

Mother and daughter volunteer for horse rescue

By Karen Everhart

Ask around and you will find that nearly every girl from the age of 2 to 92 dreams of having a pony or horse of her very own at one time in her life. Growing up in a small, rural town should have increased the possibility for Paxton Kerley but things don't always work out the way we dream.

When Paxton read about Rainbow Meadows Equine Rescue and Retirement, Inc., located just south of Sedan, in the Kansas Country Living magazine, a plan began to cook in her young brain. She started pestering her mother Dawn to contact the owners, Karen and David Everhart, about a visit to the rescue site. As often happens, life was hectic and Dawn never took the time to place the call. One day, when getting her hair cut at J K Primp Corner, Dawn picked up a brochure about the Rescue. Inside was an invitation for volunteers to assist with the care of the rescued horses.

Dawn shared the information about this opportunity with Paxton. It was impossible to curb Paxton's enthusiasm and she insisted that her mom contact the Rescue. An initial e-mail was sent inquiring about becoming a volunteer and a reply was received almost immediately. Rainbow Meadows Equine Rescue and Retirement, Inc., would be happy to visit with them and, if things went well, allow Paxton to apply to be a volunteer. A time was set for the first meeting though it could not have been soon enough for Paxton.

The rest is history. Both Paxton and Dawn applied as volunteers and were approved. An initial volunteer assignment was developed with Paxton assuming an age-appropriate farm chore and the primary responsibility for grooming of a blind miniature horse named Midget.

Since Paxton is under the age of 18, an adult parent or guardian is required to be present during all volunteer activities. So initially, Dawn was there to supervise Paxton's volunteer

tasks. Paxton learned how to halter Midget and lead her safely. She also learned about proper grooming and bathing. At the end of each session, Paxton offers Midget a few apple treats in her feed bowl.

It wasn't long before Dawn wanted to participate beyond her role as a supervisor. She shared her wishes with Karen and a new volunteer assignment was drafted. Dawn would continue to supervise Paxton's activities and then Paxton would assist

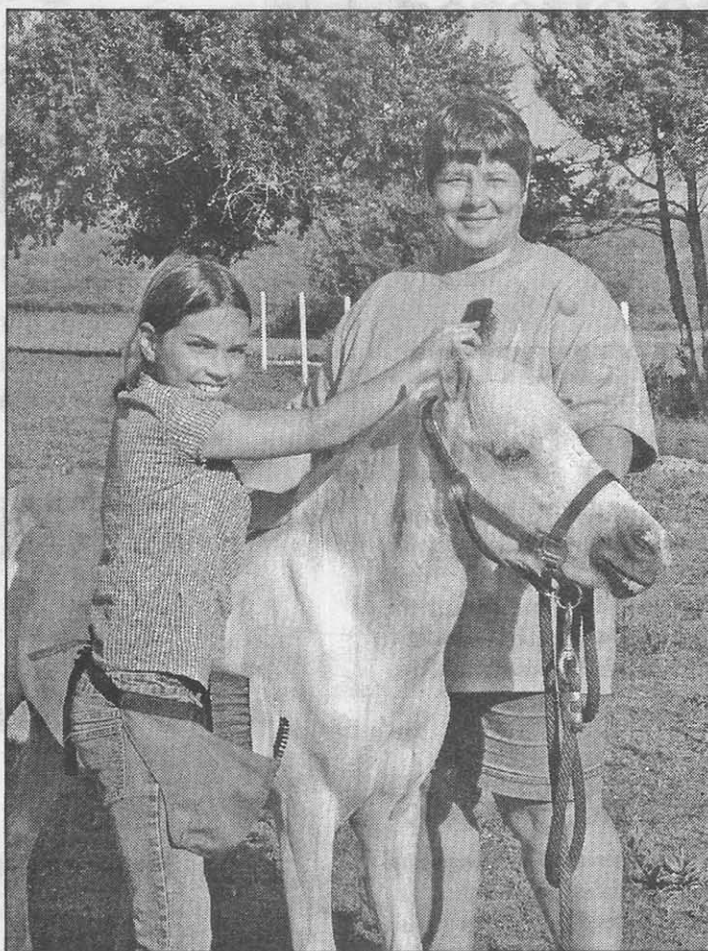
Dawn as she became responsible for the grooming of two blind mares: a Paso Fino named Palomita and an Arabian named Nia.

The smiles on the faces of Paxton and Dawn as they arrive to work with the horses are contagious. They are always eager to see their equine friends and spend some quiet time together. The horses enjoy the personal attention and their coats are clean and shiny.

The Everharts are also grateful to have such dedicated and compassionate volunteers in Paxton and Dawn. There are currently 10 rescued/retired horses at Rainbow Meadows Equine Rescue and Retirement, Inc. Without the assistance of friends like Paxton and Dawn, they could not offer the personal attention that these special horses deserve.

So, dreams do come true. Both for little and not so little girls who want a horse to take care of, but also for the founders of rescue facilities who need others to care about the horses as much as they do.

For information about becoming a volunteer, contact Karen Everhart at 620-725-3402. Rainbow Meadows Equine Rescue and Retirement, Inc., is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization, which is supported entirely by donations and gifts. To donate contact Karen at the number listed. For more info visit their website at www.rainbowmeadowsranch.com.



Dawn and Paxton Kerley

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