



ACHAIUS RANCH NEWS

A Stranger with a Vision

by Elisha McCulloh

It came through a voicemail message from a stranger all the way across the country, who had never heard of Achaius Ranch before that day. It couldn't have come at a better time, which points toward the One who is outside of time and space, who sees our needs and meets them in ways that only He can orchestrate.



On a Tuesday afternoon in late October, the phone rang, and I let it go to voicemail because I was watching grandkids while my daughter, Nicole, was outside with the vet. It was a particularly rough day for many reasons. At the moment the phone rang, Nicole was feeling discouraged and sad because they had just completed the task of euthanizing two dear old horses in failing health.

This is always a painful, though necessary, part of ranch life, and we take seriously the

responsibility to care for each creature that God places here, even at the end of their days.

I bought Keva in 2004 – years before any of us had a vision of starting a nonprofit ranch ministry. She was the mare who first gave me confidence to trail ride, and then she became our first session horse, giving many children that same sense of comfort and confidence. Due to inevitable arthritis, she retired a few years back, in her mid-twenties.

Midnight was given to the ranch six years ago by Bob, a kind Vietnam vet whose health no longer allowed him to care for the handsome black Tennessee Walker / Missouri Foxtrotter gelding. He was already in his twenties when he arrived, but Midnight was a favorite in sessions and even through his retirement years. Over the past year, as with Keva, it was clear that age was increasingly taking its toll on him.



We worked hard to keep them both as healthy and comfortable as possible, with nutrition, vet, farrier, chiropractic care, and even pain medicine, but it became clear that putting them through another winter would be unkind.

Knowing that the hard thing you have to do is the right thing to do doesn't make the thing easy to do. We can do our best to prepare ourselves emotionally, but unless our hearts grow hard, we will still grieve each loss.

So Nicole was sitting in the Polaris Ranger after the painful task was completed, gazing at the remaining beautiful living, breathing, healthy horses, and feeling discouraged, thinking about how we would eventually have to say goodbye to each one, when I forwarded to her (and the rest of our board members) the voicemail I had received a few minutes earlier.

In addition to the difficulties of the day, I had lately been feeling discouraged for reasons that can only be attributed to the tactics of the evil one. As I had walked out the door to go watch Nicole's kids so she could meet the vet, I had been at my lowest point, so I had told my Heavenly Father that I sure could use some kind of encouragement from Him. I never imagined it would come from a voicemail message from a stranger!

If you read this entire newsletter, you will see that God has been doing some wonderful new things here at the ranch. We have been trying to follow where He seems to be leading us and hang on during this crazy ride! It's so much easier to see behind us than in front of us – we can clearly witness His hand in what He has already done here, but while new landscapes take shape before us, it can be easy to question whether we're headed in the right direction. I've always found this to be so. But God lets me know what I need to know just when I need to know it – sometimes in the most unexpected ways.

I am thankful that the message came to us in voicemail so that we can listen again (and again). It was a message that we found mysterious and inexplicable, but genuine and credible, and just the kind of encouragement that God knew that we needed.

A stranger named Skyler from California had a vision of the Lord riding a horse across a galaxy of stars – a horse named Achaius. Skyler then googled Achaius, which led him to discover Achaius Ranch. Clearly moved by this vision and perceiving that it was meant for us, he then called to share it – a wonder-filled message of encouragement. The main point of it was simply this: "I don't know what kind

of season you've been in, but God sees you, God loves you, Jesus knows you. You're doing a good thing!"

Sometimes the hardest days are the ones that bring the greatest blessings.

Learning to Enjoy People

by Madyson Williams

When I first came across the ranch, I was fresh off my third move in four years. Being young, impressionable, and extremely disenfranchised at the time, I was desperate for a place to belong. My family, of course, was also feeling the strain of not having a solid place to call home, so naturally tensions between my siblings and I were on the rise; coupled with sharing a small room with two younger sisters, conflict was bound to arise.



We love each other, but we had our disagreements, as all siblings do, so it was imperative that each of us find a hobby strictly for us, a place or an activity we could use as a means for escape when one of us had a bad day.

I had always been fond of horses but had fallen out of the routine of lessons after our second move took me further away from my current riding stables than my parents were willing to travel. As Emma found softball, and Sydney, gymnastics, I was left grasping at straws for a new hobby. My parents decided that when I entered middle school, I would begin riding horses again; now we just needed to find where. The first place we came across was a

local barn that was more geared towards competitive riding, but fortunately the instructor pointed us in the direction of Achaius Ranch.

I had found my connection with God faltering amidst the turmoil of uncertainty that comes with a change in schools, homes, and of course, rooms, so when my parents and I learned that the ranch was a healing ministry, we jumped at the chance to be a part of it. I began my first season of lessons in the summer of 2016, my session leaders were welcoming and warm, but I still struggled to make true connections, as the constant strain of unfamiliarity had instilled a bit of trust issues and flightiness in me over the years.

By the end of the summer I was hooked, I am not ashamed to admit that I cried on the last day of sessions (as I now do every year). My parents could tell that I was learning to trust in both people, and God's plan for me, so they were overjoyed when I continued on in lessons, and eventually as a Junior Volunteer and then Wrangler for the next three seasons into what is now the present.

I am proud to admit that I have been here for four years and counting, because the atmosphere of healing and positivity that Achaius has offered me has made it into a very secure place for me. Since I started my journey here, I have learned how to trust, how to listen, how to speak kindly to myself and others, and how to love the world and God in ways that I never have before. Over the years I have faced many challenges but knowing that I have a place to go every summer is a refreshing thought that helps me to think of all of the good things to come.

This ministry is extremely supportive and without them I do not know where I would be today, I would like to think that Achaius has been a catalyst that inspires me every day and will undoubtedly influence my choice in careers in the future. I enjoy horses, as I always have, but now I enjoy people and helping them as well. Even my friends can tell you that I admire this place and the people in it as though they were a second family to me. As this season draws to a close, I begin to look towards another great year, and the start of my own journey into my senior year and beyond.

JV Program

We had 23 participants in Our Junior Volunteer (JV) program this year; two of these were Wranglers, a position which requires a greater level of skill, commitment, and responsibility. On average, each participant spent over 100 hours at the ranch this summer!



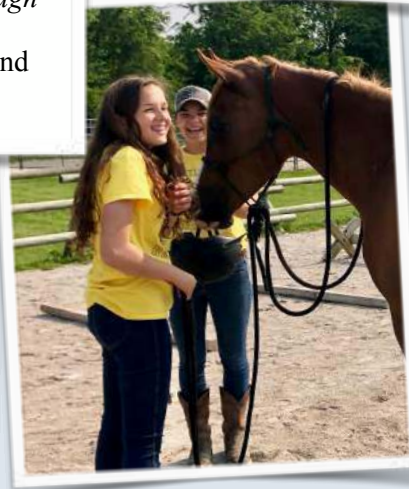


Horses

With the Rowe family and their menagerie living at the ranch this summer, we were extremely blessed and grateful to include most of their horses in our youth program. We could not have offered as many sessions without them, especially with one of our main session horses (Iago) spending the entire season recovering from a major abscess. (We're relieved and grateful to have Iago back in full health!) The Rowe's have graciously offered to continue loaning horses to AR as needed for sessions. This is a huge blessing and will allow us to keep up with the increasing numbers of kids wanting to participate!

This lovely young Welsh pony is the latest addition to the McCulloh's herd and part of the AR program team. She is confident, clever, curious, and cute. Her name is Hope and we couldn't be happier to have her at the ranch!





Youth Program

We started the year wondering if we would have enough Session Leaders to serve the growing number of youth wanting summer sessions, but God provided for this need in abundance! We ended up with five “full-time” (four mornings per week) Session Leaders (Will Bellendir, Jasmine Clark, Hannah Crosby, Tina Cummings, and Alyssa Rowe), and two previous leaders that surprised us by offering to return part-time (Lillie Durbin and Jenny Zehner). In addition, we had help from the Rowe family almost daily, which made a significant impact on the quantity and quality of activities we were able to offer during the season.

Our summer youth program served 200+ children and their families. Many of them came for individual sessions; others participated in our premier summer Day Camp, or our Fall Homeshool Day Camp. We also enjoyed serving groups, such as Valley Oaks and Indiana Connections Academy.

Seven of the teen girls that had already been highly involved at the ranch participated in a teen girls’ group this Fall, for three hours after school on Mondays. In addition to advancing their horsemanship skills and helping with chores, we discussed Max Lucado’s book, *You’ll Get Through This*. It was a tremendous time of deepening relationships with each other, with the horses, and with the Lord.

Women's Trauma Recovery Program

Together with our License Clinical Social Worker (Elisha McCulloh, Program Director), this Fall, two college students participated in an internship at the ranch, in which we worked with women that had struggled with symptoms of distress resulting from traumatic incidents or situations in their lives. Our team included Ashley Shuler, a Licensed Addiction Counselor Associate and Masters level Clinical Mental Health student, and Tiffany Rowe, a horse psychologist (3-star licensed Parelli professional) as well as an undergrad (human) psychology student focusing on trauma recovery. During this internship, we used EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) – a treatment method that is considered one of the most researched and most effective for healing symptoms of trauma – partnering with horses to enhance the therapeutic benefits of the intervention. We have experienced EMDR ourselves and it had such a positive impact that we wanted to make this available to others. Eleven women completed the program with great success. Below are some of their comments (you can read Emily Wilson's own account of her experience in this newsletter).

"I can hardly believe the change in myself. I can't explain how the clip clopping of a horse as you work thru painful trauma issues can render long buried traumas powerless to keep hurting you and can replace them with new positive images conducive to happier living – but it did for me!.... As Duffy moved clippity clopping along and we talked about the traumas – actually relived them in a sense – I could also feel the wind, hear the birds sing and the stream flowing along so that helped me have a strong sense of reality and the beauty of the present and not just get lost in the old stuff as is so easy to do."



"I think the natural way the horse moves is most conducive for bilateral stimulation for natural healing."

"It was hands down the fastest route to getting to a root issue that I have ever experienced."

"I have noticed that my anxiety is down from my daily activity. I just realized that I have actually slept through the night since my last session. I normally only sleep 3-4 hours a night. This is fantastic!!"

"It was a life changing experience because my trauma symptoms have diminished significantly."

"Astounding."

"I feel like I was able to talk openly about the past and present traumatic experiences and in doing so uncovered unresolved issues.... In turn able

to bring to light, forgive others and myself and let go of the past for good.”

“For the first time in years I am not on edge every second of the day.”

“Amazing! Out of all the therapy I have experienced in my life I finally felt like I dealt with something in my life rather than just talk about it.”

On the Christian element of this program, participants found it: “valuable,” “comforting,” “the best part,” “uplifting and real,” “vital for me,” “completely matched my needs.”

“A remarkable healing is occurring in me....

After participating in the Women’s Trauma Recovery Program at Achaius Ranch, I have been able to reprocess the traumatic memories and following negative behaviors that I have shown since [my husband’s] fatal heart attack. I am now a new person. I have hope for the future and peace in my heart. My joy is complete as I am thankful for the life God has given me. I can rest in knowing that I found true love with [my husband] and that our love will never die. Together we raised beautiful, intelligent children, who have promising futures. [My husband] has completed his tasks on earth and is now resting in peace. I know that he desperately wanted to hear the words from the Lord, ‘Well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord.’ I believe wholeheartedly that he has heard those words and that fills me with peace and joy.”

We are hopeful that this internship (which was free to all participants) is just the beginning of a new program here at the ranch, and that God will allow an affordable means for us to provide equine-assisted EMDR to a growing list of youth and adults that have requested an opportunity to participate.

The “Miracle” of Equine-Assisted EMDR

by Emily Wilson

In my time at Achaius Ranch this fall, participating in the Women’s Trauma Recovery Program, I found two beings who did the very important work of listening. One of them was Tiffany Rowe, my counselor. The other was Duffy, my horse buddy for the process of Equine-Assisted EMDR. Tiffany listened and asked questions that let

me work tough stuff out on my own, and I felt loved and accepted. I trusted her to help me feel safe when the emotions of past memories were overwhelming and I wasn’t sure what to do with them. Duffy listened, but it’s harder to quantify how a horse does that. It’s kind of mystical and subtle; touching his soft fur and feeling the rocking movement of his gait pulled at something deep down, maybe a little part of me as a child needing to be rocked and comforted. Tiffany and Duffy showed me LOVE.

Once the beginning work of creating “resources” - which are a safety mechanism in the mind - was done, it was time to move on to the real work. This didn’t actually feel like work because my mind was allowed to work on its own. During the bilateral stimulation (BLS) that is a key part of EMDR, the brain is actually healing itself. This process normally happens when we are in REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, when the brain heals broken nerve synapses. Duffy’s gait was the key to this. My hands rested on his shoulders, feeling the left-right-left-right movement, opening up my mind to see all the memories and negative beliefs connected to the trauma I had experienced.

My negative belief going into my EMDR was that I have to always be in control because that had made me feel safe and comfortable and kept me from feeling like my life was chaotic and random, but it eventually made me closed-off and hard-hearted. I came to Achaius because that thought was no longer serving me. While it may have kept me safe and alive for a time, it was now causing hurt in my relationships and chaos in my everyday life. Tiffany gave me space to talk about all the things that had led to this negative cognition, and then helped me to see for myself that I was worthy of love and healing.

We were working towards establishing a belief that “I can trust God is in control.” Tiffany asked me, “And what would that mean, if you could let go of control in your heart, what would that look like in your daily life?” I paused and asked myself the question in my mind. In a flurry and rush, strong like a gust of wind yet as calming as the sunrise, the answer came to me. “Love.”

Tiffany and Duffy helped me HEAL. On a surface level, a lightly tilled soil level, I had believed that I could “trust God is in control,” but as I talked, and Duffy walked and Tiffany listened, it began to grow roots down to the bottom of my heart. During a two-hour EMDR session, Tiffany asked me to focus on the original traumatic memory that gave me the negative belief that I had to be in control, while Duffy provided BLS as we walked around the arena.

Towards the end of that session, I had a moment where my life flashed before my eyes. My mind went back to the memory of my four-year-old self; I felt like I was zooming through a tunnel at lightning speed, passing by all the memories I had shared with Tiffany and Duffy, and finally reaching the end of the tunnel where I was there, sitting atop Duffy. I rushed to the surface, the new belief rooted in my heart. It was as if God was saying to me: "See, that moment brought you here, to be loved and to learn and to see my providence." I burst into tears of joy and tried to explain to Tiffany what had happened. She smiled and said something like, "that's awesome! We're almost done!"

Tiffany and Duffy helped me GROW. Since the end of my EMDR experience, I've seen massive personal growth in areas I've been trying to improve in for years but kept hitting the wall of my negative belief. From little things like sticking to a routine, meeting my commitments, and just eating food and drinking water regularly to the very big things like being present with my children and able to hold rational conversations with my husband, my new cognition has been with me.

I believe that the Holy Spirit worked alongside Tiffany, Duffy and me as we did this process, because the only way I can think of to describe what happened is a Miracle.

The Rowes

If you have been following the ranch for the past few years, you may be familiar with Tiffany Rowe, who has made profound contributions to this ministry through her professional skills, her dedication to serving the Lord, and her personal commitment to supporting this and other equine facilities that help people. A year ago at this time, the only inkling of how Tiffany and the entire Rowe family would soon become intricately involved in the ministries of AR was in the wishful dreams (or visions?) of our Program Director. But in May of this year, due to complex reasons necessitating a relocation, the Rowe family moved in with the McCullohs at the ranch and poured themselves into service here. The entire crew is now happily settled on their own farm, ten minutes away, and still significantly involved in many aspects of this ministry. We couldn't be happier or more thankful for this delightful development! (You can read their story in Tiffany's words in this newsletter.)

Moving to New Ross

by Tiffany Rowe



About this time last year my oldest son came to me with a dream. He said, "I don't know if this is just a dream dream or one of those dreams that is going to come true." That spiked my interest and I asked him to tell me all about it. In his dream we had just bought a new farm and we were moving in. He described the white farmhouse with a green roof and the indoor arena. There was an old house as well. The pasture was a hay field and the neighboring pasture had livestock in it. The elderly couple who had sold us the farm was there. They had to sell because her health was declining and the farmer more time to support her. There were two red tractors too. The older one was larger than the newer one. There was various farming equipment. It was a very detailed dream. After he had described it fully, I assured my son that if it wasn't a dream dream the Lord would reveal that to us in His timing.

Later that same day one of my middle daughters came to me too. She said, "I had a dream!" Of course, I was thinking well this is

interesting. I asked her about her dream as well. She said, "well there was a white house with a green roof." I stopped her there and had her go talk to her brother about his dream first. Not much later they both came into my room very exuberantly. After discussing both their dreams they had realized they had dreamed about the same place. My daughter finished telling me about her dream and I sent them both on their ways to pray about it and wait on the Lord. I decided then that I wasn't going to get on the internet and look for white houses with green roofs. I was content where I was and had no intention of moving. I was intrigued however and pondered it in my heart. At that time, I prayed that God would make it crystal clear if he wanted us to relocate otherwise, I was staying where I was.

About a month later our living situation became a bit more difficult. I still wasn't ready to relocate, and I didn't think the kids were either. In the back of my mind I remembered the dreams and I prayed that God would change everyone's hearts toward a move. Little by little the Lord chiseled everyone's hearts into desiring the white house with the green roof. I was amazed at the transformations of everyone. Watching the process was like watching a movie to me. One by one each kid came to me with a longing to relocate. Until it was just me holding us back. Well that and the fact that we hadn't found the white house with the green roof yet. Finally, the time came, and the Lord clearly encouraged me to let everyone know I was ready. My husband, who was the first one on board with the Lord's new direction for us was already making arrangements to find work elsewhere. At that time, we didn't even know where to look. We all set down with my laptop in search of a white house with a green roof. Several days and so many hours later we had nothing to show for our labor. We prayed and waited.

At this time a retired realtor friend of ours three hours north had been on the lookout for a white house with a green roof. As she was driving, she spotted a white house with a green roof. The

owner was out in the yard. She stopped in and asked if he would like to sell. As you can imagine he was quite surprised. He admitted that he had been thinking of selling though. His wife was ill, and he couldn't take care of the farm and her. He gave her a price, which was about \$200,000 above our budget. She contacted me to let me know the good news. Once I heard the price, I knew that wasn't for us. We had prayed as a family and felt good about the budget we had set. Several weeks went by and the owner contacted our friend to let her know he was reducing the price by \$200,000. At this point we still hadn't even seen the property. We couldn't look at it online because it wasn't even listed. We made plans to go and see the place. At this time there still were no other options that would provide for the needs of a family of eight, with 12 horses, eight dairy goats, three dogs, three cats, three bunnies, two cows, and so many chickens.



There was a lot of excitement when we pulled up to the farm. As soon as we stepped out of the van my oldest son said this is the farm in my dream. Everything was there from the older couple, the large older red tractor, the smaller newer red tractor, the hay field, even the neighboring field of livestock, and the old

house. At that point we started the process to buy the farm. In the meantime, we moved the whole family including all the animals into Achaius thanks to the graciousness of Rodney and Elisha!! We closed on the farm on July 29th. It was an exciting and eventful move. We had no idea where we would end up and are so blessed to be in New Ross, IN. We absolutely love it and I find so much peace about the whole journey.

This summer and fall we were able to volunteer at Achaius. We did regular sessions, two kids camps, a teen girls' group, and Equine Assisted (EA) EMDR sessions for women who had experienced trauma. It was an amazing summer and fall! It was so therapeutic, and we were able to support so many on their journeys towards healing and hope. In the present we are so excited to love on this community and share the love of God with those around us.

Nicole Wilson - Ranch Manager/Volunteer Coordinator

Founders and residents of the ranch, Nicole & Sam Wilson, have been busy with their growing family these past few years. Now that their youngest of four children is walking, Nicole is delighted to step more fully into her role as Ranch Manager and has also taken on the role of Volunteer Coordinator (training, supervising, and scheduling volunteers), which is a wonderful help to our increasingly busy Program Director! If you are interested in joining the team of volunteers, please contact Nicole directly at 765 366-3253.



We All Have a Story

by Alyssa Rowe

Whether it's the lady next door, the cashier at Wal-Mart, or the girl selling girl scout cookies. It's easy to get lost in life and not notice the small but important aspects of how we impact others. This year at Achaius Ranch, we were able to be a part of so many precious lives. It's amazing how many kids we got to see open up and hear their stories of healing and redemption. One pivotal point for me was being able to participate in the teen girls group. I loved being able to talk and share things with these girls and have time to hang out and love on each other!

I was also blessed to be able to be a session leader for a second year! I loved every minute of it! All of the session kids were able to connect with "their" horse and you could see all of the relationships blooming! One in particular, I was able to see a love and communication through him and the horse. He was really quiet and when he was rewarding the horse, he would close his eyes and place his hand right in the middle of the horse's head. He didn't have to say a word, and you could see the horse instantly relax under his quiet, gentle touch. Even the horses here have stories and when the child learns the story of the horse they are playing with, it helps them to not feel so alone in their journey.

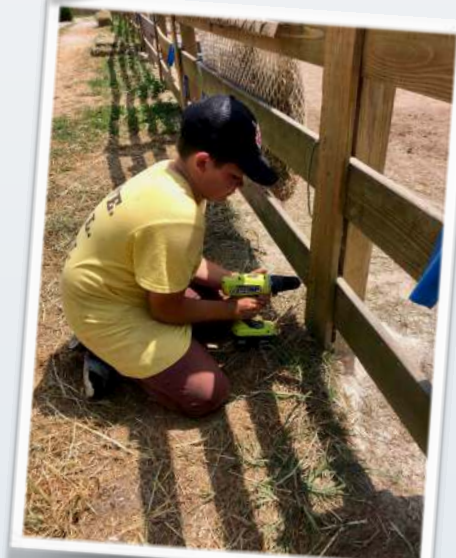
Through working with all of these kids, it has changed me as a person as well. As all people do, I have a story that God is walking me through healing with. Horses have played a giant role in that process as well. It's so amazing to be able to go out and simply sit and talk to them. It may seem silly, but horses don't judge! They don't talk back either, but sometimes you just need someone to listen. And that in itself is healing.





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 for details.)
- ★ If you wish to specifically support a new trauma recovery program (or any other specific part of this ministry), please make a note of it on your check or PayPal payment.
- ★ 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 Nicole.
- ★ Please remember us when shopping on Amazon through their AmazonSmile program, at Kroger through their Community Rewards program (our organization is #PV469).
- ★ 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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Achais Ranch exists to nurture healing and growth through the interaction of people with horses in a Christ-centered environment.