



# Horsin' Around The Ranch



Heartland Youth Ranch

Spring 2017

## The Gift by Susan Schauer

April came to Heartland Youth Ranch one summer in the middle of our riding season. Her mom was looking for help. April comes from a single parent family the result of a divorce, broken promises, broken dreams, broken hearts, and broken family. April's heart needed healing. She didn't ever say much, mostly yes and no answers to questions. She is an animal lover; when she was finished with the riding session she was never ready to leave. We could always find her playing fetch with Bullet our dog or in the barn holding and playing with the cats. She seemed to be looking for something that would love her back that would come to her just because, no conditions.

As the summer went on and she came for her sessions she seemed to relax more and would share bits and pieces about some of her difficulties. Her struggles in school, and classes struggles with friends but never anything about home. Until one afternoon.

As we were working together for her thirty minutes of work before riding she opened up. She began to share some of the deep hurts and struggles she was facing. Hurts so deep I was at a loss for words. Then all of a sudden she threw down the spade and with head down cried out, "They just don't know what divorce does to kids!"

As we put our spades away and went to catch a horse we talked more about her circumstances. How life can be difficult and sometimes we make wrong choices and those we love including family, friends and others can be hurt. No matter how

much we have messed up God always loves us. He always forgives us if we ask and He can work all things out for good even our bad choices if we surrender them to Him and allow Him to work.

That day April chose to ride a little black horse named Wings. She had ridden her once or twice before so was creating a relationship with this little horse. Wings had always responded well to her cues and they always had a good session. We talked more as she groomed Wings and saddled her. This afternoon we decided to do the ring game. This is where a rider will trot past me as I hold up rings, and they will grab the ring, ride to the other end of the arena, turn around and ride past me again until the rings are all on their saddle horn. As I said April had ridden Wings before and had handled her very well. Not so this afternoon. After she had the first ring Wings just kept circling around the arena and April could not get her to slow down or turn or get near enough to grab another ring. She just kept circling and that's when God spoke to my heart. This is what her life feels like, out of control. She is searching for direction and answers and healing.

After session we always have the riders dismount in the center of the arena and then walk to the east end of the arena. The horses want to go to the west end, where the gate is and they know that. Most the time the horses will join up and follow the child to the east end of the arena. The horse looks to them as their leader and will choose to stay with them. Wings has been

known to get distracted by the grass that tends to creep under the arena fence and veer off for a snack. Not so today. She stuck by April's side like glue even when April started to run she stayed with her step for step. When April came to the east end of the arena she turned and ran towards the west end towards the gate where I was standing. Wings turned shook her head like, oh no you don't, and caught up with her and stayed by her side. They came closer and closer and I finally yelled stop. April stopped and stood still and Wings stopped right beside her. Not past her right beside her. Then it happened the biggest smile I have ever seen broke across her face and she turned and looked at Wings and said wow. At that moment God gave this little girl a gift. The gift of a visual picture of God's love in a message through a horse. I was able to share with April that is how Jesus wants us to follow Him. Just as Wings chose to follow April even at a run that is what Jesus wants us to do. He gives us freewill. He does not force us as April did not force Wings to follow her or to stop with her. That day Wings chose to follow April to stay by her side and April got a clear picture of how Jesus loves her and wants her to choose to follow Him.

James 1:17 Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.



Heartland Youth Ranch is a 501c3 non-profit ministry. We serve children and their families teaching basic horsemanship. Good work ethics and sharing the love of Jesus. We do not charge anything for our services. Last year we held 357 sessions. We had over 700 visitors to the ranch and 1301 volunteer hours. We have eight horses on the ranch that have been donated/rescued and belong to Heartland Youth Ranch. All donations go to funding our services and caring for the horses. All donations are tax deductible.

***Ways you can donate:***

- Mail a donation to: Heartland Youth Ranch 80997 Hwy. 11, North Loup, NE 68859.
- Go to our website: [heartlandyouthranch.org](http://heartlandyouthranch.org) and press the donate tab.
- Donate at a giving station during the Big Give in Valley County, March 17-18, 2017.



**HYR Mission Statement**

**Encouragement for  
the child,  
Healing for the family,  
Empower the ministry,  
Care for the equine.**

**Comments from the children:**

One day in session we were working with Cheyenne on the safety stop, instructing her how to stop the horse safely especially if the horse started going faster than she was ready for. When we were wrapping up the session Cheyenne asked if she could trot on Abby. I asked her what she would do if Abby started going faster and faster she thought for a second and said "Wheeeeeeeeeeeeeee." We reviewed the safety stop again!

Riley was riding Sport, our lazy laid back gelding whose favorite thing to do is step on the cones and smash them. Riley was maneuvering Sport around the cones smoothly. After session she proudly declared. "I taught Sport his right and left today I don't think he knew that before."

Matty was riding Spook and I was showing her how to neck rein. After turning Spook in several circles both directions from the ground I got a little dizzy. I told Matty I needed to just stand still for a moment and get over the dizziness. She replied, "You just stand there and rest; I will go ride around." Meaning this was her perfect opportunity for speed. Needless to say, I did not let go of Spook.

**UPCOMING DATES AND EVENTS AT HEARTLAND YOUTH RANCH**

**April 3:** HYR Riding season begins

**May:** Work day at the ranch (date to be announced)

**June 3:** HYR Annual Barbecue Fundraiser

**Connect with Heartland Youth Ranch!**

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