



Written by a Haven Acres mentor

A HAVEN FOR THE HURTING

Haven Acres has been a part of my life for several years now. Each year is a little different depending on the children I work with and the horses I use. Each child has his/her own **challenges and strengths**. Some students make me happy—like the a girl I mentored for two years who did so well she was able to graduate and become part of the program as a support person! Others make a mentor really sad—like the girl who just couldn't work through her personal issues and was sinking in despair! She chose to stay in bed at home rather than come to the ranch, eventually dropping out of the program. **Each child's story is different**, and we try to meet the needs of each one where he or she is.

Reflecting back, I recall some former mentees I've had. One girl comes to mind. The ending of the story is still to be written for her. She was a **beautiful child** with an infectious smile! The minute she arrived at Haven Acres it was obvious she was very **enthusiastic to be at the ranch**. She loved the chickens, the cats, the goats, the horses, and even the crickets in the grass! She bubbled over telling me what she had been doing at home and school. The only hint that there was anything the matter was when she said she was a bit worried about going back to school in the fall. She said she was fearful of going to detention. I didn't readily see why that would be an issue because of her **sunny disposition** and seemingly carefree ways. But then one day during our session at Haven Acres we were assigned an unusual chore.

Each student who enters the **mentorship program** does chores for about a half an hour of each session. Usually the chore is scooping poop in the paddocks because each horse poops an average of 50 pounds a day, and the goal is to keep the paddocks and stalls clean. Following that, we might have a **Bible lesson**, and then work with a horse perfecting horsemanship skills and learning to ride. However, this particular day two of us mentors and mentees were assigned the task of writing thank you notes to the donors--people who support Haven Acres and the work with the children and horses. So four of us sat down at a table and began to write.

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“The King will answer and say to them, ‘I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, to the extent that you did it for one of these brothers of Mine, *even the least of them*, you did it for Me.’” – Matthew 25:40 AMP



Photo by Amanda Stamm



Photo by Madison George



I wasn't paying much attention to the conversation until the other participant started talking. I don't even remember what she was saying, but she said something that triggered my student to say, **"I don't think I've ever seen my mom."** Immediately I was all ears! My heart broke for her! Then she continued to say that she also had not seen her dad in quite some time. I asked a couple of questions, she shared a few more particulars, we had a little more conversation, and then it was time to be finished with our task and go catch the horse she would work with for the day.

My mind was on her revelation the whole time we worked with the horse. No wonder she loved the animals so much and loved to come out to Haven Acres! This was the **bright place in her life!** This was where she found living things she could love, hug, and trust! These were feelings I did not relate to at all. I had no idea how it felt to never see your mother! What was it like to not be able to talk to or hug your dad? In those few minutes my eyes were opened to a completely different perspective! I realized more than ever why I am a **part of this ministry** and how much these kids need all of us!

At the end of the session that day, I felt **greater compassion** for this precious girl than I previously had because I had been allowed to see deeper into her soul. I determined that I would **pray for her** more sincerely.

When her ride arrived to take her home, I had to repeat my directions more than once, "Come on. The session is over! Time to go home!" I watched this precious girl as, with great reluctance, she withdrew her arms from around the bay's soft neck where she had buried her face. It was **difficult to leave Haven Acres**, for she considered it a place of safety. And she's not alone. For many hurting people, it is **indeed a Haven!**



Haven Acres

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Photo by Ayalen Aboki