

Wild Horse and Burro



Issue 3

Official Newsletter of the National Wild Horse and Burro Program

Summer 2007

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*If you would like to submit articles for the Wild Horse and Burro News, please e-mail articles and photos (at least 300 dpi) to [**Janet_Neal@blm.gov**](mailto:Janet_Neal@blm.gov) or mail to Janet Neal, Bureau of Land Management, P.O. Box 12000, Reno, NV 89520, Phone 775-861-6614.*



**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Wild Horse and Burro Program**

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**"The gift of the Mustang lies not in her ability to carry us with her back.
It lies in her ability to carry us with her soul."**

When I was a child, I read Marguerite Henry's wonderful book "Mustang: Wild Spirit of the West." It taught me several important lessons, among them being the fact that one person can make a difference in the world and that a person must stand up for what she thinks is right. It also instilled a deep longing in me to someday be able to see a mustang. When I was in high school, I was lucky enough to see and pet a young mustang someone had adopted from the Bureau of Land Management. I never in my life thought that I would not only work with gentled mustangs but be able to give a home to wild mustangs as well.



I am the Director of the Horse-Human Relationship Program for Tapestry Institute. I have been able to take my love for horses and turn it into a career where I conduct research into and provide education about the deep emotional, psychological, and spiritual relationship between horses and humans. I never planned on having one specific breed of horse for this research and education – I believe any horse and human can have a deep connection. Mustangs seemed the natural choice after learning more about them and after seeing interactions between humans and a mustang during a study I did on the effect of trail riding on a workgroup of individuals who had come together to discuss a film project. Everyone loved the ride, and it had a beneficial effect on the workgroup and the meeting, but the most amazing outcome was the constant talk about how one individual got to ride a mustang. The mustang held a special place for these people, and that led me to think they might be just the right horses for our program.

Tapestry Institute is located on a beautiful ranch in the panhandle of Nebraska. We perform our research and education with horses when people come to our ranch, either for workshops that we provide or for other select meetings. We have gentled mustangs that people interact with on trail rides and also ride bareback in guided meditation. We are especially lucky to have a wild horse herd at the ranch. Launched last fall, the Mustang Freedom Project is a unique program that allows individuals to interact with wild mustangs and then process that interaction with help from Tapestry staff. The wild mustangs set the level of interaction, choosing whether to approach individuals, stand their ground, or seek more privacy. We currently have three wild mustangs – a 12-year-old white gelding, an 11-year-old chestnut mare, and a 20-year-old white mare – and plan to increase the herd soon.



Horses have been helping people heal physically and psychologically for years. Perhaps now is the time to explore how horses can heal our souls. The deep spiritual relationship that can exist between humans and horses is what we explore in our Horse-Human Relationship Program. I don't think we could find any better leaders and partners on this journey than the mustang.

For more information on Tapestry Institute's Horse-Human Relationship Program, please visit <http://www.tapestryinstitute.org> .

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Recently I bought an 11 year old, trained mustang to ride for enjoyment and on the trails for medical therapy and conditioning for my Cystic Fibrosis (CF).

I had a double lung transplant on Thanksgiving Day of 2000. At the time of my transplant, I was in ICU for 6 months as a result of complications with the transplant. I was told that other organs in me wanted to shut down from the trauma related to such a serious surgery.

Prior to that, I had 43 surgeries with 4 of them being life threatening, emergency needed surgeries due to CF. I have also participated in many different medical studies for new drugs and treatments for people with CF.

In July of this past year, I lost my beautiful wife of 12 years to pancreatic cancer. My wife spent the entire year of 2005 in a chair next to me at Providence Hood River Hospital. She was doing chemo therapy while I spent most of that same year doing IV therapy for several different infections of my own. I think we were the only married couple on the planet who were both doing infusion therapy at the same time and in the same place! In July of 2005, my wife JeNiene passed away from her illness.

A nurse, working at Providence who is an extremely great friend and a member of Back Country Horseman Washington (BCHW), took me on a horse ride up Buck Creek Trail in the Northwest Lake area. We rode the trail for about one hour that day and it was the most important "time out" day that I had in about 5 years! I was able to forget EVERYTHING!

The very next day after that ride I made a commitment to myself that I was going to find and buy a horse of my own! Almost everyone that I knew thought I was out of my mind, including the nurses and the doctors at the hospital and that it was the last thing on the planet that I should do!

I looked at a lot of horses and after awhile I could not remember one from the other. Finally, one night I was looking at Dreamhorse Classifieds and saw an 11 year old



mustang for sale. A photo showed the horse with his owner sitting on him, who looked exactly like I did, and I said THAT'S my horse! I called the owner several times and bought EL ROJO GRANDE a couple weeks later. The rest is history.

On March 25, I joined BCHW and went on the first season opening ride at Glenwood, Washington to Outlook Falls. What a ride! The people and the ride were exactly as a dream come true for me! I had the most fun that I've had in my entire life!

With my transplant issues and CF, it was a very unsure future for me on a horse. Based on all of the opinions, it was especially true for a somewhat stubborn rider on a mustang. They said I couldn't do it!

Riding a horse has done for my pain issues like no other pain medication could do for me. I have managed to lower my pain drugs by about 40 percent and most of the lower back pain I have had for many years is gone. Last week I wanted to go over to the hospital and tell all of my ill friends to go find a horse AND RIDE!

While there have been extreme advances in the medical field, which is why I am here and very much alive, there are still many things that doctors, drugs and technology cannot help people with. The thing I found is that animals, specifically my horse El Rojo Grande, can fill that gap. AND IN A BIG WAY!

I look forward to this summer with the BCHW and all the great times ahead. Trail clearing and the camaraderie of other horse lovers is something that everybody should have the opportunity to enjoy. I feel very fortunate to get out of bed every day I can and now especially with the BCHW fulfilling a long time dream of mine.

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Eastern States has a new program using fostering volunteers to gentle and place yearlings directly from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) facilities. Jane Loughmiller lives in Indiana, and has placed 23 yearlings for the BLM in fiscal year 2006, that ended September 30, 2006.

The requirement for being a fostering volunteer in Eastern States is that you must be a past adopter who is skilled in handling wild horses and has experience in gentling and training techniques. In addition, all fostering volunteers must be familiar with BLM adoption requirements. Fostering volunteers must have all adopted animals in their possession titled, if eligible. All fostering volunteers are selected by Wild Horse and Burro Specialists in the area covering Eastern States. All past adopters may not necessarily qualify to be a foster volunteer.

Pre-approved fostering volunteers may pick up unadopted yearlings at the termination of a temporary adoption location, where the animal has not been adopted, or may drive to the Ewing, IL Holding Facility to pick up a yearling wild horse.

Fostering volunteers must make sure that all adoption applications and Private Care and Maintenance Agreements are completed accurately and appropriately and sent in a timely manner to the appropriate BLM office for approval.

Fostering volunteers may also act as mentors to new adopters. Since January 2006, Eastern States has enlisted the assistance of 30 volunteers in 12 states and found homes for 153 wild horses through their volunteer program. For more information about the Eastern States Wild Horse and Burro Program, please visit <http://www.es.blm.gov/whb/>.

By Jane Loughmiller, Eastern States Fostering Volunteer in Brazil, IN

Wow...what a fantastic spring and summer it has been for fostering the mustangs! We have adopted 23 mustangs so far this year! Some have been boarded here temporarily at the Spirit of Freedom Farm. We know what we are doing and can help first time adopters through the gentling process of their newly adopted wild horses. All the babies are doing GREAT!

Here are the procedures we use:

When the mustang yearlings arrive, we unload them into the corrals. Once they are settled we separate them...2 in each corral. We feed only grass hay



for the first few days and let them get used to seeing us bring them food. Then we introduce oats, begin petting them, and take off the neck tags for those who have been adopted. By the way, we do have a waiting list of adopters.



When the horses are more comfortable with humans, we begin to let them out into the adjoining round pens when they need to be worked with or exercised. We feed them, begin petting, and then work toward getting the halter on. Once we can get their halter on we attach the lead rope. When that process is accomplished we let the yearlings drag the rope around to get used to it. After the yearlings are used to the rope, we begin the process of training them to lead. When they are leading well, we put them in a “transition” pasture next to the round pen, and work more on being caught and led into a different area.

After we can catch and lead them in the round pen and transitional pastures, we begin to lead them out into the adjacent area that is fenced on 3 sides. When they do well with this, they are put into either the “little boys pasture”, or the “little girls pasture”. Halters are left on when they are moved, until they can be caught & haltered easily in the pastures. Only one horse now has a halter on, all others are begging to be caught, haltered and loved on! Once the horses are leading well enough to be out in the pastures, we bring them in daily to be fed in the barn. We are having fantastic results with this system! We are hoping to soon add 2 more corrals in order to help meet the demand for mustang babies, and help more find good homes.

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Written By Charleen Earley

Photos by Rose Padgett



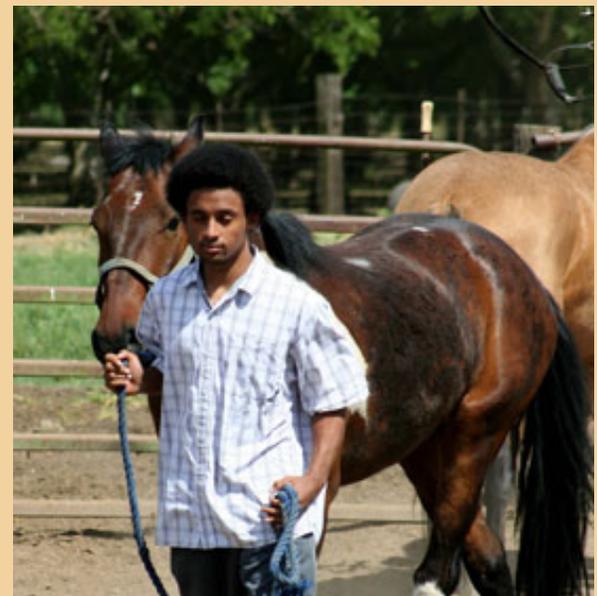
Even though Xena is tied securely to the fence, her young groomer makes his way around the horse at a safe distance. "I've seen horses at fairs or on the street where you can pet them, but never this close," says Ramon Granados, a student at Franklin High School, about Stockton's non-profit organization Mustang Connection.



For Sondra Taylor, a history and psychology teacher at Franklin and owner of Mustang Connection, it was a match made in horse-heaven. She pairs at-risk high school students with technically at-risk, rescued mustangs. "We tame the horses, we don't 'break' them. If they were 'broke' then they would need to be fixed," says Taylor.

With four mustangs and a long-haired, breeding stock paint, Taylor teaches her 16 students the ins and outs of equine care at Alpine Stables in Stockton. "I teach them everything about horses, including how to approach, halter, lead, and groom horses, as well as how to ride them bareback. I also teach them anatomy, nutrition, terminology of tack, colors, and breeds. We go on field trips to the vets, rodeos, and riding academies," she adds. The students can even count this experience as a PE course as long as they log in at least 90 hours per semester at the stables.

Matching at-risk teens with rescued horses was a concept Taylor conceived years ago while working at the Alternative Charter School in Lodi. "When I'm around horses I become a more relaxed person. I wondered how I could pass that on to my students," she says. "I've had students with extreme anger issues. I would tell them they cannot be angry around horses because your emotions feed into them, and they won't listen to you. The students have admitted it's true and I've seen their attitudes change just being around the horses," says Taylor who logs in countless hours arranging



lesson plans, posting fliers, finding funding, as well as taking care of the horses and equipment.

Over the last two and a half years, Taylor has also seen the program evolve. "It originated from my love of the horses and desire to help the kids. I have watched it become a positive influence in the lives of students. From getting them out doing something new, to giving them an outlet and a sounding board that may save them from making poor decisions, to having them become mentors to other students just entering the program," she says. When Taylor refers to "at-risk" teens, she's referring to kids in danger of academic failure because of abysmal social or family influences. "These kids are not gang members or in trouble with the law," says Taylor. "They typically come from family backgrounds that have been unstable at times." Many live with grandparents, have drug addicted parents, or have trouble coping because of impoverished lives.



Ramon Granados, who works in landscaping and at flea markets after school and on weekends, says he tells people about the horses all the time, just not his friends, because they see the program as nothing but work. However, Granados sees it as a good trade off. "You clean stalls, but learn lessons. Normally, this kind of program would cost you a bundle," he says.

Janet Mejia, a junior at Franklin, always had a love for horses and recalls riding her grandfather's horse in Mexico as a child. "My grandfather doesn't ride his horse anymore. He just uses him for pulling things. Right now I'm learning how to steer a horse and be patient. If you're not patient, the horse won't listen to you," says Mejia, who's also happy that time with the horses helps her cope better with life. "It's relaxing and it relieves the stress of homework and family problems."





The program has a long term affect on the kids Taylor teaches. "Some students need the program for school credits, some for community service hours, but more importantly, some have personal issues that they learn to manage by working with the horse." Some of these issues include anger, pride, communication skills, and working with others.

Grateful for the donations from the International Baccalaureate Booster Parents at Franklin and other members of the community, Mustang Connection is funded solely by donations. "My husband is my 'head cheerleader' and 'gopher,' and when there is no outside funding, he supports the organization financially," Taylor says. Always in need of tack (new or used), feed, and other provisions, Taylor firmly believes in her equine program, because of what horses have done for her. "You gain so much from being around them. For me it changed me physically, emotionally and mentally."

For more information on Mustang Connection, visit www.mustangconnection.net or mail mustangs8@sbcglobal.net, 209-986-2159.

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By Rob Pliskin, California BLM Volunteer and
Wild Horse Gentler



After the first two articles, "It Depends" and "Moving Further," and your own good work with your mustang, you're already reaching your four goals of directed movement, flex of the neck, loose feet, and "feel" between your horse and you. Let's see what we can do now to build on it and put some pieces together. If you want to review at any time, here are the first two articles.

<http://www.wildhorseandburro.blm.gov/news/winter2005/depends.html>

<http://www.wildhorseandburro.blm.gov/news/spring2006/moving.html>

Here is an old starting-out hint too: first practice on a well trained and patient horse. Copy these articles onto paper, and take them out with you and your practice horse first, so you can build your own confidence in the pens. This is great for getting handy, and safer for everyone, too. Plus, you'll get to meet the well trained horse in new and different ways.

ROPE WORK

Let's bring some soft movement from the round pen into the square pen for some rope work. Start with your horse at liberty, asking him to move softly around the pen. Change direction slowly using inside and outside turns, give him all the space he needs, and use *small, relaxed cues*.

If your horse is good with the rope, either fish or toss it over his neck, between the shoulders and the ears. Leave just enough to stay on his other side. Now, ask the horse to do an inside turn, hold the rope under his chin, and you have half a coil on his neck. Throw it over his back with the rest of a turn, and you have a full coil. Keep building coils like this until you have 4-6, and then use the rest of the rope in your hands as a lead rope to practice flexing, bending, and movement with your horse. You have not put a closed loop on his neck and can always unwind the coils. Also, remember -- you can't win a pulling contest with him. Don't try. You and/or your horse might get hurt and it will create bad habits in both of you. So if he resists a slight pulse, give another. If he backs up, keep asking for forward motion. Use your body English and position to move his feet and pulse the rope at the same time. Or, **JUST LET GO AND START AGAIN.**

One of the nicest parts of this work is quitting. If your horse is in a good spot and quiet, and he is used to the rope, you can flip the rope over his head and ears to unwind it coil by coil. Take your time and praise him each time. Or, you can have your horse change directions slowly and softly while you hold the rope either under his neck or over his back, depending on the direction so the coils unwind. Do it slowly. It's a gentle way to quit. You can also take this same work into the round pen as an intermediate step to ground driving on the halter.

HALTERING

Your horse is putting his face in the halter without fear. Now you must show him about working on both sides while standing on one. Keep contact with your horse's shoulder and neck as you rub the halter under his neck. Stand at the shoulder and make your motions under the neck bigger, so that he starts feeling and seeing your hand on his off side. Gradually extend the time and distance out on the off side where he is seeing your hand and the halter. The horse is learning to experience your activity calmly so release and praise him every step of the way. The pole over his back helped; the rope helped. Now he gets to learn it for haltering. So it is important to REWARD the very little steps with a release each time. When you have the halter over his nose while holding it quietly, release. Do that many times. Then go up higher, always releasing. If he runs off, then he has to learn, oops, I have to run now. Maybe it's better if I just stand here. Once you have the halter in position, take it off, and don't tie it. Quit when things are good. Do it in a lot of small sessions so your horse is asking, "that's all s/he wanted? That was easy!" EVERY TIME you halter, have the head and neck flexed toward you while you stand at the shoulder safely. When the horse is learning successfully, put the halter on and off several times and make the last one nice and quiet. Rub the horse nicely with the halter off, standing quiet. When he can do this, it's time to start tying the knot.

Here is an aid if you have problems with the horse seeing the halter with his off eye. If he is used to a rope all over his body, tie a length of cotton rope to the tie end of the halter, and do rope work at the horse's neck. Use the rope to position the halter so the tie end is over his poll. Then untie it and start doing your halter work. You are NOT required to tie the halter at this point. Just use this aid to get it up there so the horse can see it and see you working with him at the same time. You can also tie it to the end of the lead rope if your horse will take the wide loop made over his head, and then pull the halter up the off side the same way while doing rope work a little at a time.

Don't quit on them when they need you. Stay with it no matter how western it gets until there is some small good spot. Then release and quit. Go back and repeat the next time, and move a little further. The last thing they do is what they will learn.

MOVEMENT

In the Round pen – When you can halter your horse readily in the square pen, you can use the work to practice catching and haltering your horse in the round pen.

Instead of using your lariat or other aid as you have been, now take your open halter and lead rope in. First move your horse at liberty, both directions, with both kinds of turns. No slack, keep at it until they are good. When you and your horse are ready, ask him to "come up" when he is cupping an ear, looking in, or turning his head to you. When he "comes up", put your round pen work together with the halter work in the square pen

Take your time but don't hide anything from your horse. You can't anyway. If he shies, he has to do the work to "come up" again. He'll learn. Show the halter and lead rope, and start in as if you were in the square pen. Your horse has to learn the same thing in a variety of places and situations to "get it." This is how they learn. Veterinarian Robert Miller, creator of Imprint Training for equines, calls this "generalization." So be patient, reward your horse with release for the little successes, and keep building.

With your horse haltered, you can ask for a leading step from the side and front. Your horse must flex his neck toward you and take a step in that direction. Always release and

praise this. Do the other side also. Then add to the steps. You can ask a friend to come in and from a safe distance encourage the first steps from behind. You can also get movement on the halter effectively by “ground driving.”

Ground driving is an important tool in your horse’s education. You will use it everywhere, from gates to trailers to trail. The horse will gain confidence and trust and also in your ability to direct him. Stand just behind your horse’s shoulder, about 5 feet away. Your shoulders face towards the horse and forward, your front hand pointing the direction and tipping your horse’s nose to the inside toward you, flexed. Your back hand impels your horse forward. The lead line should not be taut, nor full of slack, but alive in your front hand with a light “feel” to the halter knot and the horse’s face. Lean forward; intend for your horse to move that way, and make one sound that is always the same, like a cluck. If no response, then lift your back hand holding the tail of the lead rope. Still no response? Pop the horse on the hip *ever so lightly* with the tail of your lead rope so that he moves forward. Never threaten, always encourage. Keep the horse’s nose tipped in. *A walk of a few steps to start, by the way, is fine!* Release and praise your horse!

Once your horse is going on slow easy circles with you pivoting in the center, you want to see your horse’s inside hind foot cross under the belly as it goes, moving forward with his neck flexed toward you. Remind the horse to keep his nose toward you with “feel.” You may have to use the halter and lead rope in your front hand to ask for flex, but remember, it is one pulse, not a pull, and then another, if necessary. You may have to use the other end of the lead rope as the “gas pedal” to keep your horse moving. *But use the least amount possible* after your request if it doesn’t work. From request, to ask, to demand, your energy should be the minimum necessary, but should be effective. START WITH a smooth walk for this exercise. It’s all you need. If your horse turns his head out of the circle and pulls away, let go. You CAN’T win a pulling contest with your horse’s neck. That’s why flex of the neck toward you both standing still and moving on the inside of a circle is so important! You can’t practice it and reward it enough! Let go, regroup, and practice some more if your horse moves out of the circle. Once out there, he will have to go around some more before coming back in, right? He will learn to stay in the circle to save energy. When you get a good goal for this piece, don’t forget to release and quit in a good spot. And don’t forget side two!

FOOT WORK

If you are picking the horse’s feet up with the rope as in “Moving On,” the next step is to make the rope your hand. You can get a smaller pole, or piece of one, a carrot stick or dressage whip, anything that size, and go over the horse’s body, legs, and feet as a warm-up step here.

Position the rope around the horse’s leg and run it down to just above the foot, leaving it slack. Run the stick down the leg to the ankle while giving the horse a verbal cue: “Pick it up” or “Foot” or whatever you like – just stick to one you will Always use. Without a response, give your tugs on the rope to cue the foot. So the order to the horse should be: Touch on hip running down leg, verbal cue – no lift? – cue with the rope. The next step, once your horse is comfortable with this process, is to move just to the rope and your hand and from there, to your hand. For lifting a foot you want the briefest of gives from your horse before you praise him. Do all four feet many times. Then you can start asking for more time up, then actually cradling the foot much later. It is not a natural occurrence



for equines to let you hold their feet. Even if they can scratch behind their ear! You must show them how to do it while *you* hold one up *with* them, and they balance on the other three. Reward them early and often. This is many steps in many small sessions.

Here are two good alternative methods for getting to the feet. One is on page 105 of the February 2006 issue of *Western Horseman* and involves slight movement of the horse on the halter, a stick like above, and focus on the horse's foot. You can also "Google" clicker training for horses on the internet. Don't be afraid to add new methods to your toolbox. No two equines are the same, so you can't expect the same tools to work on all of them equally.

Until next time, I wish you easy going with your equines!

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I recently was taking pictures of all of our horses. After looking at them closer, I realized how special this horse really is. The short story version first.

Our family already had acquired a mustang the year before, "my wife's personal horse". I thought that I should have one as well, and we subsequently picked out this little lady, "my personal horse". Then the price went up too high for us at the time, so we had to pass on her. Then a month or so later we received an urgent call, she was down; "malnourished", injured and expected to die. The caller indicated that, if we wanted to try and save her, to come and get her ASAP before it was too late. She weighed less than 100 lbs, I was able to pick her up, and carry her to our truck. She was so weak that she could not fight me at all; she just lay in my arms like a sack of potatoes.



The picture is the second time she had a saddle on, and the first time with a rider in it. She is so happy and relaxed she is asleep. Thanks for the experience!!

Once at our home, we figured out how to get her up on her feet, which we did every 3 hours, to feed and water her. Every ounce of food that she received for the first 2 months of our ownership passed through our hands. I should also note that our two youngest children, then 9 and 5, took their turn assisting with the duties of caring for the sick, and did a fine job. Our 5 year old daughter provided the much needed love, of course! Watering a sick horse required some finesse, but we got-r-done. After 2 months I started to walk her out and let her chew on the grass. Roughly 2 weeks after that I started to jog with her a few yards daily, trying to build her strength. Then about 1½ weeks later, to the



whole family's great joy, she was able to get to her feet on her own.

Well the rest is history she is 2 now and loves people. She especially loves to have someone riding her, even though she has not been trained. A couple of weeks back, I put my 11 year old son on her back, "no saddle, no halter", and she started prancing around our pasture, as if to say "look at me I am the most loved horse in the world". She was so pleased to be in that position, I wish I could have had my camera for that moment. It was truly a Kodak moment.

She really is a "kids" horse.

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People always have dreams of things that they would like to fulfill in their lifetime. Lots of times those dreams never come true. MINE DID, I LIVE MY DREAM EVERY DAY OF MY LIFE NOW. I always dreamed of not just having a horse, but having a WILD MUSTANG. Here's the beginning of the story of MY TREASURE.

Born 1989, Capture Date: 9/96, Location: White River Herd Management Area, Nevada, Description: Buckskin, First adoption 2/1999, Second adoption 8/1999, Piney Woods, MS.

I never owned a horse. All my life I wanted one but living in the City that was impossible. In 1999 my husband Ron and I moved to the country. Then one day I was in the right place at the right time and heard about a mustang that I possibly could adopt. I went to see this horse and fell in love at once. My very first horse, 10 years old, and wild to boot. The BLM employees tried to talk me out of getting this particular horse. You see she had been adopted previously-----beat really bad-----starved to nothing but bones and hanging skin-----then put in a chicken coop and left to die. I was told I would never get my hands on this horse and I would never ride her. This horse would not be good for me. I knew even if I never touched her, I could at least give her a good home and no one would ever hurt her again. So here her story really began.



This beautiful elegant angel lady came home with me. When I brought her home I promised her she would never be hurt again. I made sure that promise was kept. But now the real work had begun. For weeks I would just sit in her pen and talk to her, [and cry over her]. I couldn't understand how someone could have been so cruel to this poor animal. As time went on, I would move closer to her. I named her STARBUCK. Funny thing is I had her almost a year before I saw that she actually had a star on her forehead. She has a very long thick mane, bangs and tail. Whoever her first adopter was they beat

her in the head and on her back legs. We know it was a man because of her reaction to any man getting in her sight. At that time, Ron did not try to get close to her.

Starbuck was so afraid of people especially men, that to begin with I was her only contact. I would spend all day every day with her. She started watching every move I made. When I wasn't in her pen she would move to the area of her pen where she could still see me. The sadness in her eyes would just break my heart. I could see this horse wanted to be with me and be loved. Each day I would get a little closer and a little closer to her without ever trying to touch her. As long as I didn't try to touch her she would let me keep inching closer and just stand there. I finally reached the point where I was standing right next to her, so I would just keep talking. You should see the way this horse just listens. Her ears, expression and body language told me she was listening to every word I said; as if she really understood. At that time I think my voice was soothing to her. I really don't think she understood what I was saying; but I think she understands now. This particular day I was standing there talking to her and just reached up and put my arms around her neck and just held on. I did a little praying too. I didn't know if she was going to eat me up or not. Starbuck just stood there and let me hold her. HER HEALING HAD BEGUN.

Don't get me wrong we still had a long road ahead of us. She wanted to trust me. Her pain and hurt was so strong she just couldn't let loose for a long time. Day by day you could feel her relax a little, then a little more. As time went on she started letting me be a part of her life. We started bonding---building a trust with each other. Then I started trying to get a halter on her; an up-hill battle. Getting a halter near her head was a major thing. I'm short so she knew all she had to do was lift her head and I couldn't get near her sensitive area.

One day I was able to touch her nose ---- just touch, nothing else. Then I could put my hand on her nose. So I would rest my hand on her nose and say put your head down, put your head down. She learned what I was saying and started putting her head down; thus another major accomplishment. I worked mostly with her in her stall; that was her comfort zone. Now I can do anything, anywhere with my beautiful elegant lady. Remember to begin with, I was her only contact. She was just too afraid of everyone else, especially men. Then she learned to love all of us. As afraid of she was with Ron she learned to love him, too. In the end she loved Ron every bit as much as she loved me. Starbuck had so much hurt and pain to overcome that Ron and I spent hours and hours with her just to show our love for her and in return she gave us all of her love.

All of our mustangs get loads of attention. They are our babies; we spoil them all. But Starbuck was the special child. She had such a long journey to find love and happiness and to overcome the hurt and pain. I always call her my ANGEL LADY. She was an angel that the LORD sent to me and an elegant lady at all times.

I rode her everywhere; in parades, on trail rides and just about anywhere else a horse could be ridden. She went to schools for hands loving from children. I would take her to adoptions to tell her story. She's been to expos and been featured on Animal Planet. She has no problem being in the public eye; in fact she just sort of glides along with it. I can put an inexperienced rider on her back and never worry. She will take care of them. Starbuck has become such a treasure. The love and bond between us is so emotional. Everybody that meets Starbuck falls in love with her. She isn't just a horse, she is a family



member. Her body language, her carriage, everything about her speaks loud and clear I AM BEAUTIFUL AND I WILL NEVER BE HURT AGAIN, BECAUSE I AM NOW TRULY LOVED AS I SHOULD HAVE ALWAYS BEEN.

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ARTICLE LINKS[Gift of the Mustang](#)[El Rojo Grande](#)[Eastern States Fostering](#)[Volunteer Program](#)[Connecting with
America's Future](#)[Putting It Together](#)[Our Special Horse - Sage](#)[My Treasure](#)[An Arizona Adopter's
Passion for Wild Horses...
and Burros](#)[Tristan and Erin](#)[HOME](#)**An Arizona Adopter's Passion for Wild horses... and Burros***by Christine Tincher, Arizona, Public Affairs Specialist*

One of the adopters that come to mind when we are asked about success stories is **Randy Helm**. First adopting in 1994, Helm has since adopted seven wild horses and one wild burro. He teases that Bethany, his wife, is the "only reason" he adopts.

But he soon dispels that statement by adding he has always been around horses and before adopting **Hershey**, his first wild horse, he had an Arabian and a Quarter Horse. "Once I started working with mustangs that was it. That is all we have now."

Helm adds, "I do quite a bit of trail riding and hunting. These horses are very sure-footed. I couldn't ask for anything better."

His first adoption was so successful that Helm was asked to help out with the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) video "Welcome Home Wild One." In this video his first adopted horse Hershey is featured in a round pen acting up on cue for the camera.

Hershey was five when Helm adopted her. He said she gentled down right away and added, "She is such a good kid horse." Hershey made her home with the Helm family for five years until he was approached by a neighbor who wanted a good horse for her three year old. Hershey was the perfect choice. Helm says, "I drive by once in awhile to check on her and she is still doing good."

Helm's success was a surprise to his family and friends. His dad, **Bill Helm**, was a cowhand from the ages of 12 to 25 and had a lot of exposure to the wild horses roaming the lands. Bill did not consider it possible to gentle down one of those wild horses ... before. But that has changed. After he watched his son's success, Bill adopted three wild horses of his own. He and his son now ride their wild horses in the annual Camp Verde, AZ parade.

After taking one of his wild horses on a hunting trip, friends said to Helm, "Man, I want one of those!" And it didn't take long before they adopted as well.

On occasion, Helm helps other adopters to train their wild horses and has even taken home an animal they now call **Luke** that was brought back into the adoption program. Helm said "You'll never find a horse more willing to please." Helm's daughter Abigail, who tells you to spell her name like "A Big Ail" rides Luke bareback all of the time – Helm adds, "Whatever you ask of him, he'll do." Not every wild horse that Helm has checked into has worked out. He once tried working with one animal that had been abused and recognized that the animal was not ready to trust again.

Helm spends a lot of time with his horses. He says that's the trick, that and a lot of patience. Then he adds with a smile that he has a little help. "Once I was inside with a cup of coffee and looked out the window to see that my three girls, Rebekah age 12,



Abigail age 9, and Cayna also age 9, had haltered the horses and were brushing them. All three girls ride, but Cayna prefers their wild burro called **Madison** to the horses.

Helm plans to adopt one wild horse a year. He has adopted two from the Colorado Correctional Facility.

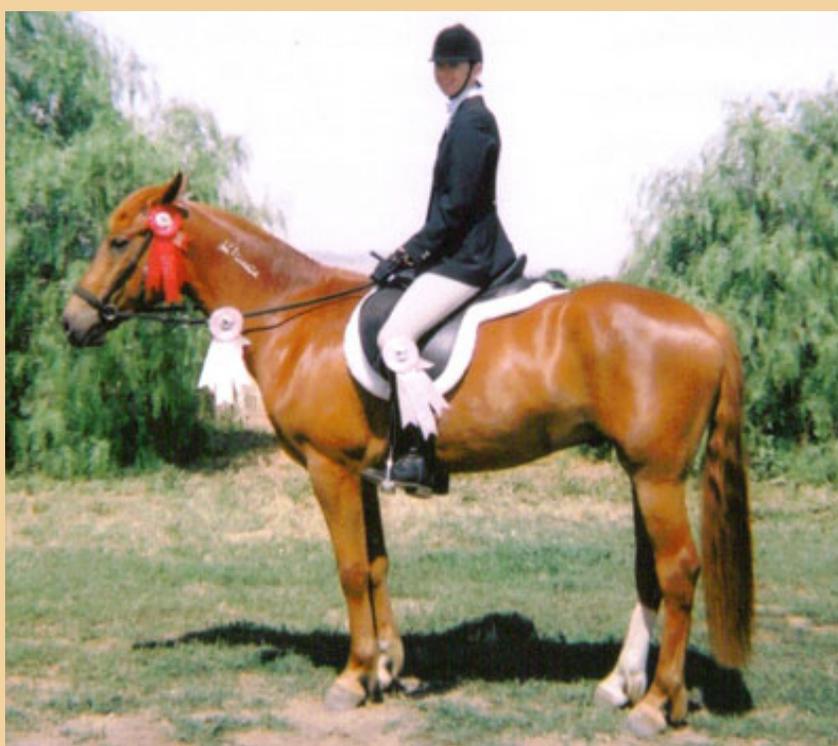
Some of the wild horses that Helm adopts will eventually be placed with other families. He says the only hard part about that is that he gets attached to each one.

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Passion for Wild Horses...
and Burros](#)[Tristan and Erin](#)[HOME](#)**Tristan and Erin***by Erin Bulger*

Long story short, Tristan was adopted by my mother, Ingrid, who was very afraid of horses. She adopted Tristan as a yearling (he picked her out at an adoption in Brentwood, CA.) and put in a lot of time just getting comfortable with him. Together, we have all developed a partnership, trust, and bond that has carried over to my ability to ride him confidently. Tristan has never experienced anything other than a gentle touch and patience.

I went to my first competition a few weeks ago with Tristin. Here's my story.



I just wanted to update everyone on Tristan and his first horse show. The show was at Brentwood Oaks Equestrian Center a few weeks ago. It was way better than expected, even though it was a little scary at the start. Before the show began, I rode him in the warm-up arena, and he was spooky over everything. After a bit we both relaxed and it was soon time for business. Our first class was Open Green horse walk/trot. I was quit unsure how he was going to do, but as soon as we entered the arena he knew that it was time to show off. Tristan was a pro. Never up to this point did he really react right away to my cues, but now he was right on the money. We got 2nd place out of four horses. My poor mom was in tears; she did all she could not to run into the arena and hug Tristan. We went on to get 5th out of seven in English pleasure walk/trot and 5th in English equation walk/trot. It turned out to be a great day for me, my Mom and of course, Tristan.