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Horse Haven

All About Equine Animal Rescue

BY CHLOE DALEY



PHOTO BY DANTE FONTANA

For some horses crammed in feedlots in Nevada, death was an impending reality and just a drive to Canada.

But All About Equine, a new rescue organization in El Dorado Hills, saved them from a slaughterhouse fate and now provides a second future, one of rehabilitation and adoption. The nonprofit is a labor of love for Wendy Digiorno who grew up with horses, but had no interaction for a long time and now has them back in her life everyday. "We are giving horses a future that had none at all," Digiorno says. After planning the rescue for a few years, Digiorno's vision is now a reality and she partners with another equine rescue in Nevada, which buys horses from feedlots before being sent to slaughterhouses out of the country.

The organization is 100-percent volunteer-run, from 12 year-old girls to horse lovers in their 40s and 50s. Digiorno says that for someone like herself, it is an opportunity to have horses back in their lives. Volunteer Linda Lewis says the work is a dream come true for her. She recently adopted a colt from the rescue and is training him for her grandson Clayton. "It is great for the younger volunteers to see how a passion for horses never dies," says Lewis.

"At sunset, when the horses are feeding, it is probably one of the most peaceful times one can experiences," says Lewis. With roughly 21 horses currently housed at the ranch, 10 being foals, the care and upkeep is no easy task. Volunteers must feed and check the horses' water, muck out stalls, repair fencing and work with the colts, the majority being socially damaged from little to no human contact.

Lewis said it is no quick process and the rehabilitation is done in baby steps as the animals are wary of any quick movement. "In order to get the trust, the horse has to respect the person," Lewis says.

But not all the volunteers have equine enthusiasm or a background with horses. Patricia Piazza, who now heads to the ranch every day, found herself sunk in depression after losing her home in the recession. But, she says working at the ranch has given her a sense of purpose and inner peace. "The horses need you and they do something for you. You don't need to be a horse person to help."

Piazza says she is like Paris Hilton on the farm; she wears her juicy couture while mucking out stalls. Now she says it has become her thing and she's more comfortable around the horses. But the day-to-day volunteer work is just one side of the nonprofit. The organization is still in dire need of funds to pay for veterinarian bills and farrier fees. Many of the horses arrive to the ranch severely injured and in need of serious medical attention.

Digiorno says buyers will choose horses from the feedlot that have the best chance of survival and rehabilitation. The ultimate hope is that the horses will be adopted and placed in permanent homes.

To donate your time or funds to help support All About Equine, visit allaboutequine.org or call 916-606-3330.