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## Morning Star Youth Ranch Winter 2110 Newsletter

### From the Director - Diane Odell

Isn't God good! Over the past year He has shown himself faithfully to us through countless seemingly insignificant details on a daily basis. Those little things that only God can orchestrate in His perfect timing, like the golden eagle that grabs a ground squirrel at the precise moment you turn the corner; and then there are those "blow your mind" hard to miss events like the filling of our barn with donated hay for this winter or the sudden healing of an ankle that the doctors were ready to operate on. Or maybe a disaster averted because the wheel of a tractor breaks off at a time and place so as not to injure anyone or block a needed roadway until it can be repaired. God so desires to be in the center of our lives and yet it is so easy to hook into the "to do list" and miss the fiery painted sunrise or a full moon that rises at the exact angle to highlight a perfectly symmetrical oak tree so that you know that no one else sees the incredible

view as you do. I pray you all take the time this coming holiday season to ponder the richness of the small things that really aren't so small and enjoy the grace of His blessings as you spend time with friends and family. **Merry Christmas to each of you.**

It has been an incredible year at Morning Star Youth Ranch. Our Father's care and provision, His sustaining love, guiding hand and obvious protection have drawn us all closer to Him throughout this long busy season. October marks the end of our second season with children, mentors and horses enjoying the benefits of building relationships, resting in His perfect love and overcoming the trials and bruises we encounter in our lives.

I want to share with you of one of the many miracles we were privileged to be part of this past year. (Details have been altered to protect the privacy of those that come to the ranch.) The call came late one afternoon "We have a child just

placed with us who has come from a difficult situation and the only thing he seems to respond to are animals. Could we bring him to the ranch for a visit?" As they drove up the road and into the barnyard I prayed that God would meet the needs of this little broken heart. Although I had no idea what had happened in his young life, my eyes filled with tears as I watched him slowly get out of the car. Cali our little "greeter" was the first to introduce her self, tail wagging, tongue licking, hoping for a quick game of king of the mountain on the nearby dirt pile. I was glad to see him acknowledge her if only briefly. After short introductions we started off to meet our four legged encouragers. Our first stop, and as it turns out, our only stop that first day, was to see Teaspoon our little miniature horse.

Her story is rather remarkable itself. She is over 30 yrs old, blind in one eye, hard of hearing and due to bad teeth only able to eat processed feed. Over the last 2 years she has triumphed over debilitating seizures, which nearly cost her life, food allergies, and depression and fear, all related to toxins in her body and previous disrespectful handling somewhere in her past.

As I began sharing what I knew of Teaspoon's life our silent little visitor lifted his chin from his chest for the first time and made eye contact with Teaspoon. As Teaspoon is often shy and reserved for most of our visitors I expected we would

move on to meet another of our four-legged angels, but as God would have it, Teaspoon approached this young boy and waited for him to reach out and touch her. As he stroked her neck and listened to her story I could see his shoulders relax slightly. Teaspoon and this young boy stood together silently touching each others' lives until he was ready to go, his heart filled with all the love he could handle for this visit.

He would return several more times over the next few weeks, each visit spending precious moments with Teaspoon and then moving on to learn the stories of the other horses at the ranch.

He learned about Hannah's leg injury when she was a baby and her birth deformity, and about Whisper, beating the odds and surviving cancer. He heard how Selah became an orphan and Indy was beaten, how Cooper survived major surgery, Libby, found abandoned and Anya, spending her early years isolated and neglected. I noticed each time he returned to the ranch he was a bit more relaxed and a bit more curious. And then it happened on his forth visit: He simply looked at me and said. "I was sad when I first came here because I was hurt too."

As he had learned the stories of each of our horses and experienced the love and safety at Morning Star, this broken little boy gained the courage to begin to tell his story and start on his own path toward hope, healing and trust. Isn't God good?

## Kid's Corral

*Did you know horses are measured in hands, not in feet and inches like you? How many inches equals one "hand"? \_\_\_\_\_*

Learning to interact with horses and know them takes on many forms at the ranch. We encourage each young person's individual expression as well as encourage them to grow in their knowledge of horses

**Unscramble the horse's names from the ranch below:**

- 1. HAELS**
- 2. NYDI**
- 3. NNAAHH**
- 4. DUDBY**
- 5. OOERPC**
- 6. PIERSHW**
- 7. IERF**
- 8. YANA**
- 9. BBILY**
- 10. EAOSPONT**

DRAW YOU AND YOUR FAVORITE HORSE FROM THE RANCH HERE

ranch. Each horse has its own blessed recovery story, as do many of our "two-legged angels, as we continue to build trust with God's love through the Morning Star Youth Ranch program. The unselfish giving of time and talents by the volunteers brings forth grateful praise to God for all He has accomplished, so far, through each of us and our "angels in horsehair".

### **A Message From the Board:**

As we come to the end of 2010, we on the board are so thankful for all of you who have given of your time, gifts and prayers to support this ministry. Thank You!

By God's grace we have come a long way this past year. We look forward to the coming year as we seek to expand our volunteer base, encourage and serve a waiting list of children and families, continue building quality facilities, maintain safe and healthy horses while always striving to make prayerful and well thought out decisions.

We know we do not labor alone and cannot do what we do without your encouragement, gifts of time, talents, and donations as well as your prayers.

As many of you know, we have no paid staff and the program is free to every child. It takes about \$100 to cover the cost of one day of ministry here at the ranch, including care and feeding of our horses .

If you would like to help with an end of the year gift or a monthly pledge, please use the return envelope included with this newsletter.

All of us at Morning Star Youth Ranch wish you a wonderful Christmas season. May your hearts be filled with His love and peace, and may this New Year bring you health and joy.

*The life of Jesus is bracketed by two impossibilities: a virgin's womb and an empty tomb. Jesus entered our world through a door marked "No Entrance" and left through a door marked "No Exit."*  
*Peter Larson*

## **2010 - A Year of Blessings!**

### **A Wedding!**

After a yearlong courtship Carl Linn and Kathy Whitacre are to be wed December 11<sup>th</sup>. Best wishes and much happiness are bestowed upon them both as they begin their new life together.



### **A New Home and Office**

The donated doublewide mobile home has been set at the ranch along with a garage and temporary office for Morning Star. Our program director, Diane, moved in this summer and is still in the process of settling in.



### **A Promotional DVD**

Morning Star has its first promotional DVD. Filmed in April, it can now be used at our presentations, given away and be on our website. Thank you James Greenelsh, Gary and Harvest Media for all your work on this project. Go see it at: [www.morningstaryouthranch.org](http://www.morningstaryouthranch.org).

### **A Training Trip**

Diane, along with 3 of our mentors in training, traveled to **Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch** to attend this year's training clinic in May. Tammy, Greta and Kevin brought back to the ranch with them a renewed sense of purpose, many creative ideas and a stronger personal vision.

### **A Healing**

Whisper, our amazing little Thoroughbred, who has struggled over the last 3 years with various health issues, was diagnosed earlier this year with stomach and colon cancer. Just recently, after months of medication, she has been given a clean bill of health. Praise Him!



## Tack Shop

Our Used Tack Shop located at the San Miguel Flouring Mill in San Miguel has been restocked and is under new management. Our tack shop provides income each month for our ministry. Please remember to stop by if you are in need of good usable tack. Donations are also gladly accepted. Please call the ranch office to arrange for pick up. 805-226-2859



## A HAYRIDE

October 30<sup>th</sup> marked the end of our second season. We celebrated by joining together for an afternoon of games, hamburgers with all the fixins', a hayride to the top of the hill and then gathered around the fire pit to warm up and sing some campfire songs. (See the video on our website!)

## A New Sign

Morning Star now has signs at our entrance gates! A huge thank-you to John Szymaniak and his son, Hobie, for their design work, labor and installation of these beautiful gate signs.



## A Garden

Our Morning Star garden was able to provide sweet pears, fresh greens, zucchini and yellow squash, tomatoes and peppers to families and friends this year. Many thanks to Caroline, Delisa and the many volunteers who helped make this dream a reality.

## A Teaspoon of Brown Sugar Bernice Bernhardt

The huge, soulful, deep brown eyes watch me as I stroll towards her carrying the familiar blue grooming bucket at my side. Her beautiful eyes seem almost too big for her miniature face, so full of questions, as well as acceptance. Her trust is the

reward for almost a year of lovingly slow, gentle, but firm handling. Teaspoon is our resident miniature horse that came to us a broken, frightened and sick mare. Something in her history had severely damaged any trust she may have had. It is estimated that she may be about 30 years of age---very "long-in-the-tooth". She no longer can see through her left eye, which modifies the way in which we relate to her.

As a Morning Star Youth Ranch volunteer, I was blessed to be given the opportunity to work with this frightened little mare on a regular basis. My role in her fragile life began soon after her physical health had been restored at he ranch. It was apparent from the beginning that patience, deliberately slow movements, and being at her level were key in communicating and building trust with her.

Being in the "golden years" myself, I had a lifetime to learn these attributes and brought them into our relationship. I learned to give her time to mentally process what I would ask of her, like picking up her foot to be cleaned, or moving her body to one side. She proved to be a very wise horse. Her response time improved as her trust grew. Some days she would be a bit frisky and other days uncooperative, but she grew to respect me and what I was asking of her. We both have come to look forward to our time

together. It is obvious that she anticipates and appreciates the currying, brushing, loving words and soft touch. She stands so still, with her head low, deeply feeling the touch of the brush and my hand stroking her soft, dappled brown coat. It seems that she hopes it will never end. When I find an itchy spot I will linger there as she extends her neck and head, wiggling her upper lip in sheer ecstasy. I am amazed by this little one's tenacity and strength that has survived all she has been through in her life. Her willingness to once again take a chance to trust, speaks volumes to my human spirit.

Sometimes she and I will take a walk to the garden and orchard area so she can investigate different sights and smells, sniffing out any edible snacks growing along the way. When she stops, with her ears up alert to some new sight or sound, she is reassured by a quiet voice and gentle touch telling her all is well. She will move closer to me demonstrating her trust and I am blessed. I may have accomplished a lot with her, but she has given me the special gift of trust and a useful purpose in God's plans. She is our "Teaspoon of brown sugar" a blessing in this ranch setting. no longer frightened of the happy, boisterous children as they approach her and talk to her, is a testimony of God's grace on all the work done here at the

QuickTime™ and a decompressor are needed to see this picture.