



# ACHAIUS RANCH NEWS

## Feeling Wrong

by Elisha McCulloh

When she came to the ranch at the beginning of the season, Georgie's\* downcast eyes and hunched shoulders spoke of self-doubt, hinted that she might not feel acceptable to the group of Session Leaders and Junior Volunteers gathered in front of the Welcome Center. But I knew this young lady, who had participated in sessions in previous seasons, and I trusted that she would soon feel welcome and embraced by the loving staff, most of whom had never met her until this moment. I knew this, not only because that is the culture that is both natural and purposefully cultivated at the ranch, but because Georgie is truly a lovable, acceptable girl.

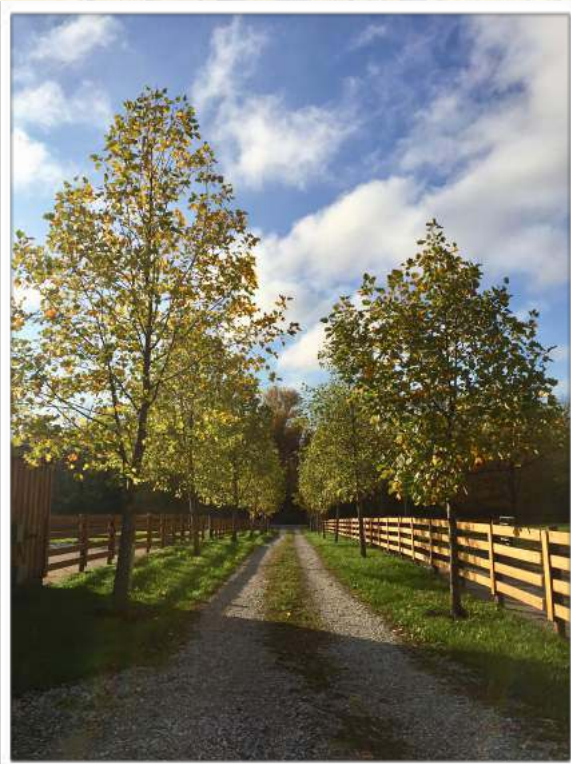
Yes, that can be said of each and every child that comes to the ranch. Each one is worthy of love, simply because we are each created in the image and likeness of God; unique, unrepeatable, wholly worthy of love and acceptance, despite our current fallen condition, our brokenness and flaws. Indeed, that is the underlying reason that Georgie is lovable and acceptable. But specifically, as everyone who got to know her this summer quickly learned, she is not at all hard to accept and to love. Like all the kids

that come here, she has many strengths and gifts, and she is a pleasant person to spend time with, especially during those times when she is free from the bondage of feeling "wrong" about herself.

It is a crippling thing to constantly feel "wrong" about oneself, and sadly, so many people (young and old) feel this way. It is a form of trauma, and it can actually change how we behave and how people experience us – change our very personality. Then it becomes self-perpetuating. If we are given a label, then we often become that label. Every personality trait has pros and cons. It's so easy to see and focus on the negatives, entirely missing the positives. For instance, many kids come to us with a diagnosis of ADHD, and most of the time they thrive here. The same ADHD traits that present problems in other settings can actually prove beneficial to a person at the ranch. These kids are so used to feeling "wrong" in most settings and it must be a relief for them to feel "right" at the ranch.

This same truth applies to horses. One of our session horses came to us from a home where he was always "wrong." He was not the horse that his owner had hoped for. He did not look right. He did not act

right. For the whole of his life, never ever right. And indeed, his behavior had sometimes been truly appalling and problematic. Until he was rescued from the place where he could not be "right" and came to the ranch. Then his true "horsenality" quickly emerged. Most everyone that meets him and works with him now would never imagine him as the "wrong" horse that he had been. He enjoys all





the loving attention he receives from humans and he tries super hard to please them. He is truly a delight! It must be a relief for him to feel “right” at the ranch.

Like Georgie, this horse can still shut down when he experiences too much pressure, when the effects of his past trauma cause him to go “right brain” (impulsively reacting to a sense of danger instead of thinking through a puzzle). But it has been wonderful to see how both human and horse did so less and less over the summer as their self-confidence and their confidence in our acceptance and love for them grew stronger.

May the Holy Spirit give us the eyes to see the unique beauty in each of us, see each other through the eyes of our loving Creator. “I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well.” – *Psalm 139:14*

\*name and other details have been changed to protect privacy.

“We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our own homes to remedy this kind of poverty.” – *Mother Teresa*

## A Place of Healing and Refuge

by Alyssa Rowe

Achais Ranch is not any ordinary place. It is a place of healing and refuge for the hurt and broken. God moves through the people and horses in an extraordinary way. When the opportunity came up for me to be a session leader, I was so excited. I feel like the Lord has called me to pursue a career in trauma and psychology, so I filled out the application and got the job!

Over the course of time that I have worked there, I am learning a million new things everyday! I love all of the other session leaders so much and they have helped me grow in my walk with God on a new level. My relationship skills have improved and I have a greater love and empathy for hurting children. I have not ever been very good at receiving help from people outside of my family, but all of our Junior Volunteers (aka JVs) have grown that area in



me so much!

A couple years ago, I would never have thought that this path would be for me, but from looking back at all of my childhood trauma and experiences, I now understand why I have a burning desire to pursue and love on people from hard places. I give God all of the credit for my new understandings, but man, Achais Ranch is pretty amazing too!

I have always had a hard time with depression and controlling my emotions and usually I try to play it cool when I'm around others, but it's hard to do at Achais. Everybody there treats me as family and knows, somehow, when something's bothering me. I think that God has found a way to really heal me deeply through the people and horses that are there because I've never experienced his healing so well. For the first nine years of my life, I lived with addicts to all kinds of things and I still carry lots of trauma from those things and find it refreshing to have friends that accept you as you are. I am very thankful for Achais Ranch and for all of the opportunities that Elisha has given me to grow. I could not be this far ahead without them!



## Little Brother

by Sarah Rogers

This was my second summer working at Achaius, but this is the first summer my brother has sat in the passenger seat of my Buick held together with good faith and duct tape every single morning, still pulling socks over his feet as he rubbed sleepy eyes. Last summer, my brother timidly asked me in the middle of July if he might be able to come to the place filled with horses and sunshine and I shrugged my shoulders and thought why not? He was quiet that first summer, giving shy smiles and sticking closely to my side—this was my place, and he was just tagging along. That first summer he learned the joys of riding around in the 4-Wheeler, distributing hay to each of the horses to eat. He learned to brush the sides of the powerful bodies of the horses, letting the fur blow away in the summer wind.

This year, I spent the month of May in Zambia, Africa. My brother had applied to be a junior volunteer and had spent a week at Achaius without me and had let his boots make an indentation in the dusty ground—this was now his place too. My brother and I are seven years apart and out of all my siblings, I never would have said we were the closest. He is the youngest child in my family and with each child leaving to get married and forge their own lives, our house became more and more empty. I thought working at the ranch would be good for him. Being the youngest out of eight kids can be hard, especially when they all have their own lives. I came back from Zambia with a head cold and to a brother who walked with confidence to each horse on the ranch, flinging the felt bareback pads on their backs as he looped the straps perfectly every time. I watched him learn to exhale his breath to tell the horse to stop, and I watched him learn to love the towering,

beautiful beasts.

He broke from his shyness this summer and I watched as he became everyone's younger brother, squishing himself in between bodies on the couch and knocking them to the floor with a mischievous smile. He became a little less of a boy this summer, learning to work hard, taking pride in the work of his hands. He beamed with pride every time he knew he did good work. School does not come naturally to my brother and it was amazing to see him excel so naturally at the ranch. His mind remembered every knot, every maneuver, every amount of grain each horse was supposed to get—even having to correct me at times. I loved watching him be the one the younger kids would look to ask questions and he guided them with patient hands. He was the perfect mix of confidence and humility.

I think I met my brother as a person this summer. Our time together went past the early hours of each summer morning, the sun beating down on our necks. He was the one who accompanied me to coffee shops and movie nights, and he was just as much company to me as I was to him. We talked to each other as equals, and there seemed to be no difference in the 21-year-old and the 14-year-old. My mom would often tell me I didn't have to take him when I went places, thinking I only included him out of an older-sister duty. I told her I didn't mind at all, and I tried to explain I genuinely enjoyed his company. I graduate this year, and I have been praying for direction for this summer as to where to live and what to do. I am not sure if I

will be able to work at Achaius this summer, and if I do it will probably be the last time. Even if I don't come back, I will always be thankful to Achaius Ranch for giving me the opportunity to learn to see my brother as the incredible person he is.



"It is said that "Children are the future." If we build a healthy child, then we are laying the foundation stone of building a healthy community." – *Mama Maggie*





## Session Leaders

For the first time, we had five Session Leaders this summer, making it possible to provide more sessions than ever before! The following young women did an amazing job and we hope that some of them will be able to return for our next season.

- Janay Byrer started at the ranch in 2016 as a session participant, was a Junior Volunteer in 2017, and this year graduated to Session Leader (also graduating from high school as a homeschooler). She also works at The Joshua Cup in Crawfordsville.
- Lillie Durbin, the oldest of seven children and home-schooled, is Tiffany Rowe's working student, planning to become a licensed Parelli Professional.
- Brianna Fisher is a case manager at Wabash Valley Alliance and a Masters of Social Work student at IUSSW. She is married with a one-year-old son. We were blessed to have Brianna with us this summer as an intern through her degree program.

- This was Sarah Rogers' second season serving at the ranch. Sarah is a senior studying journalism at the University of Southern Indiana. Post-graduation she plans to become a full-time missionary.
- After completing high school (she is home-schooled), Alyssa Rowe is interested in pursuing studies in psychology and how trauma affects the brain. She also wants to become a licensed Parelli Professional, like her mother, Tiffany.



I am the President of Half Way Home, a 360-sober program for women in our community suffering from drug abuse and other issues negatively impacting them. One of our successful graduates has an 8-year old daughter who attended the Achaius Ranch this past summer. What a wonderful learning and fun experience this was for this child. It was an experience she could never have been able to afford or to attend without the Achaius program's donation and financial support. Horses provide incredible comfort and therapy for children who have been raised in turbulent, unstable homes. The ranch provides the opportunity for children in these situations to benefit from this activity. I highly recommend the Achaius Ranch. The staff is excellent and caring and the one-on-one contact in and of itself is so beneficial to the children involved. – *Sarah Houston Dicks*



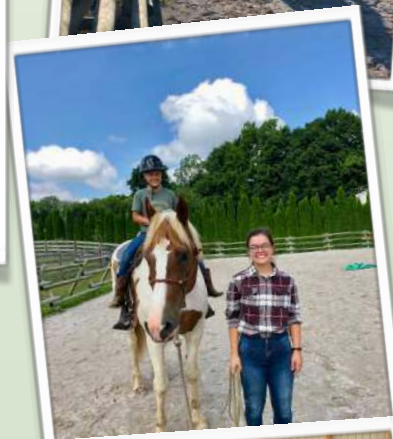


## Youth Program

This year, our youth program served over 200 children and their families through individual and group sessions, and many more through additional events! A core of 51 youth came for an average of 5½ individual sessions per person. We also loved serving groups from the Boys & Girls Club, Wabash Valley Alliance, and Indiana Connections Academy again.

In February, we hosted a group of 20, visiting Montgomery County from Hong Kong! In September, we took two of our minis, a goat, a dog, and a kitten to Fuzzy Bear Preschool in Ladoga for kids to love on. And then we took them to Ladoga Park for a National Night Out Event in October.

We ended our season with a fun barn dance for people that had been part of our youth program this season.





## Horses

With great sadness, just before Christmas we had to euthanize Liberty, who we had rescued in February, 2014, after she had been burnt in a barn fire. Unfortunately, despite successful skin grafts and nearly four years of tender-loving care, her badly damaged skin developed squamous cell carcinoma (cancer) that was pervasive and rampant. The wonderful vets at Purdue Large Animal Hospital agreed that treatment was not a viable option. We chose not to prolong her suffering, especially as the harsh winter season approached and we were unable to keep her exposed, damaged back warm. We laid her to rest in her pasture. We greatly miss Liberty and are so thankful for the happy years we had together here!

One of our very first rescue horses, Sadie, reached the end of her days in summer, 2018, after a long, full life. Sadie (along with our Eva) had been rescued years ago by the Indiana Horse Rescue after being confiscated, along with more than 100 herd-mates (taken from an unethical, abusive breeder), during what we were told was Indiana's largest criminal confiscation case in Indiana's history. Sadie and Eva were our very first adopted rescue horses in our earliest days. Sadie enjoyed many happy years here and now rests beside Liberty.

On a happier note, we gained four horses this year!

Mackinney came to us in March, having been rescued by Tiffany Rowe, 3-Star Parelli

Professional (and our very dear friend). We named him Mackinney, which means "God has heard me," since he was rescued from where he had been starving, alone in a depleted little patch of land, for many months. His body condition was a one (many horses die before they even reach that point of starvation). We brought him to the ranch and carefully followed a re-feeding protocol and provided vet care from teeth to hooves, including chiropractic care. He amazed us with his resilience and overall health despite the damage from starvation.

Within two months, he looked like a new horse, and he has steadily continued to improve. He has already participated in our youth program!

Quinn came to the ranch in December, 2017. Quinn was a "nurse mare foal," a refugee from the Thoroughbred racing industry. Quinn was rescued and raised for two years by another similar ministry,

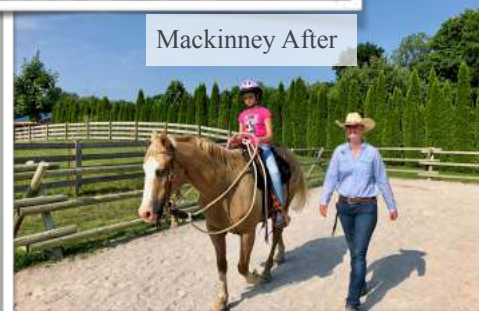
Stormhaven Youth Ranch in Kentucky. He is now approaching five years old and continuing to develop physically, mentally and emotionally. We named him Quinn, which means wise or intelligent.

Duffy, a nine-year-old black Quarter Horse gelding, came to us from a therapeutic riding center in Southern Indiana. We named him Duffy, meaning "dark one who brings peace." This name suits him perfectly, as his confident, intelligent leadership has indeed brought peace to our entire herd of geldings.

Seersha is a 14 year old Tennessee Walker who came to us in January of 2018. Seersha had previously been badly abused, starved, and was rescued from slaughter in May, 2017. Seersha (our new name for her, which means "freedom") is an intelligent, confident mare who did not trust humans when she arrived. She spent most of the year undergoing assessment and training with Tiffany Rowe and has made good progress.



Mackinney Before



Mackinney After



Quinn

## JV Program

We formalized our Junior Volunteer (JV) program this year. Ten young people, who had previously participated in sessions, committed to serving the ranch on a weekly basis all summer. We began with three mornings of training and team-building activities, and then provided them with weekly group lessons and occasional individual lessons. These young people made a fantastic addition to our team, in addition to gaining a great deal from the experience! On average, each JV spent 95 hours at the ranch this year alone!



"This year was my first year, and I loved it so much I didn't want to leave. Merlyn is my favorite horse. I worked with him a lot. All the session leaders are so nice. I have loved horses for so long, but after the first time I did sessions, I liked them more than ever." –  
*session participant*

## How You Can Help

- ★ We hope you will keep the ranch in your prayers!
- ★ 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](http://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.
- ★ Please remember us when shopping on Amazon through their AmazonSmile program, at Kroger through their Community Rewards program (our organization is #PV469), and/or any other service that allows you to designate the ranch as recipients of rewards when you shop!
- ★ Remember us if you work for an employer that matches employee donations to nonprofits!
- ★ Buy our merchandise! We have mugs, tee shirts, hoodies and other items available in our Welcome Center, or contact Elisha for details.





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

"I'm so thankful my daughter was able to participate in sessions at Achaius Ranch this summer. She looked forward to it every week and loved every minute. The atmosphere was loving and Christ centered. I knew my daughter was cared for and taught with love. I'm especially glad she was able to be around so many good female role models. The work Achaius Ranch does is invaluable and it's such a blessing that they provide it free of cost to children." – *parent of a session participant*