



ACHAIUS RANCH NEWS

“Passive Persistence in the Proper Position”

by Elisha McCulloh

Caci (not her real name) arrived at Achaius Ranch feeling so nervous that she struggled just to emerge from the protection of the family car. Nervous about meeting new people in a new place. What would they think of her? What would she be asked to do and could she do it? Would she look foolish? Would she be accepted? Or judged?

Upon first meeting Caci, her anxiety expressed itself in body language that could easily have been misinterpreted as disinterest, even disdain, for me, this place, this whole “ranch thing.” The lack of eye contact and the negative expression on her face looked a lot like the stereotypical teenage “attitude” of contempt toward adults. Praying for guidance as to how best to help this young lady instead of letting my own negative emotions get triggered, I warmly introduced myself and gently drew her into the group of leaders and youth gathering for our next round of sessions. We prayed together and then divided up for our one-on-one sessions.

I was interested to see that despite her misgivings about contact with humans, Caci showed no fear of interacting with the horses. Though reluctant to ride them, she clearly enjoyed watching, touching, and silently communicating with them. And they responded well to her gentleness and affection. (Horses can tell when someone genuinely likes them and they give more “try” when we are pleased with their effort. I think this is true for humans as well.)

Over the course of the season, it took Caci a long time to finally decide to get on a horse. But no matter: we do a lot of groundwork here so there was plenty of opportunity for her to learn natural horsemanship skills, communication, herd

dynamics and leadership methods. With each new task introduced, Caci was nervous to try and gave up quickly when she felt she was “doing it wrong.” But, with the help of the Holy Spirit, I saw something different hiding beneath the surface than what her prominent behavior seemed to shout. God showed me that Caci was actually a very brave young lady. And she was a quicker learner and more competent than she realized.

In his program of natural horsemanship, Pat Parelli has many helpful sayings that get repeated a lot around here so that they can gradually sink in and permeate our understanding of how to successfully lead horses (as well as humans). One such phrase is “passive persistence in the proper position.” We practice this concept when we want to encourage a horse to act like a partner, go “left brain” (thinking things through instead of reacting emotionally), and solve the puzzle of what it is we’re wanting him to do at that moment. We need to set up the necessary clues using specific motions, guiding the horse with light pressure aimed precisely to make it as clear as possible so the horse can “win” the game by moving in the appropriate direction. It is important to keep our actions clear and consistent, repeating them as often as needed, without expressing frustration or impatience, and as long as it takes until the horse makes even the slightest movement in the desired



direction. Then, as Pat says, we “expect a lot, accept a little, and reward often.” Once the horse starts to understand and respond as desired, he gets rewarded with a release of the pressure and a pleased attitude from us (and often with “cookies” or scratches). Then we can build upon that understanding and ask him to do more and more.

With Caci, this passive persistence in the proper position looks like showing her a new skill, putting the lightest pressure on her by asking her to try it (while fully expecting her to succeed), standing by with an attitude of encouragement and affirmation (instead of rushing in to “rescue” her and do the task for her when she expresses doubt that she’s capable of it), and patiently waiting for her to go left brain and figure it out. So far, every single time, Caci has immediately expressed doubt that she can do each new thing. And every single time, sometimes after multiple tries, she has actually succeeded in doing that very thing. And without fail, she feels elated when she succeeds. Her confidence is growing by leaps and bounds. Like rays of sunshine peaking through a mostly cloudy sky, big smiles on her face speak for themselves, and sometimes, she expresses her happiness through words as well.

Caci rarely refuses to try even the things that seem the most challenging and scary for her. This is a clue that innately, a confident person is hiding beneath a very anxious façade. When and how she adopted this façade, I do not know. But according to what I’ve recently been learning about how trauma affects behavior and personality, the reason is most likely related to some past trauma.

Practicing passive persistence in the proper position while seeing the true person that often hides beneath the surface of those who come to the ranch broken and in need of healing is no easy task. Our motto here is “love, heal, grow.” 1 Corinthians 13 (paraphrased) teaches us that love is patient, kind, persistent, full of hope, able to fully see and know the real person; see the truth. None of us is capable of doing that apart from Christ. It is the Lord alone that can “...direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.” (2 Thessalonians 3:5) There is much healing still needed in Caci’s life. Through passive persistence in the proper position, those of us here that work with Caci over time will depend upon and point her toward God’s guidance and strength as he helps her shed the weight of her anxious façade and to more fully become the confident, competent person he created her to be.



Session Leaders

We’re so thankful for dedicated session leaders! This was Jenny Zehner’s third season serving as Session Leader. We are sad to see her move on but excited for her as she continues her studies at Purdue University and plans to travel abroad next summer.

It was an unexpected but great pleasure to have Alice Combs available to serve here for the first month of our summer sessions. Alice is graduating from Ball State.



We are delighted that Sarah Rogers has joined our team, and look forward to her return in 2018.

Living in the Present

by Jenny Zehner

I didn't have a lot of horse experience when Elisha asked me to be a session leader at Achaius Ranch. I knew that I would be learning how to handle horses, but I didn't realize how much more my time there would teach me. Looking back over the last three summers, I can say that it has changed and shaped me far beyond horsemanship. It has helped me grow in virtue, understanding and empathy, it has introduced me to some of the best people I know, and it has helped me during my own time of suffering.

One thing I found at the ranch is silence. Silence is a rare and valuable thing, especially in our modern, fast paced and stressful world. The beautiful country setting of the ranch, as well as the peaceful animals always drew me into an interior peace. In this peace, I could abandon my stress and actually reach out to love others.

As a Christian, I know that God speaks to me in silence and in the present moment. The present is the only time in which I can encounter and serve Him as well as love the people He has put in my life. However, the 'present moment' is often the last thing my cluttered, stressed mind can actually focus on. Sadly, I feel like this is true for most of us, even children. One of the blessings of working with horses is you are forced to live in the present. That means forgetting that embarrassing thing that happened two weeks ago and that exam that's coming up. It can be a means of either forgetting your struggles or dealing with them. Horses don't carry the same anxieties we do. Interacting with them draws us out of our anxiety and obsession with the past and future. We are forced to be present.

The friendships I've made at the ranch (with both the humans and the horses) have deeply impacted me as well. Last winter a close friend of my family and a former board member of the ranch passed away, leaving those of us who knew him heartbroken and shell shocked. Elisha, her husband

Rodney, and her daughter Nicole comforted and supported his family. Despite her own grief and responsibilities, Elisha took the time to reach out for prayer on my behalf. I am so touched that she did that. Volunteers, session kids and their parents all reached out to me offering me comfort and prayers. There are times in life where true community is the greatest comfort we can ask for. I will always be grateful to the Achaius Ranch community for their support when I needed it most.

The ranch still offered me comfort beyond words. I believe that there is nothing more relaxing and healing than working with the trusting and gentle horses of Achaius. And I believe there is nothing more rewarding than introducing someone to the joy of working with horses and seeing them accomplish their goals and grow in the same ways I have. I have loved every minute I have spent on the ranch which is my favorite place on earth. I will never forget the kindness of my fellow session leaders, the wonderful volunteers, Tiffany (our trainer) and her family, Bob (a ranch sponsor), my incredible session kids, Elisha and her family, and of course the horses. I will never stop being amazed at

the beauty of God's creation. I will never stop being grateful for the gift of horses and the community I found at Achaius Ranch!



Volunteers

We are building a wonderful team of committed volunteers at the ranch, which is such a blessing to Elisha and Nicole. We love all of these enthusiastic helpers! The following adults (who often bring their children to help as well), served on a regular basis during sessions:



Rebecca Wellhausen, Crystal Cotten, Sarah Keesee, and Vickie Cornett. We've also been blessed by occasional help from others, such as Angela Dillman and Sharlie See.

This year we launched a "Junior Volunteer" program, which was so successful that we plan to further develop it in 2018. After they have participated in sessions for at least one season, youth age 12



and older are eligible to apply for this position. In order to be considered, they must formally apply for the upcoming season by the end of April, be available for required training, and commit to spending at least one morning per week (most weeks



of the summer) assisting the Program Director and Session Leaders as needed. For more info on this program, please contact Elisha.

Two of our Junior Volunteers turned 18 this year and graduated into full volunteer status: Emma Osborne and Janay Byrer. Both are continuing to help maintain the ranch over the winter and plan to be involved with our youth program in 2018.

We were also delighted to have help from the Crawfordsville High School Key Club on several occasions.



Our youngest helpers are Finn (5), Annie (3), and June Wilson (1) who help their "Mama," Nicole, feed the horses. Our dear friend and Parelli instructor, Tiffany Rowe, has inspired



and modeled parenting kids to develop competence and servant's hearts from early childhood. It's amazing how much even the youngest children can truly contribute! Baby #4 (due in June 2018) will no doubt follow in the footsteps of his/her older siblings.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.
(Ephesians 2.10)

These Are My People!

by Sarah Keesee

My daughter, Esther, and I began volunteering at Achaius Ranch in the Spring of 2015. Esther had been showing interest in horses, which reignited my own enamored I'd had since childhood, but stuffed away during my early adult

years. I could never get enough of being around these amazing creatures. But little did I know how much they could teach me, and help me process my grief.

My sweet Mama, LaRhonda, was 58 when she died in July 2014. She was a beacon of light and joy. When Esther and I came to the ranch, we were still in a shroud of grief. We began weekly visits to help with chores and learn the Parelli approach to horsemanship from Miss Elisha. I began to refer to it as "my mental health time." Elisha and the AR team have created an environment that is nurturing and healing. I truly feel that my time with horses has helped me deal with my grief. It is also challenging in that it promotes self-development, and that is rarely painless. Esther and I have both experienced "hitting a wall," feeling like "I can't do this," or, "I can't get this horse to cooperate." We've had to work through those feelings of frustration, and realized how very keenly the horses can sense our emotions. Getting my own emotions in balance has been key to a successful horse/human relationship. I'm very glad for the life lessons that Esther is learning from her ranch time: patience, perseverance, respect, hard work, etc.

Another concept that Elisha has developed with us is that of confidence. One might be inclined to equate confidence with arrogance, but nothing could be further from the truth. If a horse is confident, he is a joy to be around. He's calm yet playful, cooperative... a great partner. An unconfident horse is difficult, at best. So much of the horsemanship at AR centers around developing a healthy relationship between horse and human, so that the horse can learn confidence and trust his human leader, and grow in his own confidence, making him better and better for kids.

The "life lesson" I've taken from this is that a human who is arrogant, acting out, needing attention, or quick to put others down is most likely insecure. A confident person is pleasant to be around, calm, and eager to promote others because they know they don't have to put others down in order to succeed. I have found myself often pondering this concept: if I know who God has made me to be, if I understand that I am secure in God's love, redeemed by Jesus' sacrificial death, and I have nothing to fear because my Heavenly Father ordains every day of my life, even the hard days... then I can be confident. I don't have to prove myself. I can simply reach out with God's love and truth to others. A confident horse calmly waits for his leader's guidance, and he is safe for children, safe

for hurting people to be with. That is what I want to be.



I have also observed how many of the horses have horrible experiences in their past (before finding a better life at AR), yet they are not bitter. Some are blind, some have scars. Several experienced cruel neglect at the hands of their human owners. Yet they are happy in their new safe home, and they don't hold on to bitterness. They don't hate all humans. They open themselves up to love again. What an example God gives us in these beautiful creatures. Many of the kids who come to the ranch have gone through tough stuff. Many are struggling. Being with the horses, learning their stories, seeing their resilience and their gentle power, has such an impact on the children. Sometimes you can see on a child's face, after their time with the horses, that a spark has been ignited. A spark to protect the vulnerable, perhaps. Or realizing how God's natural creation can be healing. Or a direction for a career. The possibilities are endless.

I have also found a community at the ranch. What I didn't know when we first began coming to AR is that everyone on the team has a story of brokenness at some point in their life. Last month, as several of us gathered to close the season, I looked around at the faces which have become dear to me and I thought, "these are my people." We're all broken; we all have scars from the difficulties life has brought. But we have found Jesus and the healing He brings. We have found friends He provides to share each other's burdens. And we have

found the powerful, graceful animals He created to nurture our spirits.

I think I may speak for all of the AR team when I say that our goal when interacting with anyone at the ranch is to share God's love by providing a safe, nurturing environment in which to love, heal, and grow. If we have been filled with God's love, we can do no less than share it with others.

Property Improvements

Early in 2017 we were thrilled to replace an old barn with a much more useful one. The new barn includes a feed room, plenty of space for equipment, storage, and occasional indoor activities such as barn dancing, and four stalls that are currently being used by senior and/or special needs horses.

A much larger hay barn has also been added and the old (very small) hay barn is now used instead to store tools and equipment.

Much of the fencing on the ranch has been replaced with sturdier, more attractive fencing.

Happily, we believe that these big projects should conclude our major construction work. Next year's projects should mostly consist of beautification such as landscaping.



Becoming a Better Me

by Emma Osborne

I have been going to Achaius Ranch for almost two years now. Achaius Ranch for me is more than just a place to learn and be with the horses and great people. Achaius Ranch truly helped me in a great way; being at the ranch was my first step to becoming a better me. Before I started sessions at the ranch I had been very depressed; my grades were dropping, and I wasn't myself. My first experience at the ranch was through a field trip with my school. It was Junior year. Once we got there, there was a neat demo with the horses. Our "Leader" was one of the younger girls at the ranch—she was about 7. She was working with a horse named Flint. I was instantly drawn to watch her work with him. I was truly so surprised this young girl was able to be the herd leader of this large horse. She had so much confidence. I was really interested in learning more but wasn't very vocal about it. My mom picked up on this and nearly instantly signed me up for the summer sessions.

My first session ever was with a very sweet girl named Jenny. I was with a horse named Flint. Flint was super sweet, and I felt instantly connected with him. Jenny helped me learn so much about the horses and in the process, I was gaining so much confidence in myself. The program director, Elisha, was extremely caring and helpful. She also helped me learn so much about the horses. When nervous or feeling uneasy we would do "power stance." This means we would stand in a position that in my opinion makes me feel calmer and stronger. At Achaius Ranch, they use the Parelli Natural Horsemanship method. This way of working with the horses makes you part of the herd. You are the leader of your herd. I learned so much at the ranch.

One of the horses there is named Liberty, and she is a rescue. She was in a barn fire with her baby and had to kick her way out. She lived, but the baby sadly did not. Liberty has burns on her back still, but is super loving. She has beautiful eyes. Two different colors! No one can ride her, but we can groom her and do a little ground work. Mostly "Friendly Game" which is exactly what it sounds like, you are being friendly with the horses. When I got to be with and groom Liberty, it was so relaxing. She's been through so much and has fought so hard to be where she is today. Seeing her happy, even

with her past, truly helped me see the good in the world. Liberty was badly burned but is still living, she is still going on and making others happy. I never thought I could be inspired so much by one horse, but I have been. Not just by one horse, but a lot of them at the ranch.

Being at the ranch truly was my first step to becoming a better me. I was getting out of the house, driving to the ranch, working with the horses, spending time with the horses and the great people at the ranch. I was able to speak about home issues if needed. The ranch was truly my calming place. My place to get away and relax. I slowly saw a difference in how I was acting.

I ended up coming back to the ranch the next year to be a junior volunteer. The experience has truly helped me come out of my shell. I get to talk with all these new kids at the ranch and see so much that goes on before the session. I got to spend more one on one time with the horses. My goal is to spend time with each horse at the ranch. In



"Cowboy's Corral," I was able to hang out and truly be one of the horses. I would have never thought I'd have the confidence to be the herd leader of three horses at once, but I did it.

Elisha truly is a busy woman and she does so much for these amazing creatures that God has given us. Elisha helped me learn so much and I am so thankful to have met her. I have been able to have one-on-one time training with her. I got to help with one of the new minis, Pumpkin, who is super smart but had not been worked with much before he came to the ranch. I got to see his "switch" flip from

resistance to responsiveness as he acknowledged our leadership. Together we helped him learn how to move away from pressure instead of pushing against it. It was and is such a neat experience.

I honestly cannot imagine my life without Achaius Ranch. I cannot imagine not meeting Elisha, the kids, the Session Leaders, the other volunteers, or the horses! I am so blessed to be able to learn more with them to this day. I love everyone at the ranch and am so happy to still be going. I look forward to each day I get to go.

Horses

This year we adopted two miniature horses and a goat. Cricket, Pumpkin and JJ (the goat) came to us when their previous owner learned that she was no longer allowed to keep them due to

zoning issues. She had previously rescued the minis from situations in which they were not properly cared for. Cricket (a 15 year old mare) had foundered and



came to us with very sore feet, spending most of her first days lying down until we were able to work with our vet and farrier to get her on the road to recovery.

She is a very sweet girl and we expect to increase her involvement in our youth program next season, as her hooves should be fully recovered by then. Pumpkin, a five year old gelding, was obese but otherwise healthy. He is slimming down and we are delighted with his response to natural horsemanship training. He has already become active in our youth program.



Since we didn't want JJ to be a lonely goat, we adopted two additional goats. Oakely and Sweetheart love attention from the kids as much as JJ does!

Sadly, just before Thanksgiving we had to euthanize Eli, one of our rescued miniature horses. Eli had diarrhea for nearly a year, and in the past months had lost a great deal of weight. For months, while consulting with several vets (including one from Purdue University), and undergoing a range of testing, we had tried many and various treatments. In the end, nothing helped, and it seemed that cancer was consuming his little body. It eventually became clear that the best way to help Eli was to release him from the battle. Eli came to us in 2012, along with Faith. Both were blind.

These two sweet minis have been a much-loved part of the ranch since the beginning of our youth program. Cricket and Faith have grown quite fond of each other, so Faith has the comfort of her new companion to ease the loss of her old friend, Eli. We will miss Eli and we are very thankful to have had the privilege of giving him these past five years of love, care, and peace at Achaius Ranch.



Youth Program

This year, our youth program served over 150 children and their families through individual and group sessions, and many more through additional events! The 41 youth that came for multiple individual sessions averaged six per person. The Boys & Girls Club, Wabash Valley Alliance, and Indiana Connections Academy were again able to bring groups.



In May, we hosted an event for the JUMP program, in which mentors brought their mentees and other family members to interact with the horses and have lunch at our picnic shelter. Despite rain, it was a very enjoyable time for approximately 24 attendees!



In June, we took our new minis and goats to Fuzzy Bear Preschool in Ladoga for 60 kids to love on.



In August, we participated in National Night Out at Milligan Park, with too many kids to count enjoying a brief visit with Pumpkin and Cricket.



Our Family Fun Night took place in October and was attended by over 200 people! The free event included pony rides, dinner, barn dancing in our new barn, and a horsemanship demo. The evening concluded with a delightful sing-along of worship songs, led by Brian McCulloh and Fr. Joel Weir.



How You Can Help

- ★ Donations to the ranch are vital to this ministry and greatly appreciated! If you would like to help financially, please send a check, payable to Achaius Ranch, to 4592 E 750 S, Ladoga, IN 47954. You can also make one-time or repeating donations via PayPal. (See achaiusranch.org for details.) 750 S, Ladoga, IN 47954. You can also make one-time or repeating donations via PayPal. (See achaiusranch.org for details.)



- ★ If you are interested in being a part of the work we do at Achaius Ranch, please check out the volunteer info on our website and/or contact Elisha.
- ★ We hope you will keep the ranch in your prayers!



- ★ Please remember us when shopping on Amazon through their AmazonSmile program!
- ★ Buy our merchandise! We have mugs, tee shirts, hoodies and other items available in our Welcome Center, or contact Elisha for details.





"I have dreamed about having horses and being a cowgirl my whole life. The first time I went to Achaius Ranch I was ecstatic! This is the best thing that has ever happened to me and I am so thankful. Going to Achaius has helped me with my confidence and my patience a lot. It helps me to feel free and I love all of the great fellowship. Thank you Achaius Ranch!" – Cadence (13)



"I was a completely broken child; so broke and lost that I truly didn't know where life was going to go. At age 12 I started starving myself and was hospitalized with anorexia. I weighed 52 lbs. when I was admitted. I am now 35 years young. I am married to my best friend and together we are blessed with four beautiful children. Achaius Ranch and their ministry has helped me in my healing process. It first started with this woman named Elisha. Her love for the Lord and kindness was God given. The amount of love, respect, and acceptance was more than appreciated in my eyes. I never ever in my life have imagined how the Lord could use a horse to help heal my past hurts, struggles, and heartaches. When I first started working with Iago from the beginning to now, I know that the Lord paired him up for my own personal healing. The forgiveness that I experience from Iago when I accidentally confuse him, the confidence that I have gained in myself, the time that I get to spend and admire God's beauty, whether it be on horseback, doing groundwork, talking to the friends that I have made and now call my family, I am completely blessed more than I deserve. When I am at the ranch I feel so free, completely lost in God's loving arms, whether it be by the staff, or working with the horses. The Lord is completely willing and able to use anything he can to heal your brokenness, he chose my healing to continue at Achaius Ranch. I am forever grateful, thankful, and blessed!" – Crystal Cotton



"Achaius and the horses have impacted my life and made me more confident and assertive. I used to be afraid of riding but now I love riding. I have so much fun there and I hope for a good new season next year. - Davis (11)





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Achaius Ranch exists to nurture healing and growth through the interaction of people with horses in a Christ-centered environment.

Achaius Ranch is a 501(c)(3) corporation.



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It is with great sadness we note that our dear friend and Achaius Ranch Secretary/Treasurer, Billy Belt, passed away suddenly on January 21, 2017. Billy was a supporter of the Ranch since its inception. His wife and children were our first ranch participants, helping us figure out and practice how to do sessions before the Ranch officially opened. One of their daughter's photos appeared on the front of our first brochure. Billy is very greatly missed. Please remember his wife Susan and children Savannah, Summer and Caleb in your prayers.

