

SUMMER
2005



Pegasus Press

Helping at-risk youth soar to greater heights

The Ugly Duckling

It was past midnight and the main street of our small, rural town was empty and peaceful. But, we were far from calm as we waited in anxious anticipation for the arrival of the truck loaded with donated horses from the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation. These four new horses would be joining our other horses to create a strong and diverse “treatment” team. A team of four legged therapists with the special ability to give and receive unconditional love and attention at Tekoa, a treatment home filled with children who have only known a life of neglect, hurt and disappointment.

After meeting the driver and leading him down yet more winding roads, we arrived at our barn and proceeded to unload the four nervous, wild-eyed thoroughbreds. The final horse off the trailer was a thinner version of the first three—black, gawky, with a baseball sized knot on one knee. As thoroughbreds go, he was not the cream of



Money in the warm up ring at a public show.

the crop. Still, there was something about this “ugly duckling” that made us want to learn more.

We knew that this five year old gelding,

Little Money, had earned his name, winning a meager \$18,000 racing before his knee injury. As the weeks passed into winter, we found that Money was what is termed a “hard keeper”. He ate twice as much as the others, yet remained thin despite regular worming and dental checks. We also discovered that this horse had a genuinely likeable personality and loved attention from the kids. He was well behaved under-saddle, enjoyed trail-rides, and even a little low profile jumping.

On one occasion we were reminded that race horses live a sheltered life and seldom meet other farm life. The day Money met a llama, we learned that while he is amenable to most people and experiences, llamas are not part of that category! For 36 distraught hours, Money struggled with accepting the visiting llamas. Watching his anxiety build, we hoped he could soothe himself if he was loose in the riding ring. Despite our hopes, Money taught us that his anxiety, when awakened, gave him an inner strength and determination enabling him to easily clear our 5 foot fence in his search for higher ground to protect himself from the llamas.

But our story about Money is really about how he, except when confronted by llamas, is a steadfast part of our treatment team, perpetually unruffled. His first spring and summer with us were extremely busy, with a parade, horse shows, lessons and demonstrations. Throughout, Money has been a solid therapeutic riding mount, hauling here and there, encountering everything from fire engine sirens, balloons and streamers, to crowds and squealing kids in wheelchairs. He seems to intuitively know how to behave in response to our at-risk kids and children with disabilities. He readily provides safety, companionship, reliability and affection.

On an otherwise gloomy day, a disheartened child can experience a relaxing ride through peaceful woods in the company of Money. Yet, when a



Somer & Little Money enjoying a Spring ride with help from Chambree, AmeriCorps member

teenager needs to learn the importance of clear communication and patience Money can remind a rider that horses hear with more than just their ears. By partnering with our four legged “therapists” at Tekoa, we support and challenge our children to awaken their inner strength and determination to overcome their fears and ‘move to higher ground’.

As horse trainers, we too often develop a critical eye for confirmation and movement, focusing on horses’ external faults. Being cynical adults, be it in regards to horses or life in general, we often forget the morals of the fairy tales we read as children. One such story, “The Ugly Duckling” is a reminder that our first impressions about what is on the surface do not always mirror what is inside. The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy defines an ugly duckling as “someone who blossoms beautifully after an unpromising beginning”. Both Little Money and the Tekoa kids help us learn that if we shift our focus to what is on the inside, we see the promise of the beautiful swan, just waiting to emerge.

A version of this story was published in the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation national newsletter with over 8,000 copies distributed.

Confessions of a Closet Horse Lover by Miriam Walls

If you have ever met people who ride or train horses, you may have noticed that they are unique—a different breed of people. The way they talk and interact with horses is as if the horses themselves are human. Even though I had some experience with horses at summer camp, I had no idea that horses have such distinct personalities and so much of their behavior can be analyzed or interpreted.

As an AmeriCorps member with Tekoa I began coming to the barn in November to help with the horse classes and in order to build relationships with some of the kids. However, I found myself intrigued by the horses. I noticed that different horses had different personalities and certain kids were drawn to particular horses. The kids taught me basic grooming and riding skills and I began to understand how a rider can interpret a horse's communication.

However, it wasn't until I met Clint that I really fell in love with horses and understood this horse ESP that had been so foreign to me. Clint, named after Mr. Eastwood, was a beautiful, three year old, chestnut mustang. Tiffany, myself and three Tekoa boys began a 12 week training session to prepare Clint to be sold to another owner. At first, I thought that Clint was the biggest baby that just needed to 'get over himself', but then I began to understand that because Clint was a mustang, being wild and untamed was central to his personality as well as his

know Clint, I felt like he and I moved closer towards trusting each other. From this experience, I gained a better understanding of how to build relationships, in that they can't be rushed or forced, but must unfold in their own time and way. Furthermore, I learned to accept and even appreciate that Clint was a very independent and strong-



Junior trainers at work teaching Clint ground skills.

willed horse, which was the nature of his personality and breed, not anything that could be changed.

Surprisingly, working with Clint taught me more about myself than I ever could have taught him. As I gave Clint commands to walk or to stop, I had to communicate verbally as well as physically, and moreover I was required to be assertive in order to make Clint respond to what I was asking. In the same way, I used those skills to motivate kids of Tekoa to come to class or to express themselves appropriately. Because Clint would have good days and bad, training him taught me to persevere just as I do in supporting the kids as they face life's obstacles. Lastly, working with Clint built my self confidence because I felt competent in my abilities as a horse trainer and that same confidence helped me be a positive influence in the kids' lives.

While I don't have a "horse lover" license plate on my car, working with horses has really captured my heart and opened my mind. Before I didn't understand why working with horses was amazing, but they truly are incredible animals that can teach you more about life than you ever could imagine, if you are willing. Training Clint has changed my life; my only regret is that I wished I had spent more time with him. People say you never forget your first love. I believe that to be true in regard to horses as well.

Monty Roberts has donated *10 Horse Sense for People* books as well as recently donated books on tape, multiple videos and several other books. At the time of



Miriam & Clint working on the essential mastery of leading

breed. Very slowly, Clint began to trust us, learning and remembering what we taught him. At the end of the 12 weeks, Clint was able to walk and stop on command, be led around the ring and be ridden.

While we had succeeded in "taming" Clint, it was a much more difficult task to have Clint trust us. There were several circumstances where Clint got scared and panicked and any comfort or reassurance we tried to give him was useless. Slowly, and after spending considerable time getting to



TRAVeling

The Therapeutic Riding Association of Virginia, TRAV, acts as an organizing body for many programs across the state, hosting conferences as well as the annual state horse show. In Lexington, Virginia every fall over 15 programs come together with horses, riders and volunteers for two days of good hearted competition. Riders compete with varying ability levels at different challenges ranging from dressage tests to obstacle courses.

Through the help of sponsors the Tekoa *Reins to Ride* program participated last October with two riders. The adventure began with riders, volunteers and horses departing on a Friday and returning 24 hours later exhausted from the trip. Aaron Miller and Alyssa DeHart represented the program well and took home ribbons. Andrea Lowe also competed last year with the *Reins to Ride* program at a "Big Red Barn" show. The scholarship program helped make this opportunity an option for the entire Tekoa crew. Thank you to our supporters!



Nisha & Aaron navigating an appetizing obstacle course.

Pegasus Press printing, work was being done on finalizing "*Clint*" articles for his international newsletter and website. Watch for the next Press to learn more about this great partnership or check both our website and theirs, www.montyroberts.com, for more information.



Pen to Paper

In Their Own Words:

Over the winter, we held classroom equine academic classes since the weather was too brutal for us to brave the cold. In one of the weekly classes we asked the kids to write a short story about 'their' horses. To help spur the creative sparks we provided some questions, ranging from how they felt about horses when they came to Tekoa to which horse was their favorite. We thought that the students would not want to write as a part of horse class since they do so in academic school all day long. We were mistaken. The girls put their heads down and started writing immediately. In the quiet classroom, usually filled with playful laughter, they rarely even looked up as the silence of winter moved inside. The girls really took the assignment to heart and put a lot of effort into their articles. It is amazing what different gifts a horse can give to a human. While a lot of the young writers wanted to share their essays, we could only choose a few for this edition of the Press. From their hearts through their pen and on to this paper we are proud to share –

"The thing I do not like about horse class is that I do not think we get enough time to spend with them, but other than that I love horse class. Last, my future goals are to own a ranch some where with a least two horses and make enough time to spend with them."

Written By: Misty, Level I Rider, Barn Assistant
{At such a young age, Misty recognizes the importance of "making time"} •

"When I came to Tekoa, I really didn't know that much about horses. The only thing I knew was that they are beautiful animals. My sister loves horses. She always loved horses because she thinks that when she has no one else to talk to she could talk to her horse because it would listen to her."

Written by: Kayla, Level I Rider {Kayla helps to remind us about the value of silence and the worth of a good listener} •

"I can't actually remember a time that horses have helped me get through a situation. They do challenge me sometimes, when I try to get them in a stall or to give them grain or even to catch them. They make me feel calmer because I feel more patient with animals more than humans."

Written by: A Tekoa Student, Level I Rider {To know our strengths and accept our weaknesses leaves this child safely anonymous} •

After a while, I got used to them [horses]. I realized that horses respect you for who you really are. Doris is my favorite horses. I think it is because she is misunderstood like I am. Sometimes she is stubborn and it takes a while to get her to do what I need her to do. But she does it after a while. A horse is a great experience for me and I will never regret it."

Written By: Shannon, Level I Rider, ComUnity Student {The mirrors we find in friends, 2 or 4 legged, helps us define who we are} •

The love it [the horse] shows and the warm soft body make you feel happy and important. It makes it almost impossible not to show love back to the animal. This is one of the biggest reasons I think riding is so therapeutic.

Joey, Level I Rider, Barn Manager
{Unconditional, nonjudgmental, genuine love.. our horses have a lot to offer and teach!} •

"Horses helped me learn so many things. They helped me learn major patience, how to handle challenges, and how to stay positive when situations get negative. Whether or not horses can talk, they help you communicate with just body language."

"There is one horse that I have been close to since the first day I saw him and that would be Mr. Money Man. He is so joyful and loveable that I feel I could trust him with my life. When I'm with Money I feel like I'm flying free and that's all I want."

"I love everything about horse class, everything is so insightful and educational."

Written by: Tara, Level II Rider, Barn Manager
{Tara, the gifts of insight and education only come to those willing to accept them} •



Long Hours, Exhausting Work, No Pay and ... Napping on Horseback?

The Tekoa Horse Program started off this summer with more staff than ever. A few months ago, we were approached by two individuals that wanted to complete their college internships with the horse program. We sent them off to their VT and RU professors to see what was required of Tekoa for the internships. After completing the paperwork and required university process we now have two very qualified people assisting our program.



Paula caught snoozing aboard Flash, a new summer horse.

Bob McCabe and Paula Griggs started their internships in May and will be working with different aspects of the program. Bob graduated in the spring of

2005 from Radford University and will be starting the Masters of Social Work program this fall. Paula is completing her bachelor's degree at Virginia Tech with a

major in Psychology and a minor in Equine Studies and will graduate in Spring 2006.

We are very excited to have these two individuals joining our program for the summer. To date they have made a noticeable impact in our Therapeutic Riding program and the Spring into Summer parade to say the least. While these internships are from two distinct universities and academic programs, both of these internships were sought out and created by Bob and Paula. If you or someone you know is interested in doing an internship with our program please contact Tiffany Smith at 540.382.6657, ext. 102 or tsmith@chpc2.org.

Horses and riders ready to strut their stuff.



What color is YOUR horse?

Have you ever seen a horse painted from head to tail in bright florescent colors? How about a horse with four hooves painted red, green, blue and bright pink? If you answered no to these questions then you missed one of the most fun events of the summer, the annual Floyd "Spring into Summer" parade. On Saturday June 18, The Tekoa Equine Team went wild as they decorated their horses for this coed community event. Watching the creative juices flow as the kids painted the horses in bright colors and unique designs was a great experience for everyone. Fun was had by all as a lunch of pizza was devoured while admiring the five horses costumed in regalia that matched the "Wild and Wacky" theme for this parade. Joined by Carol O'Brien and Oreo the colorful horses were sandwiched between great banner girls and the *We Haul for You* truck with candy throwing kids aboard. The parade went off without a hitch as the team of young people and horses poised and experienced rode the entire parade route essentially unassisted. The pride shone from each riders face as they trotted to the high school to finish the ride. Thank you Jim & Carol O'Brien of *We Haul for You* for donating our first class transportation! Great job you guys!

Winter Wonderland Work

It was the winter of 2005 and with two facilities and eight horses the barn employee program was in full swing. We had 10 employees working at both barns that earned their positions by applying, interviewing and completing training just as in the 'real world'. During the summer, the work is pretty easy and a good excuse for a farmer's tan yet the winter is much more difficult. Breaking ice, throwing out several bales of hay, walking down the long driveway in the snow, rain and ice, sometimes does not always feel rewarding or worth the meager pay.

With great appreciation and respect we reward the employees that stick it out through the rough weather and hard times of Virginia winters. Annually we plan a trip to a horse festival as a gift from the horses that they took care of every single day. This year we began the trip by volunteering in Whitepost, Virginia at the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation. Together we all gave spring shots, de-wormers, and fought burrs in the manes and tails of about 20 horses. After that long day the kids switched gears, changing from Junior Vets to young adults, ordering steaks and salads at a nice restaurant. While our kids are still learning about steak

knives and how they like their food cooked, we closed the night with playful fun in the hotel pool.

With an early wake up call the next day we traveled on to Richmond to the Equine Extravaganza. After checking into the hotel and trying to navigate the streets of Richmond, we attended clinics, non-stop demonstrations, breed barns, and did some shopping. The close to this busy weekend came complete with trick riders, lighted Friesians, bridleless jumping and our local Mt. Tabor vaulters at the spectacular two-hour finale show. The kids were especially excited by special arrangements made for them to personally meet and receive autographs from the trick riding Gesells and comedian horse trainer Tommy Turvey, Jr.

It was a great trip, filled with exciting experiences and magnificent memories. We are very proud of the jobs our kids do as barn employees. They are learning real world responsibilities in getting and keeping a job while caring for animals they love.

Salutations

There has been a lot of change in the Tekoa horse family. As the program grows we are increasingly able to better assess program suitability while having access to higher quality horses. In that process we all learn the valuable lessons in both welcoming and saluting the horses in our lives.

Our first new addition to the horse family was Flash, a black draft/quarter horse cross. With his white blaze and beautiful flowing feathers (long hair) hanging from his legs, his breeding implies great size yet, he is only about 15.2 hands in height. Jane Canavan is a graduate student at Radford University and one of our senior volunteer exercise riders. She graciously, free-leased Flash to Tekoa through the end of the riding season, knowing he would have a great summer of fun with us.



A resident proudly astride beautiful Barry.

Strength in Numbers!

This February Tekoa had a huge volunteer exercise rider drive. We had over 30 participants try out in the cold at both of our barns. The drive for volunteers was a huge success, receiving the best response ever. We did several tryouts on many days and took some great riders that are really dedicated to our program and horses. By the end of tryouts, we had approximately 25 riders signed up as exercise riders at our facility.

If you are without a horse, but still have the desire to train or help out and ride, please do not hesitate to give us a call and join our great group. We also need assistance with special events such as parades, horse shows, and trail rides. If you have extra time, we have extra fun work! Contact Marian Osborne at mosborne@chpc2.org to learn more.

Second to the family is another Thoroughbred from the Retirement Foundation in White Post. After meeting Barry during our volunteer work with their agency he seemed a perfect fit for our program. Barry is a 16 hand bay that was delivered by Jim O'Brien whose business, *We Haul for You*, has been very supportive of our horse program. He seems to be adjusting well to his new home and is very people oriented, loving the attention that the girls are showering on him.

Our third and final addition takes some extra room. We are excited to welcome Mandy, a 12 year old Clydesdale with the gentlest of hearts and big kind eyes. She has done under saddle work but also spent time playing an important role in fairy tale weddings, bringing beautiful brides to their ceremonies. Mandy will be with us on free lease until late Fall.

In a bittersweet moment filled with many arrivals, we are sadly sending two horses on to more suited homes. Vigor was with the program for three years but with medical issues is returning to open arms at the TRF where we can enjoy visiting him on volunteer trips. Sandy came to Tekoa in 1999 as a 22 year old but with her increasing age and active arthritis we found another home. We wish them both well and appreciate all they gave!



The Roanoke Valley Horsemen's Association, Inc. consists of horse enthusiasts in the area representing all breeds of horses. They have one common interest; to promote horses and their welfare through education and promotion of the sport of riding in the Roanoke area. The RVHA has been very supportive of the Tekoa Equine Experiential learning program, running monthly stories as well as providing our contact information.

THANK YOU!



LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS ORGANIZATION AT
www.roanokevalleyhorseshow.com/rvha.html

Great Grant News!

In Fall 2004 we applied for a grant through the Holston Conference Youth Ministries as suggested by a parent from therapeutic riding. We were awarded a \$1500 grant for that program, providing scholarships and resource funds.

The United Methodist Youth Service Fund (YSF) is more than just a drive for funds. It is a call for United Methodist Youth to become active lay members, visit www.holstonyouth.com to learn more.

In Spring 2005 we again applied for additional funding for the therapeutic riding program to allow for scholarships to be offered to riders and their families. The Thoroughbred Charities of America awarded a \$2,000 grant for scholarship and volunteer meal expenses.

TCA's sole mission is to raise money for distribution to over 100 organizations involved with Thoroughbred Rescue,



Retirement, Rehabilitation, Research, Education, Backstretch and Handicap Riding Programs, visit www.thoroughbredcharities.org to learn more.

With these two grants, we have already offered 9 full scholarships to participants in this program, totaling nearly \$1,400. As we enter our second therapeutic riding series the program is doing well and enjoying new riders and volunteers.

A quick thank you shout-out goes to our community volunteers, Bernice Callahan, Pam Simmons, Kimberly Ingram and Jane Saunders! We would also like to thank community donors that continue to add to the scholarship fund, Dr. Kent Adams, Frank Osborne, St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Ben Holstein, Alice Hinterscheid and Mitch Webb of Merial Animal Health.

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*"No hour of life is lost
that is spent in the saddle."*

~ Sir Winston Churchill

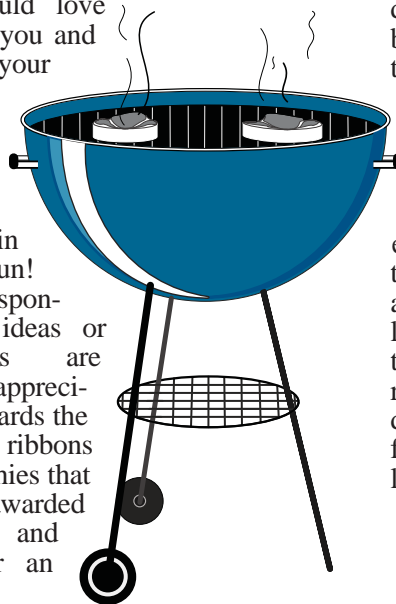


**HAPPY TRAILS TO YOU...
UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN!**

Save the Dates!

*Friday, August 19th
Tekoa Classic*

Join us on the Floyd campus for the Annual Horse Show & Cookout! There are many new horses and kids that would love to meet you and hear your cheers as you celebrate the smiles in the sun! Any sponsorship ideas or donations are greatly appreciated towards the many ribbons and trophies that will be awarded that day and kept for an eternity!



Friday, September 16th Annual Fall Ride

Read all about it... another event, but one YOU and your horse can join! In the Fall of 2004, we loaded up the trailers, packed the coolers and followed directions to Foster Falls State Park. A beautiful day and facility for a relaxing trail ride with about 15 horses and riders. Our kids enjoyed the company of new horses and friendly folks as they left their instructor's sides to ride with the 'cowboys'. It was an amazing experience to see the kids enjoy their own knowledge and ride in the company of people that viewed them as horsemen and not 'Tekoa kids'. Following the ride, we ate lunch, relaxed in the grass and enjoyed the sounds of the river. The annual ride is on the calendar again, September 16, and we hope for even more riders so our kids can feel like the adults they want to be.

**Contact Marian Osborne
to learn more about these
upcoming events!**

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