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ACHAIUS RANCH NEWSLETTER

LOVE ★ HEAL ★ GROW

Liberty

By Elisha McCulloh

Late winter 2013. The promise of new life, of ease, comfort and plenty after a miserably wet winter, a beautiful paint mare awaited springtime. Did she have any sense of foreboding? When the first flame was sparked in her barn, how quickly did she sense her peril? As the flames spread, what heart-wrenching cries did her two-year old colt make, trapped and suffering so close to her? So close, and yet beyond her ability to help him in his separate stall. How did those flames sear her mother-heart? What did she think, feel, sense as she kicked and struggled to get away from the heat, forced to leave him behind?

Mercifully she freed herself from that burning barn and saved her own life. Tragically, her baby wasn't able to do likewise. Liberty earned her name, given to her eleven years before it made perfect sense.

How did her sweetness and trust remain intact when the baked flesh of her back did not? How is it that she survived at all? So easily the smoke could have ruined her lungs; infection could have entered her



damaged skin and moved deep into her bones. Her mind, her spirit, could have broken. How lonely was she after the fire, with no herd? How did she manage through a long, sweltering summer and then an intensely cold winter with little-to-no shelter as she worked valiantly to heal with nothing more than some bacon grease to soothe her ravaged back? For eleven months she endured as her owner also struggled with hardships, not knowing what to do about her. "Put her out of her misery", "Put her down" people told him, but he couldn't do it, he could not give up on her.

Nearby, so close but unknown, her new home awaited, a place of refuge, healing and love. Yes, eleven months was a very long time to wait, but through the heat and the cold, the pain and the loneliness she survived and now she thrives in her new home, thanks be to God!

Liberty came to Achaius Ranch in late February, 2014. Although skin had regrown over many of the burns one large section would not heal without medical intervention. In early March we took Liberty to Purdue University where she underwent skin grafting: 207 tiny plugs were taken from both sides of her neck and placed on her burnt back. The vet said the damage was so extensive that the skin would never have been able to close over and heal without the grafts. After several days she returned to the ranch. The new grafts had to be protected while we waited and prayed that they would grow. She had to be kept tied on a line in our new run-in shed so that she could not roll and damage her healing skin.

For months she only had freedom to move around in her temporary stall, our sweet Liberty, but she was no longer alone. Her new human friends fed and walked her each day, letting her graze a bit on the fresh spring grass. And now she had a herd to keep her company. She could see Patrick, Sparky and Midnight wherever they went and touch noses with them. The “boys” sure seemed to love her! Patrick stayed very close and stood watch over her, true to his position as leader of that herd.



Finally the day came for this beautiful, long-suffering mare to enjoy some liberty. How exciting (and a bit nerve-racking) it was to set her free in the pasture for the first time! At first she took a few tentative steps and then the weeks and months of confinement were tossed aside in a wonderful, joyful explosion of bucking and galloping around the pasture! Freedom at last! And how fascinating to observe her incorporation into the herd! She quickly established dominance, even over Patrick, but gradually accepted Patrick's leadership.

Liberty immediately accepted the new humans in her life as well. She shows no signs of fear and rarely tries to move away when we approach her to ease the itch of her scars by spraying on a mixture of pure aloe, vitamin e and lavender oils, or to protect her from the sun's damaging rays and biting flies by putting on her special “armor” each morning. When fully “dressed” she looks like a horse waiting for her knight in

shining armor. She will probably always need to wear her armor; there are a few small tufts of hair growing but her back will never have adequate protection from the elements.

How beautiful to see this creature, who has been through such trauma, respond so heroically! At the time of her tragedy, as with all captive horses she was completely dependent upon humans for her well-being. No doubt with good intentions, she was locked in a barn. Sadly, no one saw the fire in time to rescue her and her colt. Without meaning to, humans failed them. Even though different humans now care for Liberty, we're still human. How does she have any faith in us? How does she trust us so readily, without bitterness, resentment, or fear? She can not know our plans for her, how what we do for her, in spite of periods of pain and discomfort, is always in the hope of her healing; she calmly and willingly accepts our lead.

Our God is a loving God who reminds us of His love for us in so many ways if we will only slow down and pay attention. And on the ranch here we KNOW God can use a horse to remind us. As with Liberty we often do not know the plans for us. We often do not see, in periods of pain and discomfort, how God loves us and wants us to be whole. How easily, when the world seems to fall apart around us, do we lose faith? Maybe Liberty's story can help remind us that our Creator loves his creation. Maybe her story can help us remember God truly loves us and wants us to be healed.



END OF SEASON COOKOUT

In August, we had an enjoyable evening of fellowship, food and fun with our volunteers, session kids, and families. We hope to host more fellowship events next season. We'd love to see you here!



MISSION STATEMENT

Achaius Ranch exists to provide refuge of neglected, abused and unwanted horses. We welcome children and their families to the ranch to help care for and interact with horses in a Christ-centered, loving environment in order to nurture healing and growth for both horse and person.

CONNECT WITH US

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PROPERTY IMPROVEMENTS

THE OUTHOUSE

We finally got us some real fancy modern plumbin'! What a blessing to have a fully functioning bathroom for all to use. No more port a potty's!



HITCHIN' POST

While there are no actual hitching posts by this building yet, we're thrilled to have a nice place to keep all our tack organized and accessible inside it!



TREES

We planted 28 trees this year and the wonderfully wet weather has kept them watered with very little help from us. In a few years there will be a lot more shade around here. We love trees!



WELCOME CENTER

As session participants emerge from the tree-lined drive, we love welcoming them in front of our new welcome center! It already looks inviting on the outside and provides a place to sit in the shade. Finishing the interior is one of our most exciting current projects!



VOLUNTEERS

By Elisha McCulloh

It has been amazing to see God at work in so many ways here at the ranch. Truly our greatest need is human resources. As ranch funds have not yet allowed for any paid workers, Nicole and I have managed the day-to-day operations and youth program since this ministry began. We have been blessed by those who have helped through occasional workdays and by the many wonderful people who step in from time to time and help as they are able (such as Taylor French and Stephanie Smith, who sadly for us have both moved away). We constantly pray that God might send others to join in this ministry on a regular basis. This past winter we spent much time researching the idea of having interns here to help with these endless chores and other areas of need. After consulting with our attorney and accountant we reached the sad conclusion that this would be more complicated than we hoped and cost money that the ranch simply couldn't afford at this time. So, we reluctantly resigned ourselves to the reality that we must continue doing the bulk of the work on our own. The idea of interns was firmly set aside.

Our ranch president has often said, "God knows what we need and when we need it." And, can you believe it, this summer we had three honest-to-goodness interns working at the ranch every morning, Monday-Friday! They were truly a God-send and it was a new and wonderful experience to have helpers on such a consistent ongoing basis. Emily Neal, Kylee Trahan, and Courtney Welliver came to us via the JAG program through Crawfordsville High School, where they graduated in May. This program arranged outside funding to pay them for working here this summer. What an unexpected and wonderful program! We didn't go looking for this; it simply came to us. Yes, God knows our needs. We hope they are the first of many summer JAG interns to come, but there are no guarantees so we are simply grateful to have had their help for a couple of months.



Courtney and Emily are now off to college but have offered to return to volunteer when they can in the future. Kylee wants to continue as a volunteer as much as she is able, even though she needs to find a job to pay her bills. In fact, as I write this, it just so happens that Kylee is texting me about continuing through the year(s). In her words: "I wouldn't stop volunteering at the ranch for the world. You guys have been so wonderful and you've taught me so much. I just don't know how to show you how thankful I am that you let us do this for the summer." How these words bless and humble me! How amazing that she feels that we have "let" her come out every morning and work hard to help with the horses, cats, and children. God is so good for sending us lovely people like Kylee!

Happily we've also gained another volunteer. Michaelan Sharp has been helping out at least once a week and plans to continue as long as her schedule allows. We will need even more help than usual as Nicole's due date approaches (late September). If you have time and interest to volunteer at the ranch on a regular basis, please contact us.

Someone else that we would be lost without is Tina Wilson. Tina has made it possible for Nicole to help as a session leader by watching little Finn at least two mornings per week. We can't thank you enough, "YiaYia" Tina!

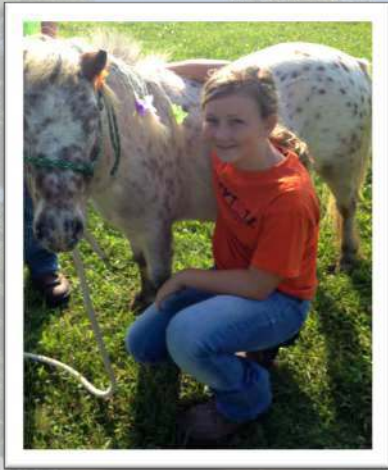


SESSIONS

This is our highest purpose here – serving God through His children (of all ages). We have two session leaders (Elisha and Nicole) and hope that one day we will have additional volunteers trained and available to serve as session leaders. So far we have been able to offer at least one session to every child (ages 8-18) that has applied. Last year we were able to serve 21 children and their families through our youth program and we have served about the same number this year.



SUPPORTERS



We would humbly like to thank everyone that has financially supported the ranch this past year, including those who bought a tee shirt and/or dropped a few dollars into a jar during a ranch event, folks that have set up monthly payments through their employer or via PayPal, the Women of the Moose Lodge in Speedway who have made multiple donations, the young essay winner who chose the ranch as a recipient to be paid by a Montgomery County Community Foundation grant for her award winning essay entry, the young lady who spear-headed several fundraisers for the ranch, the lovely couple that stopped by to have a look around after learning about the ranch from a brochure found in their doctor's office and then mailed us a generous check, the employees at the Wal-mart Optical Lab that chose the ranch as a grant recipient, the local Girl Scout troop that chose the ranch as recipients for their fundraising project, and the many family members who have made donations big and small.

You are all a huge part of this ministry, not only through your dollars but through the emotional boost it gives us to know that you value the work we are doing here in the name of Jesus! And above all we value each and every prayer that is offered up on behalf of this work and all those involved (horse and human)! Thank you.

What your donation pays for:

- * Feed, farrier and medical care for the horses (at a minimum of \$1200 a year per horse, this is by far the largest expense)
- * purchasing/maintaining supplies for the ministry (tack, equipment, and session supplies, etc.)
- * training the horses
- * insurance and legal fees

Abused/neglected horses with physical problems, as well as horses that need emergency care or unexpected vet visits for any reason, incur additional expenses. We've had more of those than ever this past year, especially due to caring for sweet old Scooter in his final days and Liberty's treatment at Purdue.

If you would like to pitch-in to help Achaius Ranch support children, families and horses in need, a tax-deductible donation may be mailed in the enclosed envelope.

Donations can also be made via Paypal at www.achaiusranch.org.

Achaius Ranch is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 corporation.





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