

Stable gives horses a second chance

Everyday Heroes by Lynda Hudzick

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If you believe, as Cindy Gilbert does, that animals have and can express feelings and emotions, then you'll easily understand her passion for the horses that share her life.

Cindy and her husband, Dave Garber, own and operate Harvest View Stables (www.harvestviewstables.com) and although Cindy said that it's a lot of work and responsibility, she's never been happier.

Riding horses before she could walk, Cindy said she has always loved them, but got away from riding for a while. Then one day a friend of Dave's announced she was selling her barn, and Dave decided that they ought to look into it, knowing Cindy would enjoy getting back into riding. He had no idea where that plan would take them. "It's funny that it was his idea, because he's never been a horse person," she said. "But I was excited about the idea too, so we started looking at other places as well and I happened to stumble on this place. I wasn't sure Dave would go for it because it was too far from where we were living in Lancaster, but I took him out for breakfast one morning and showed it to him. He ended up coming back on his own to check it out, and then I knew I had him."

Cindy said that she fell in love at first sight with Harvest View, and knew right away it was the perfect place for a riding school. Harvest View offers riding classes for all ages and skill levels, and has several highly qualified instructors on staff. There are also boarding facilities available, and many programs and educational opportunities for people who are just interested in horses, all of which are outlined in detail on the web site.

The view of rolling hills in front of the stable, and the forest and protected game land trails surrounding it makes it the ideal setting for a riding school - and for what turns out to be a second chance home for about half of the horses she owns who have been adopted through the Lost and Found Horse Rescue program in York. (www.lfhr.org.)

"It was not my intent when we bought this place to work with the rescue," she said, "but right around that time, I met Kelly Young, who runs the rescue. She was manning a booth at the Pennsylvania National Horse Show, and I thought immediately that it was the perfect answer for us. What I really like is the idea of giving horses another chance. In addition to the horses we've adopted from the rescue, we've also done some foster care for them. I'm actually on the advisory board for the organization."

According to the I & FHRF (Lost and Found Horse Rescue Foundation) Web site, they have



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"successfully placed more than 500 horses, averaging 100 per year since 1997... whether they come by way of neglect, auction or donation, our mission remains clear and constant: working to educate horse owners, legislate the humane treatment of horses everywhere and find homes for abused or neglected equines of all descriptions."

The first horse that Cindy adopted through the rescue was an Amish carthorse named Kish.

"He was sold to slaughter, but the rescue bought him from there," Cindy said. "I was looking for a horse quiet enough for my husband, who has never been a rider, and when I met Kish, I knew he was the one. He was very thin and had thrush, and his feet were overgrown, but he took very well to the TLC we gave him. He's so sweet with a wonderful personality, and he's great with kids and beginning riders. We have some special needs students, some who are mentally disabled, and Kish is incredible with them. He's just a little prince."

Another horse that came to Cindy through her friends at the rescue program was Delight, who is actually a thoroughbred.

"Delight was sold to slaughter for \$350," Cindy said, "and I was at the sale with some friends, and although I had never bought a horse directly from the meat pen myself, I knew he had to be saved. He was absolutely beautiful, how could I not take him? He had actually already been sold to a meat dealer, and I offered the buyer another \$50 for him, so I got him for \$400. He wasn't saddle broke, but we sent him out for training for six weeks, and now he's wonderful to ride. You know, he almost seems grateful, too. When he was in that meat pen, he was terrified, I could see it in his eyes, it's a sad place for a horse to end up. But now, he's a very special boy to me. Somehow things fall into place, and I know he was meant to go home with me that day."

Cindy readily admits to having a favorite resident of the barn, though, and that is the biggest horse in the place, a beauty named Buck. Having belonged to some friends of hers from York, Cindy said that as Buck aged (he's 20 now) he was having a hard time with the more vigorous hunting and showing parts of his life, so she was contacted by his owners, who knew Buck would have a good home at Harvest View. They donated him to the rescue, and Cindy adopted him from there.

"Buck is my very special guy," Cindy said. "This is the horse who taught me to ride again after all those years. We go out on hunts and he jumps logs that have fallen in the woods. He's still enjoying all of that, but not at such an intense level, so he handles it well. I feel safe on him, and he takes care of me. He actually gets anything he wants from me, he is spoiled a bit. I just love him, although he is very high maintenance, but that's my fault, I guess. I've really created a monster!"

Any horse lucky enough to end up at Harvest View Stables is a lucky horse indeed.

The sense of contentment simply radiates from all the residents of the barn, starting with the horses and ending with the assorted cats that find cozy warm corners to nap in the hay. There is a loving, family atmosphere in this place, and that is exactly what Cindy enjoys most about it.

"I have never been happier in my life," she said. "These horses are all amazing and I feel honored that they are a part of our lives. People say this must be my dream come true, but this is actually more wonderful than any dream I ever had. I get up every morning and look at this beautiful place and I just can't believe I live here. It's the perfect place for me."