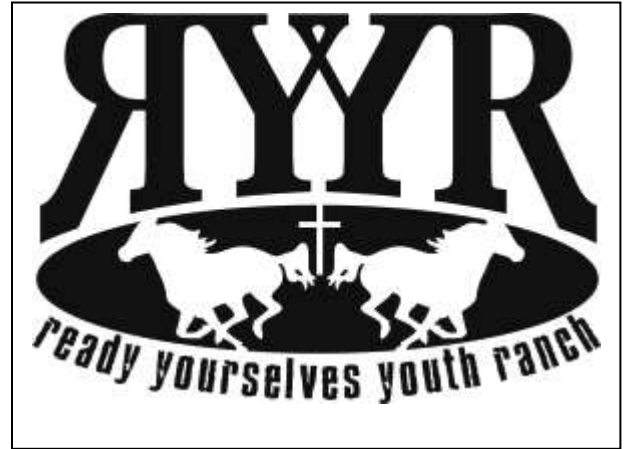


# October 2020



***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.*

## Would you have **EVER** thought in your lifetime?

As many of you have noticed (John Hoogerbrugge...LOL), after May, there were no newsletters. I was fearful that it would be a silent year, due to COVID -19. Honestly, I thought it could be the year the ranch folded. But PRAISE GOD, once again, it was an explosive year of activity and hope! After my initial anxiety, we put our fears to prayer and God answered by giving us the peace that we needed. It was a calm before the storm of sorts. With all the extra work for the COVID-19 requirements and the program finally opening later than usual, I did not have time to do monthly newsletters. It was evident that services like ours were needed more this year than ever. Our community and the kids in it are hurting. Every person has now experience isolation and the pain, anxiety that goes with it. Some more than others. To me, this creates the compassion for children that are suffering. The very same ones that we serve at RYYR. These kids are alone in their fears from abuse, neglect, bullying and drugs and alcohol in the home. The rate of abuse has increased this year due to the lockdown and it's understandable why. We are working from home, schooling from home and picking up everything ordered online. Anyone who is human can attest to how this can rattle senses. Some have enjoyed the time at home and cleaned and organized like never before. But for a child, this change is radical and can be deeply detrimental to their mental health. We thank God for his goodness and that in times like this we can lean into him and trust that he's going to catch us.

Seriously though, would you have thought, in your lifetime, that you would see such a crazy thing as this COVID Pandemic and all of it's affects? The effect of shutting down schools and businesses and halting life as we know it is the equivalent of a car moving at 120 mph hitting a brick wall. Wow! But as children of God firstly and as resilient Americans secondly, we are made of some tuff stuff! And thank God for that!

# SUMMER 2020 UPDATE

It may not seem that much was done at the ranch this summer but many things are simply maintenance, like spreading manure to fertilize the fields, stocking (& stacking) up 3,000 square bales of hay, repairing broken gates, doors, fences and on and on the list goes.

We added another grazing paddock that is not technically on the farm. This was one of Don Peffer's first projects when he & Zoe got back from Brazil. Praise God that they were able to get back to the U.S with all the Covid shut downs! Don installed posts and fence line to create a 3 acre pasture. We have numbered the paddocks/pastures in the order they were created. Of course paddocks 1 & 2 are closest to the barn and spread further away. Paddocks 6 & 7 can be seen on your way out of the ranch. If you've been to the ranch, you'd never forget that our driveway is very long (somewhere between ¼ & ½ mile). So the new paddock is #8 and is located right in front of our home which is the house facing Wisers Grove Road (you have to drive by the house to get to the barn. God Bless our volunteers, for they have to walk the horses out or bring them in from paddock 8. That's a lot of walking but they are extremely efficient. They now have one of the volunteers drive them out there to drop off or pick up the volunteers so it's only a one-way journey. I love our volunteers so much! Their willingness to do whatever it takes to provide good care to our horses makes my heart swell!

After five years in our present location, we have finally made an attempt at enriching our pastures. I had no idea how involved "pasture management" was! This meant testing the soil, spreading lime (tricky on our hilly property), spraying weeds and hopefully seeds. We've begun increasing our grass pasture as well, laying out 3 acres to begin to fence in next spring. I don't know about you but I had no idea how hard it would be to grow good, rich, quality grass! There's a whole science to it! I thought we could just throw down seed and viola! I praise God for our farmers! I had no idea how much you had to know about, weather, terrain, pesticides, equipment, etc. Wow!

We've also been blessed to install rubber mats on the floors in the barn aisles! Thanks to all the many volunteers that helped grade the floor down, bring in the gravel, rake out the gravel, tamp the gravel and measure and cut the rubber matts (they weigh a ton 4ft x 6ft, ¾ inch thick)! This rubber flooring is interlocked like puzzle pieces and is much softer on the horses' joints (as well as volunteers)! The mats help keep down the dust in the stall area too.



## OK.....maybe we are having too much fun?

Many of our volunteers have said how therapeutic it is to come to the ranch to take care of the horses. Maybe we are enjoying it too much....nah! All for Christ!

*“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.”*

*– Colossians 3:23*



Christine & Marilyn – our faithful Monday morning team

## What are people saying about RYYR?

As we do every year, we train new mentors about horses, riding and working with kids in crisis. Two new mentors, I'll call them Big K & Little K made this observation; they noted how other barns don't have the positive atmosphere and how, here at the ranch, everyone works together and the work just seems to get done without anyone bossing each other. Big K said, “What Micheline said to me, when we first met, about loving people where they are was so helpful to me.” Both were impressed by the teens taking responsibility and getting barn chores done without having to be told. Big K also said, “When they come to the barn, it's like they all become one.”

*Galatians 3:28 – “There is neither Jew or Gentile, neither slave nor free, or is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*

Our therapists in horsehair need your help...

I know the feeling when you are constantly inundated with requests for donations so I understand that you may flinch when you hear yet another appeal for funding. We have made many improvements at the ranch all for the health of the horses and safety of the volunteers. However, this need has become of the utmost importance and of course is very costly and I will explain why. Fasten your seat belts, you're about to learn more than you could ever imagine you would need to know about horse hoof health! I could also entitle the class "Reason #101 why horses cost so much" Are you listening all you parents of teenage horse addicts?

In order to have nice green grassy pastures (in addition to the pasture management mentioned above), you must not put horses out in these pastures in rain, snow or icy weather. Horses weigh on the average 1,000 lbs. When the ground is wet, horses sink and leave holes wherever their hooves land. And when horses take off into a run, they dig into the ground and flick up chunks of soil & rooted grass. This leaves divots where grass will not regenerate. After a while, you will notice that there is less and less grass. That is why we have to have "sacrifice areas." I have had people look at me with horror when I say that. No, not an area to sacrifice horses but an area that horses can be during times of bad weather. A "loafing" area where they can move around outside to keep the grassy areas healthy. Keeping horses in stalls constantly due to inclement weather causes mental health issues that turn into behavioral problems.

The sacrifice area needs to be relatively level and must keep the horses feet dry and clean of manure. Standing in manure and mud causes two hoof/leg conditions: 1) Abscesses - Abscesses in a hoof is like having to stand on a pimple. It's a bacterial infection traveled into the hoof and becomes infected. It makes a horse not able to walk, over night. It's excruciatingly painful and a lot of work for us as we have to soak that hoof in Epsom salt twice daily to draw out the infection. Plus the horse has to stay in their stall for days. We have at least 6 horses per fall, winter & spring (each) season that suffer from abscesses. Some horses have multiple abscesses at one time or consecutively. 2) Scratches or Mud Fever - this is an issue that is caused by a variety of skin conditions including viral, bacterial, fungal or parasitic infections. It creates painful scabs that can become inflamed and turn into cellulitis. This requires stall rest and medicine. We have one horse that has had scratches since September of 2019! He is improving but the infection just keeps hanging on!

Our current sacrifice area is sloped and all dirt so in spring and fall, it is nothing but mud. If winter is warm, then mud ALL winter. If we lived out west, the ground is solid rock, folks out west don't have to deal with mud but unfortunately we have rich soil and lots of rain. Last winter was mild so the ground did not freeze for long. Our horses were standing in cold mud most of the winter, sometimes 1 foot deep.

The plan is to create multiple areas of varying sizes for groups of horses that get along. In order to do that, we must border the areas with huge concrete retention blocks, fill the area with clean fill (dirt, concrete block or brick) so it is level. Then lay road fabric down (to keep the stones on top from sinking in.) A layer of medium to small gravel on top, and finally the smallest stone (pea gravel or crushed gravel) on top. All this helps drainage so that the horse does not stand in mud or water. As you can imagine this all takes a

lot of labor and materials. This will save us a lot of money for Vet bills and save the horses a lot of pain and suffering. We cannot wait until we have enough funds to do all the areas so we will start with one area at a time. We don't have a final cost but know it will cost upwards of \$20,000.

Once we have one sacrifice area done, we will need to do daily poop pick up to keep the area clean for the horses so a part of our budget for the sacrifice area will be to purchase a pooper scooper that we can drag behind a quad. With 20+ horses, we will definitely need it. It is called the EKO Horse Manure Collectors and Paddock Groomer: total cost \$3590 plus shipping.

I know this is a BIG ask but if you can make any donation to the "Sacrifice Area" or the "Paddock Groomer" fund we would really appreciate it. If you have any fundraising ideas, we would be happy to discuss them. Thank you!

## BREAKING THE CYCLE

-by Micheline Barkley



"There's so much, I don't even know where to begin." Laughed the young lady in front of me. I'll call her Red, short for Redeemed. If ever there was a story of redemption and hope, it would be Red's story. Red is only 17 but has experienced a lifetime of adversity. Some of the events were of her own making and some were just what life had thrown at her. In spite of it all, she has grown leaps and bounds in the two years since she came to RYYR.

Red came from a broken home. Her father was an addict, which led to a life of crime and imprisonment. Her mother struggled with her own issues and needs so it was better for Red to live with her Grandmother Judy. In retrospect, Red knows that living with her grandma was the best thing for her. Especially after one night when she was about 9, riding in a car with her Mother and her mother's boyfriend to go get drugs. Yes, it was better. Grandma Judy raised Red for the majority of her life giving her the love and stability she needed. Grandma Judy walked her to school everyday and simply gave her the most valuable thing that a child needs, her time. Grandma Judy really loved Red. She never gave up on her, even when Red was placed in various juvenile correction facilities and programs for months and years.

Red was a tomboy. She loved hanging out with the neighborhood boys and playing basketball and wrestling. She'd stay outside all day and sometimes didn't even come in to eat. Everything seemed fine until the age of ten. Red was placed in a mental health facility when she unsuccessfully tried to slit her wrists. She had been bullied at school and didn't know how to handle it. This was just the beginning of a five-year struggle for this little girl. At 11, she began acting out and avoiding school. She was then placed in a youth home where she could get the help she needed and continue her education. She did well and

loved the staff so much that she didn't want to go home. Without a father or mother present in her daily life, she felt a deep hurt that came from rejection. Especially when her Mom moved in with a boyfriend that had kids living in the home, but she was not allowed to live with them. This hurt, would turn into anger and the anger Red harbored festered and became rage as she got older. She got into fights left and right.

In 7<sup>th</sup> grade, Red did everything she could to leave class so she'd make up any kind of lie to leave class, leave school and get into fights. Eventually she was expelled. Eighth grade seemed promising, however, by the second month of school, she was expelled permanently. Red would not listen to anyone. She was defiant, had a smart mouth and a foul one too. She simply didn't care about consequences. She was angry all the time and slightest things set her off.

Over the course of her early teens, Red was in and out of placement at a myriad of treatment facilities. She'd get out of treatment, quickly get into trouble and then get placed in another facility. There were some facilities that refused to take her back because of her "Failure to Adapt." She made everything difficult and simply would not apply the things she learned to her life to make it better.

Red's anger and rebellion got her into trouble perpetually and sometimes just made things worse. At one particular court date, the judge reviewed her long list of defiance, disobedience, fighting, non-compliance and looked directly at her and said, "The minor clearly has no respect for authority." He then sentencing her to a long term detention facility. Red's response? You guessed it, she lost her mind. Her fit of rage required 11 officers to take her down. She was restrained with shackled and handcuffed to a metal pole for several hours to let her calm down and arrange for transport.

What started as a sixty day sentence turned into almost two years of lock up. Red was told when she had to get up, when to shower, when to do school work, when she could make a phone call, when she had to go to counseling and even when she could go to the restroom. It was a very regimented life. In those two years, she continued her education and counseling but she continued to struggle with her issues and as a result she was restrained 31 different times.

Towards the end of the two years, Red finally decided that she wanted a different life than the one she was living. It was a surprise visit from a cousin that changed the trajectory of her life. She found it odd that her cousin was visiting her at the detention center. He had come to deliver the awful news that her Grandmother Judy had died. Red was in total disbelief. She had just spoken with her two days earlier. Grandma Judy spoke with Red faithfully every Tuesday. Grandma was the only person who loved her unconditionally and never gave up on her. Red's heart was shattered. She was permitted to attend grandma's funeral to say her final good-byes but Red continued to mourn her loss of Grandma Judy for a long time after.

Red decided that she was done. She wanted out of this detention center and she wanted a good life. With the help of some counselors, she started to make better choices to meet the requirements to get out.

The summer after her release, Red's counselor had mentioned a new horse ranch that was offering a mentoring program. Then her probation officer recommended she enroll in the RYYR summer program and so she did. Red had a real fear of horses so it was understandable that on her first day at the ranch,

her anxiety levels made her sick enough to throw-up. After her attempt to avoid interaction, we introduced her to a recent rescued mini horse named Gunny. Gunny was a skittish black and white mini with blue eyes. With his fear of people and her fear of horses, they seemed to bond instantly. Red would sometimes revert to her old behavior, such as avoiding doing barn chores. She would conveniently have to go the bathroom or get a drink of water. She went as far as to lure others to do her chores for her. But for the most part, we saw positive, gradual changes in Red. Her fears dissipated quickly. By the time she completed our 10-week summer program, Red rode almost every single ranch horse including Pansie. Pansie was our enormous draft horse, she passed away December 23' 2018. She weighed around 1800 lbs. and her head was almost 8 ft tall. We watched as Red began to lower her guard and emerge from her shell. She became more confident and emotionally made herself vulnerable to create relationships with others.

On one particular day, weeks into the program, a Law Enforcement group was invited to come tour the ranch. When Red arrived she refused to get off the van when she saw all the police vehicles. Her experiences with officers up to this point was not good, she was fearful. When the probation officer explained to her that they were not here for her, she finally came out of the van. A short time later, after we gave a brief introduction to all the officers there, we asked all the kids that were a part of our program to speak to the officers and maybe share what they had learned. When it was Red's turn, she unapologetically said, "I'm Red. I don't like cops and I want to go home." She was extremely uncomfortable. But after the officers (who were out of their element surrounded by 1,000 lb. creatures) asked her some questions about the horses and explained their reticence, she just took the bull by the horns and you just couldn't stop her. It was just amazing. Red gave the officers a full facility tour and taught them about the horses, about safety and how to overcome fear. At the end, she opened up about her experience with the law. WOW All it took was one question from one officer, "So how has this place helped you?" To answer that question, she had to share her history. She pointed to a "Circle of Control" painting that she did during her time at the ranch, explain to the officers that we did more than just riding horses. In the end, they shared a mutual respect for each other. It was the beginning of healing Red's painful memories with authority and restoring the relationship to a healthy position. At the end of the day, one officer was heard saying about RYYR, "They're doing really good things out here."

Along with many other kids, monthly, we invite the kids to come back and visit at the ranch. They come help do chores and sometimes ride and sometimes just hang out. Red has participated in these monthly visits when possible. Her schedule is pretty full. Between school, homework, working at McDonalds, volunteering as a junior firefighter for Monaca, Red doesn't have much time. However, she made time in her schedule to volunteer two days a week at RYYR this past summer as a Junior Mentor. Her goal is to enter the Navy after graduation and become a nurse or firefighter.

The most important change in Red came in summer of 2018 after she was released from her two-year detention. She was invited to attend a week long youth group revival called Kingdom Bound. The guest speaker gave such a powerful message that when he offered the call to come to the altar and ask for salvation, she answered the call and became a child of the King that day!

I do not wish to boast about anything we are doing here at RYYR. It took many people who cared to help change Red's life. However, I simply want to share the stories of the healing that occurs at our ranch because God is at the center of what we do. God is the physician, we are just here to be his hands and feet.

## November Saturdays will be Community Outreach Day at RYYR!

Please feel free to come and see us on Saturdays at RYYR to visit the horses, meet volunteers and help do barn chores from 8am-12noon. Please text or call 724-713-1653 or email me at [michelinel.barkley@ryyr.org](mailto:michelinel.barkley@ryyr.org). to reserve your spot! Thanks!

Come and visit our website at [www.RYYR.org](http://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!