



Stable Stories

NEWS FROM STABLE DAYS YOUTH RANCH

WATER
&
HEAT

A BETTER PLAN

By Caryl Lester

Nearly four years ago, Ben and I started down an unfamiliar path. Prompted by faith to trust and obey, we started a youth ranch. No land, no horses, no tack, no experience, we didn't even have a "pail to pee in" as my grandfather used to say. But we had passion that was fueled with a confidence that God was with us, and He would lead us.

The volunteers came, the horses came, and donations of tack, supplies, funds began to find their way to us and miracle after amazing miracle, the needs of this start up ranch were met.

Our sessions started at Kuster's Wagon Wheel, a community barn in south Grand Forks. We were excited to have a location to work from, but not having control of the barn led to some significant concerns of safety and atmosphere. We needed our own land, so we put together a list of 'must haves' and 'wants'. At least five acres, a barn, close to town, a place for a garden, room for a chicken coop, a parking area, and of course a place for the horses.

We searched on both sides of the river and to our delight we found the perfect place - seven acres, a big barn, and two extra barns that we could use for firewood, a house that had 'potential' and a leaning garage with a sun roof (hole) the size of a car.

After one of our sessions we loaded up



*I am yours; rescue me!
As pressure and stress bear
down on me,
I find joy in your plan.
Your laws are always
right; help me to
understand them.*

Psalm 119:94 & 143

the van with volunteers and headed to the property. Even though it was a little small, a little too far away, and a lot too run down, we all agreed, that this was it! It was the perfect place for Stable Days to call home.

We made an offer and were excited to have it accepted. We spent the next several weeks dreaming, budgeting and planning. It was all coming together.

And then it all fell apart.

Tears and disheartened spirits led us to question the future of Stable Days. "What are we going to do?" "Where are we going to run this program?" We found ourselves crying out to God, seeking his comfort and direction. We had been convinced that this property was God's provision and losing it was tough. We couldn't believe that the 'dump' in Buxton would not be ours.

*"Sorrows may last for the night,
but joy comes with the morning."*

Psalm 30:5

Back on the hunt for land, we drove out to an abandoned golf course and supper club. We met a mechanic who was leasing part of the old shop. He shared with us the story of the River-

We want to thank all of the dedicated volunteers that have carried 5 gallon buckets of water day after day for AM and PM chores winter, spring, summer and fall, to make sure the sdyr horses have clean fresh water. We thank you and you know the herd thanks you.

God's provisions have amazed us, blessed us and humbled us. This fall once again, God and his great people have left us speechless! East Grand Forks Rural Water, Economy Plumbing, Higher Ground Excavating and a family very dear to us, have gifted the ranch with the information, materials and labor to bring water and heat to the barn.

**NO MORE HAULING
5 GALLON BUCKETS
OF WATER!!!**

We are framing, insulating, running water lines, installing automatic water systems and wondering what ever will be do to strengthen the upper body now that hauling water is a thing of the past. Oh yeah, HAY! We still have to load, haul and stack , over a 1,825 bails of hay each year not to mention hundreds of pounds of manure that need to be raked up and pushed out in wheel barrows.

So volunteers you're as needed as ever, and how sweet will it be to have a heated barn. A place to groom and tack up in the winter and Thanks to the Lord, a place to warm up in on those frigid nasty days.

“TODAY IS A GOOD DAY”

Madelyn and her sisters Sofia and Greta arrived at the ranch for their first session as participants in our 2013 Horsemanship program. Their visit began with the regular greetings and information. Sessions always start with a chore and today they would be working on the Green Thumb Team. Grabbing their tools the girls and their mentors headed to the vegetable garden. Weeding, talking and giggling are some of my favorite ways to get to know a new friend. With Madelyn, it didn't take long to discover that everything about horses caught her attention.

After chores were finished, we headed over to barn to be fitted with riding helmets, and to grab the grooming buckets, saddles, bridles and lead ropes that we'd need for the day. Madelyn, ready to 'cowboy up,' carried her own gear, or at least most of it.

Before today, Madelyn's love of horses had been bound up



in the books she read and the dreams she dreamed. But this day, she would ride. She would be paired with a horse that would be hers for the summer.

After several laps in the riding pen, Madelyn let out a long audible sigh, loud enough to cause both her mentor Candice and I to turn around. We saw a relaxed Madelyn, with a smile as big as Texas. “Today is a good day!” Madelyn said, with a quite, thoughtful voice. Reaching down the soft neck of her new friend, she whispered, “I love you Taz.”

Taz, a 16 + hand (that means REALLY tall), striking Appaloosa was partnered with Madelyn. He's as sweet as he is fun to look at. Spotted, speckled, full of color and sporting a full blaze. Taz is handsome and an absolute treasure.

His registration papers and conformation seemed to assure him a place in the 'good life'. His first owners made every effort and spared no expenses in his care and training. His competitive life started early and to no one's surprise Taz was amazing.

As is common in life, change was coming for Taz. An injury disqualified him from competition, and with a full recovery unlikely, Taz was sold

At first, his new family seemed to be an answer to prayers, but they lacked experience and time. Before long, Taz found himself alone, no caring hand to groom him, no loving friend to lead him, no partner to ride him.

The lack of attention evolved into lack of care and before long Taz was in trouble. His hooves had grown grotesquely long, flaring up and curling backwards towards his knees. Standing was uncomfortable and walking was more and more painful as this treatable condition grew worse.

The staff at the stables where he lived, were saddened by his situation, they hoped for a change and worked to facilitate a sale. This is where our story and Taz's intertwine.

The day Ben and I met Taz was unforgettable. He stumbled out of his stall and with great effort walked to the center of the arena. His eyes focused on the ground in front of him, his head dropping low with every step. His suffering was undeniable. Later that week, we loaded Taz into our trailer and he began a new life chapter. The injury that pulled him out of competition is still troublesome for Taz, but he no longer stands or moves in pain.

Taz has served Stable Days Youth Ranch from the very beginning, being the second horse to call this ranch his home. This year, he loved and partnered with 17 kiddos, making each one feel as special as he did with Madelyn.

Nearing the end of the season Madelyn was sitting high and happy on her horse. Knowing she had only a few sessions left to be with her beloved Taz, she looked down at me. With a thought-

ful and serious expression she said, “Caryl, when I'm old enough to have my own horse, Taz will be old. He'll be too old to have kids like me ride him. Can I buy him then? Can I take care of him when he's old? Can Taz be my horse?”

I swallowed hard, not wanting tears to come, but so touched by how life had now come full circle for Taz. He once was sold because he couldn't perform. Today he so strongly touched the heart of a child that she wanted nothing more than to provide for him, to love Taz in his older years when he had seemingly little left to give. Madelyn simply wanted to love him and be by his side.

Madelyn's words were so beautiful, with a smile on my face and tears in my eyes I replied, “Oh, what a sweet idea Madelyn, will have to see about that when the time comes.”



LOOKING BACK / LOOKING FORWARD

Dear Friends,

It's been four years since we put the idea of starting a youth ranch to pen and paper and are excited to share a few 2013 highlights as well as a few goals that are set in place for the next year.



Hero getting love from Cassy & Greta

•**Participation:** We continue to fill every mentor session that we've been able to make available! Our 2013 participation goal was exceeded by 33%! Allowing us to serve 80 kiddos in our summer session.

•**Volunteers:** We were blown away by the dedication and service of the many who volunteered at the ranch this year. Our 2013 volunteer goal was not only

exceeded by 300%, but our 'single day' individual and group volunteers topped 580!

•**Donations:** We are blessed beyond belief! That is the best way to describe the support received in 2013. Our goals were exceeded by 71%!

This year we were able to fix the power lines out to our pasture to run the water tank heaters. The existing water lines were extended to the farthest paddock and a break was discovered and repaired. A water line now runs to the barn and we have all the materials required to finish and heat the barn, and create a much needed office space. Computers, monitors and a desk were donated for the new office. We planted and pruned the grounds are far from done but little by little this place is shaping up. We made great progress on fencing, finishing the 'special needs' paddock and the small riding pen.

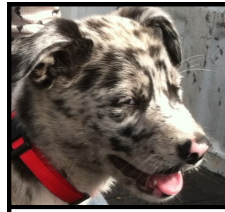
Thanks to a few concerned friends, we were



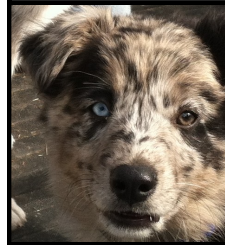
Midnight with volunteer Marissa Llund

notified and able to participate in another horse rescue, this rescue had the additional gift of two lost puppies. So in a day the Stable Day's family added Midnight, a three year gelding who suffered from 2 1/2 years of neglect, and Mumford and Mozart, four month old puppy brothers in need of a new start, a new family and a good bath.

We had a paddock visitor we named Nasty Turtle, said hello to our new gelding Dakota, and sadly said goodbye to our two oldest



Mumford



Mozart



Dakota



Gem & Freida Mae enjoying a pasture walk

horses. Gem and Freida Mae, we're happy to say, were loved and well cared for to the very end.

Looking forward to 2014, our goals reflect not only the observed needs of the ranch but the vision to see this as a place of service in a year round capacity. Our four focus areas are listed in order of importance:

•**Our Horse Sponsorship Program:** If you're interested in supporting SDYR in this way you can either follow the links on our web

site stabledays.org or fill out the form on the back side of this page.

•**Staffing:** We have applied for grants to facilitate this need but hope to see the general donations increase to provide for sustainable staffing. The first staffing positions will be that of a year round program assistant as well as three seasonal mentor positions.

•**The Indoor Arena Project:** This project is imperative to our vision to facilitate mentoring sessions through out the year. We've started working on design and initial budget plans. If support of this project follows the giving trends we've previously witnessed, we may even be looking at a ground breaking in 2015!

•**The Greenhouse Project:** Each mentoring session includes gardening and healthy lifestyle coaching. A greenhouse will allow us to continue this through the winter months. We're also excited to offer the benefits of gardening and the exposure to 'green' as an offset to the long severe winters we face here in the Red River Valley.

Our hope is that you'll continue to support Stable Days through your prayers, gifts and time. Allowing us to stay steady on this course, rescuing the equine, mentoring the child, supporting the family and above all ,loving and serving our God.

Thank you for your support,

Ben and Caryl Lester
Founders, SDYR



HORSE SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Our horses, many of them coming from backgrounds of abuse and neglect, are at the very core of what we do here at Stable Days Youth Ranch. The spirit of these horses inspire the children who visit the ranch, and the children in turn do their part to help heal these once broken, lost and hurting horses.

For the horses who call this place home, Stable Days offers a safe haven, a gentle hand and a life purpose. Our training and riding methods are based on the theories of Natural Horsemanship, which utilize quietness and patience to communicate with horses in their own language, focusing on developing a trust relationship with these magnificent creatures.

By choosing a sponsorship level, you can ensure quality care for our horses and a cost free opportunity to the children who participate in this unique program.

Your sponsorship will provide:

- *daily hay
- * supplements, grain, and vitamins as needed
- * professional hoof trimming
- * regular preventative de-worming and vaccinations
- * daily engagement both physically and mentally
- * tack and equipment needs, as well as the maintenance and repairs of fencing, paddocks, shelters and stalls.

We love staying connected with those who choose to support the ministry through our Horse Sponsorship program. To show appreciation for your generosity, each sponsor will receive a 4x6 picture, a quarterly update featuring your sponsored horse and a small gift courtesy of the ranch.

To become a horse sponsor, please complete this form and mail it back to us. We are so thankful for each person who supports us in this special way.

Please consider sponsoring one of our horses!
 You can mail your sponsorship form to:
 17721 429th Avenue So. West
 East Grand Forks, MN 56721

Please check the program desired:

- Galloping Club** - A full sponsorship - \$500.00 per month for 12 months
- Loping Club** - \$100.00 per month for 12 months
- Trotting Club** - \$50.00 per month for 12 months
- Horse Lovers Club** - _____ per month for 12 months



Sissy Ruby Sampson Taz Solomon Precious Hero Merida Dakota Midnight

**Future
Rescue
Fund**

Name of Horse(s) I'm choosing to sponsor _____

Sponsor(s) _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

E-mail _____

Signature of Sponsor _____

Date _____



You can read more about the sdyr horses on our web site.
www.stabledays.org

Stable Days Youth Ranch has been established as a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization by the Internal Revenue Service. All donations are tax deductible. This agreement in no way entitles sponsor to ownership of sponsored animal or ranch property. SDYR accepts all liability, expressed and/or implied, for sponsored equine. Sponsor has the right to cancel this agreement with a 30 day notice to SDYR. Please note that there may be more than one sponsor per equine.

A BETTER PLAN CONT...

Bend.

Nearly seven years before, on a Sunday afternoon, the Riverbend opened as usual, to serve their customers. After the lunch rush the employees were gathered together for an announcement.

The restaurant would be closed! Effective immediately. No jobs would be spared. The new owner after winning the property with a good hand in a card game the night before, would be locking the doors. The property would change hands again as the winner of card game, lost in life, and the property became part of a court ordered debt settlement.

Steve, the new owner, had been asked to sell a multitude of times and for whatever his reasons were, he was not interested. We spoke with him at length about our mission and our desire to build a place where children, families and horses would learn from each other. Where they could look for and find hope and choose to love and be loved unconditionally. Steve was in!

God, in his perfect timing, opened our eyes and stretched our faith. He patiently tested and taught us to trust Him, to trust that He would provide perfectly in His perfect timing. We were aiming low, God was thinking BIG! He wasn't preparing a seven acre dump for Stable Days to serve families, He was preparing a 60 acre piece of paradise!

Rough, raw and amazing. We took possession of this land on the 15th of March 2012. The path once again was not what we had planned. The purchase of the land required the sell sale of our home, relocation and more renovations. But God had faithfully prepared our hearts for this change and replaced our desires with His desires.

We had prayed for land but our vision was impaired by our lack of faith. We were happy to settle a fraction of what God desired for us. We desperately wanted a shack at the very time that God was preparing a mansion.

So God stepped in and rescued us! He rescued us from our un-balanced enthusiasm, from our prideful "we know best" ideas and from our impulsive "we want it now, even if we're not ready" impatient attitude.

Loosing the Buxton land and the plans that were attached to it was painful. When doors that we think should stay open close, it can be hard to trust that it's for the best.

No discipline (or disappointment) seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Hebrews 12:11

Persistently and patiently, God has been teaching us that His plan is great, far better than anything we could put together on our own. With each step required on this path, God strengthens our faith and encourages us to trust Him more. So as we move forward, our grip will not fail, we will be ready for the trials that will come. We will be able to stand firm, and be fully devoted to the work we do. Pressing faithfully on, for God has given us much, and much will be expected!

H O R S E S P O N S O R S H I P

Our horses, some that were just in need of a new home, others, coming from backgrounds of abuse and neglect, are at the very core of what we do here at SDYR. These horses, all with their own unique stories of hardships and hope, are now loved and cared for by children who themselves our vastly unique, but similarly looking for love, hope and a sense of belonging. Sponsoring a horse enables us to continue to offer this special program free to the children and families that visit SDYR.



FUEL FOR THE FIRE

A prayer, a hug, a call, a chore, a meal, our time or our money... each of us has something we can give to help others. When we place these gifts into the hands of the Lord, miracles will happen, and the fire will keep on burning.

Yes! I would like to shoulder with Stable Days Youth Ranch to support children, horses and families.

I send me more information about:

- Visiting the Ranch
- Horsemanship Sessions
- Volunteering

Please use my donation for:

- Where it is needed most
- To Mentor the Child
- To Care for the Equine
- I'm interested in a **Horse Sponsorship**

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State/Zip _____
 E-mail _____
 Phone _____

Payment Methods:

For PayPal users visit www.stabledays.org
 Or make check payable to Stable Days Youth Ranch

Please send donations to:

*Stable Days Youth Ranch
 17721 429th Avenue SE
 East Grand Forks, MN 56721*

Please make my donation a gift

- In memory of:
- In honor of:
- Please send a gift acknowledgement to:

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State/Zip _____
 E-mail _____
 Phone _____

STABLE DAYS YOUTH RANCH
17721 429TH AVENUE SO. WEST
EAST GRAND FORKS, MN 56721
701-330-9952



Love God * Rescue Horses * Mentor Youth * Support Families

Participants

As space allows, participants can schedule a one time visit or join us for weekly 90 minute sessions. Simply download a Participant Form from the home page of our web site at stabledays.org.

Sessions run June - August, and are **free of charge**.

Horsemanship Sessions: Participants ages 5-17 years of age will learn to lead, groom, ride and most importantly, relate to their assigned horse using principles that are based on natural horsemanship.

Scheduling is flexible.

Mentoring Sessions: Participants, ages 5-17, join us for weekly sessions and will be paired with one leader who will choose an activity or horse they feel will best encourage that child /young adult towards personal growth. Sessions may include horsemanship, crafts, games, chores or other activities. Participation requires one session per week.

Though our primary focus is serving those kids who are 'disadvantaged,' our program is open to **all** children ages 5-17 regardless of their health or background.

Volunteers

Our Volunteer staff serve the ranch through out the year in a huge variety of roles. We gladly host groups, families and individuals. You can join in the ranch shenanigans for a day or join us several times a week. Responsibilities can include: mentoring, horse training, grooming, feeding and exercising, stall mucking, greeting, crafting, scrap booking, photography, gardening, planning, fence building, hay stacking, land clearing, tree wrapping, manure moving, fundraising, office assisting and more...

We'll train you, and work right beside you! If you're interested in applying for a volunteer position simply download an individual or group volunteer application from the home page of our web site at stabledays.org or contact the office **701.330.9952**.

Winter Ranch hours:

Mon - Thurs, 11am - 5pm
and Sat, 10:30-2:00

Summer Ranch hours:

Mon - Thurs, 10am - 7pm
and Sat, 10:30-2:00

Ranch tours are available by appointment.

Please call the ranch office at 701.330.9952 with any questions.