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Horse rescuer: EDH woman rehabs bedraggled horses

By Noel Stack | Mother Lode News | October 27, 2009 12:50

“Clayton” has had it rough.

He suffered a leg wound, an umbilical hemorrhage and an ulcer - all in his first few months of life.

On top of it all, the little guy didn't have a mom.

Any other horse might lay down in the dirt and give up. But “Clayton” got lucky; he found a home and an adopted family at All About Equine's rescue ranch in El Dorado Hills. The foal now spends his days munching hay and recovering thanks to excellent care.

“This guy's been a little trooper,” said Wendy Digiorno, All About Equine founder. “He's been through a lot of treatment.”

It's stories like “Clayton's” that pushed

Digiorno to create her horse rescue after years of considering the idea. She has 14 rescued horses, one-third of them youngsters, at the 15-acre facility she opened on her parents' property this past June.

“Eleven horses have come from an actual slaughterhouse feed lot,” Digiorno said.

All About Equine works with Valley View Ranch Equine Rescue to pull slaughterhouse horses away from the jaws of death. She described their condition as “terrible” when the first batch came to her ranch.

“Some of them have never been handled,” Digiorno said.

And so the slow process of recovery begins for these animals given a second chance. It could take months to rehab a horse and then All About Equine pairs the animal with a new owner to “create lifelong relationships.”

Digiorno's effort caught the attention of El Dorado Hills resident Anni Benson, a volunteer who grew up around horses.

“Between my family and we're here every day,” Benson said.

All About Equine relies on volunteers like Benson and donations to keep the horses healthy and happy. Digiorno won't accept a horse unless she has six months worth of funding, about \$500, available to cover the animal's basic care.



HAY DAY ,Ä El Dorado Hills resident Anni Benson, left and Wendy Digiorno, All About Equine founder, right, dedicate every spare moment to rehabilitating unwanted horses. Many of the horses at the El Dorado Hills rescue were destined for slaughter. Democrat photo by Pat Dollins

Veterinarians and farriers donate their time. All About Equine sells donated items on craigslist, holds car washes and relies on private donations to keep running the operation. Digiorno is applying for 501(c)3 status and said all funds coming in go directly to the animals.

“We really can use anything and everything,” Digiorno said. “We could save a lot more if we had the funding and resources.”

If funding becomes available Digiorno said she has big plans for All About Equine - adding an arena to better train and work with the horses and building more shelters and additional fences so the rescue operation can expand.

Ideally, every horse that steps into All About Equine would go back out to a loving home. Digiorno said she encourages anyone considering buying a horse to look at rescued horses first.

“It’s just great satisfaction knowing they have a future,” Digiorno said. “It’s all about these guys and making a better life for them.”

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