



The Greatest Family Ever *By Holly Graffunder*

Have you ever been treated like you don't matter because you're not smart, or pretty, or successful, or useful? Nearly each one of Haven Acres' horses has been treated like that at some point in their life, but when they arrive at Haven Acres, they become part of the herd, a family of sorts. In the herd, there are lazy horses, spirited horses, horses that LOVE kids, and those who prefer less stimulation. There are brown horses, black horses, pushy horses, bossy horses, respectful and obedient horses. Despite their differences, their quirks, their strengths, and their weaknesses, each one of them receives love and acceptance, not for what they have to offer, but just because they are a part of the Haven Acres family.

John 1:12

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God."

For instance, Opie was bred and trained for racing, but his laid-back personality earned him retirement before he could even set foot on the track. He was passed from owner to owner until he arrived at Haven Acres. He's only five years old.

Jed was an amazing ranch horse, but when he got too old to work the long, hard days, he was slaughter-bound. He was rescued, and we added him to the herd.

Savannah isn't pretty and has experienced loss leading to severe anxiety and behavior issues.

There is one horse that can't be ridden at all because of an injury; yet, like the others, he is loved and cared for meticulously and sacrificially by Jason and Jenifer.

Like these horses, if you have become part of the family of God through faith in Jesus, it doesn't matter if you are smart, if you have an anxiety disorder, if you aren't very attractive, if you are successful, or if you have a shattered heart. 1 Corinthians 1:26 says, "Brothers, consider your calling: Not many are wise from a human perspective, not many powerful, not many of noble birth." God loves people while they are sinners and saves them by grace just like Jason and Jenifer love their horses even before they deserve it.

The horses at the ranch are a picture of God's grace. He doesn't choose a person based on how they perform for Him. After saving them through grace and adopting them into His family, He doesn't expect them to be perfect in order for Him to continue caring for them.

Cowboy, one of the ranches' best horses, illustrates this point well. A few months ago, he got caught in the fence and cut through the tendon, hitting the bone. We thought we might have to put him down.



Photo Credit: Jenifer Heath

The Greatest Family Ever - continued



Photo Credit: Jenifer Heath

Thankfully, the injury is healing, and he is able to continue serving kids at Haven Acres, but it hasn't been without a cost. There has been a significant financial price to pay for the vet appointments, antibiotics, and bandaging supplies, but beyond that, it has taken hours of Jenifer's time each month to clean and bandage the wound in order for it to heal properly. It would be ridiculous if Cowboy thought that he had somehow earned the care that Jenifer gives him just because he is a great horse. In reality, she would care for any of the animals in the same way simply because she loves them.

Likewise, some of us feel that even after we're part of God's family, we have to earn His acceptance and love. That's absolutely not true! According to Ephesians 2:8, He saved us through grace which means that God offers us His love and forgiveness as a gift, even though we have not earned it or deserved it. There is nothing you or I can do to earn a place in God's family. Jesus' disciple John says in 1 John 3:1, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are!" **If you are His child**, He loves you deeply simply because you are His.

Your story might be filled with the pain of being treated like you aren't worth much, or have you been hopelessly trying to earn God's approval? Maybe both are part of your story. Our hope is that when you walk through the gates at Haven Acres and see the horses that are loved and treated with utmost care, you will be reminded of God's unconditional love and care for you. If you have never been brought into His family, He offers you the privilege of becoming a part of the greatest family ever. We hope you'll join the herd!

STABLE Program

This summer we launched a brand new leadership program called the STABLE Program. It stands for Spiritual Training and Biblical Leadership Enhancement. Our hope is that many of the students that have been mentees at Haven Acres will go on to serve as mentors in the future, and in order for that to occur, some additional training is necessary. Students in the STABLE program attend a 3 hour weekly session which includes one hour of spiritual training, one hour of hands-on horsemanship skills training, and one hour of additional instruction. This summer we have been privileged to learn about a variety of topics that will help us more effectively serve the special needs participants at Haven Acres. Lynn Quam, a local Occupational Therapist with an extensive background in working with kids with disabilities, has given generously of her time and expertise to educate us in these areas from a Biblical point of view which has been amazing. We currently have 5 young people enrolled in STABLE, and they are all well on their way to becoming incredible leaders and mentors, not just at Haven Acres, but in whatever field of service they may choose in the future.



Photo Credit: Jenifer Heath

INTRODUCING...



◀ JAC

Jac is a very cute 17 year old bay Quarter Horse donated to us this spring. He could almost be Ruby's twin! He has heaves, which is like equine asthma, and he needs special medicine before he can be ridden. In spite of this, he has been doing great here. We've discovered that he loves to have his face scratched! He has adjusted well to being in the herd and seems to honestly love spending time with the kids and having a slower paced life.



JOE ▶

Joe is a beautiful, chestnut quarter horse who is 16 years old with a cute, big face and a long mane. He was donated to us from a couple in Wisconsin who used him for cutting, reining, and other western disciplines. He came to us because he has navicular in his front left leg and cannot be a competitive horse any longer without becoming sore and limping. He is a very sweet boy who seems to be loving our program so much that he'll get upset if he's not used during a session! We love his ready, willing, and respectful attitude.



▲ CASSIA

Cassia was purchased by Haven Acres from a young lady who has used her for years as a kids horse but outgrew her. Right from the start, Cassia has been so excited to be used with kids, raising her head and looking very excitedly at them the first time she saw them come out. She's a beautiful, sweet, 17 year old bay quarter horse with a big white blaze. We're so excited to have her!



INTRODUCING... (CONTINUED)



Opie is our tallest horse, part thoroughbred, and is only five years old. Even though he is young, he has already experienced a lot! He was bred and trained for the racetrack, but they soon discovered he wasn't fast enough, earning him the nickname of "Opie Dopie." Next, he was purchased by a gal for barrel racing until she realized he had an injury to his coffin bone and couldn't be ridden competitively. With his laid-back personality, he's been a great fit for our program! We're so thankful that God has used his misfortune to bless some of the kids that attend Haven Acres.

OPIE ▼



Peppy is a black quarter horse with two white spots on his face. We received him from a lady who had mostly used him for trail riding. He's a spunky boy for being over 20 years old and has loads of personality. He likes to come up to you at the gate and sniff you all over. He loves to be ridden and loved on by the kids! He's been known to pick up the stick and string or the lead rope with his mouth and wave it around. He has brought a great deal of laughter to the ranch.

▼ PEPPY

DILLON ▲

Dillon was purchased in May 2017. We were told that he is an amazing horse but gets sore if trail ridden for an hour or more. Upon our arrival to pick him up, we discovered him to be very lame in the left hind, and he was also about 80-100 pounds underweight. We went ahead and purchased him as planned in order to rehabilitate him in hopes that he could be used in our program. He is a very sweet, beautiful 21 year old palomino pinto. The vet has been out to see him and believes he sustained an injury to his pelvis or stifle, so he will not be able to be ridden for at least 6 months depending on how long it takes him to heal. This summer he has experienced the love and attention of many kids. We are excited to see his healing take place just as the kids are experiencing their own.



A Parent's Perspective



Haven Acres has brought HOPE to our family this year as our 12 year old daughter has been facing some major challenges. Jason and Jenifer have welcomed us with open arms. Each week our daughter counts the days until she can relax and be herself, completely accepted, surrounded with peers who struggle just like she does, where no one is judged, mocked, or left out. Haven Acres is full of mentors who breathe life into our kids each week. They speak truth to them. They encourage and lift them up. The bond our daughter has with her horse, Peppy, is a beautiful thing. She feels safe and secure on this big horse. He is a gentle giant... just like her. Their bond is so great. In addition, I learn so much each week from other parents as we sit on the deck and listen, encourage, and lift each other up. It's a beautiful thing. Haven Acres has brought us HOPE, and we are forever grateful. — Sara

Comments from the Kids

The first time I visited Haven Acres, I felt like a new person. It has changed me forever in remarkable ways. The first time I went, I felt like I was connected to my horse because my horse has ADHD, and so do I. I have never met an animal so much like me before. It was the best day of my life. Now that I go every Thursday, I have something to look forward to each week. Jenifer has taught me so many things about dealing with ADHD and other struggles. She is like a prayer warrior. She prays every time after the lesson and also at the end of my session. She also prays for us before we come. You can meet amazing people at Haven Acres. No one judges you because we are struggling with the same things. Haven Acres is the best opportunity you could ever have. — Allie



We are so pleased to report some of the wonderful things God has done for Haven Acres through all of you this spring and summer.

- Conditional Use Permit approved
- New STABLE Leadership program instituted
- Goat shed and chicken coop completed
- Wish List items donated: a wheelbarrow and wheelbarrow tires, new halters and saddle pads, saddles and other tack, helmets, a small refrigerator, a TV, DVD and Tablet for training purposes
- Log archway with sign for Haven Acres- Total quote was \$7300... we paid \$350

What a great big God we serve!



FOURTH ANNUAL
Round-Up Celebration

You're invited to the Fourth Annual Haven Acres Round-Up Celebration! It includes a riding program for participants to demonstrate skills they've learned in front of friends and family, Silent Auction, Pony Rides, Food and Fun for the Family. All are welcome to attend.

**Saturday, September 9th
 from 4 - 7 pm**

Take a peek at what the kids have been up to this season and learn about the services Haven Acres provides to the community. Find out how you can get involved!



Haven Acres

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