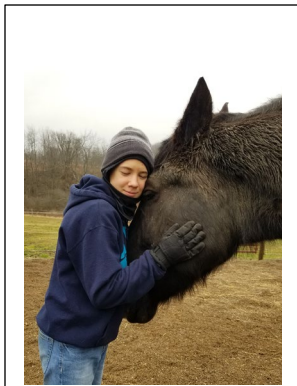
Do you love what we do at the ranch? Have you ever wanted to help people using horses but didn't know how? Well, your opportunity to learn is coming September 26-27, 2020. There are other Horse Ranches/Ministries all over the world that connect with each other to share information and learn from each other. One group that RYYR belongs to is called East Coast Ranch Ministry Clinic and Fellowship. The group gathers annually for a 2-day information sharing conference. In years past, it has been hosted by ranches in Florida, Virginia and North Carolina. We are happy to announce that the 2020 Conference will be held at RYYR. If you know anyone who is interested in attending or speaking, please feel free to email me for information, Micheline.Barkley@ryyr.org Or you can follow the Facebook page and inquire there - east coast ranch ministry clinic and fellowship

LAZARUS here sir! Reporting for duty!

If you did not receive the story of Lazarus in last month's newsletter, you can read it online at our website. The day after Lazarus arrived at RYYR, I received a text message from a counselor who regularly refers children to the ranch. The text message read:

Hello, yesterday one of my kids was in a downward spiral. She had self-harming thoughts and struggled with her father committing suicide. She was triggered by just about everything and we struggled to reach her. But when I told her the story of Lazarus, it made a huge difference. Lazarus is on the job already. I told her soon she could come out and meet him!

God is amazing!



HORSEPALOOZA ANYONE?

Save the dates – May 15th & 16th come and attend our first annual Horsepalooza Fundraiser!
Our ranch will be open to the public to enjoy!

FRIDAY the 15th

Exclusive Farm Access Friday Night – Pre-purchased Tickets only
Guided Tours, Dinner, Chinese Auction & Hoe Down on the farm

SATURDAY the 16th

*craft vendors

*food

*fun run

*chili cook off

*bonfire

*music

*Kids fun corral – games, pony rides, crafts, pictures

*Horse Education Clinics - Grooming/ Leading

Come spend a family friendly, fun filled day on the farm!



Did you know that RYYR is registered as a charity on Amazon? When you order through Amazon Smile, the ranch gets a portion of the proceeds of your purchase. If you buy from Amazon, shop Amazon Smile instead and please consider selecting us as your charity of choice! It's just one easy way to support us!

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!