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Karen and David Everhart with two of their horses at Rainbow Meadows

HORSE RESCUERS

Ranch in Chautauqua County provides retirement for equines

By Rudy Taylor
TAYLOR NEWSPAPER FAMILY

A quiet hilltop near the town of Chautauqua is now the home of a small ranch where neglected, abused or abandoned horses are finding new life.

The Rainbow Meadows Equine Rescue and Retirement Facility is owned by Karen and David Everhart who moved to Chautauqua County in April from Wichita where they had lived for many years. She took early retirement as a health care administrator and he retired after 37 years in the military.

It was Karen's passion for neglected, abused and abandoned equines that led the couple back to her roots in this area. Her grandparents on both sides resided in Cedar Vale and Grenola.

The Everharts operate a complete horse training facility but her heart felt concern for abused and neglected horses remains her highest priority on the ranch. As a result, the Everharts have formed a non-profit corporation which holds as its purpose to rescue and care for horses that have been abandoned, neglected or abused.

They currently have two rescued mares, one blind and one lame. "The blind mare was to be euthanized by her owners because she could no longer bear foals, and the other was lame from many years of standing tied where she was forced to deliver urine to be synthesized for hormone replacement therapy," said Karen.

The lame mare was rescued from Canadian "pee-lines" which have become a common source for Premarin (pregnant mare urine).

Since 1942, Premarin has been prescribed by doctors to treat the symptoms of menopause in women. Premarin (conjugated estrogens) is extracted from the urine of pregnant mares.

Because so much of this drug is prescribed, its production re-

quires the operation of around 700 "farms," in which around 80,000 horses live their entire lives penned in tiny stalls, unable to turn around or meaningfully lie down, deprived of water, repeatedly impregnated, and continuously connected to plumbing collecting that urine.

When they can no longer produce adequately, most are summarily slaughtered. Most of their offspring are either put in stalls or slaughtered. The Everharts note that over 58 years of Premarin production, well over a million horses or perhaps millions of horses, have lived in cruelty and then been slaughtered. Only in the last twenty years has this process become known to the public and many rescue organizations have been formed as a result.

"This is an industry that believes horses are to be subdued and confused," said Karen. "These horses are seldom given the medical treatment they deserve and their hooves often are allowed to grow without trimming."

The Everharts vow to give back to the animals what they have given to humans during their lifetime.

"We offer a retirement opportunity for horse owners who care about their animals," Karen said. "These horses, whether they are ill and neglected or simply those nearing death because of age will receive the dignity they deserve," she said.

"Horse owners can bring their animals here, then come and see them and help care for them in a loving environment."

The Everharts will help horse owners write a will or living trust, assuring the horses of care after the death(s) of their owners.

"So many times, horses are not given a thought when people make out their wills," she said. "We have a place for the horses, and we will work with them until the day they die, then provide a dignified burial for them."

Rainbow Meadows already

has a number of horse in the system for its perpetual care plan, and several for retirement.

"We have talked to lots of horse owners who simply don't know what to do with older horses," she said. "These are animals that have given so much during their lifetimes and their owners should want to provide some contentment and care for them as they grow older. We offer that love and care."

The Everharts said they want to work with law enforcement in this area since those agencies often are contacted to report abused or neglected horses.

"We also want to be an educational resource for horse owners who may find themselves trapped or confused by misunderstanding the horse.

"Horses are intelligent, highly sensitive animals so it requires time and effort to care for them," Karen said.

Rainbow Meadows needs financial partners to help pay for feed, medical supplies and other supplies. Eventually, they will need volunteers to help work with the rescued horses.

"We want each horse at Rainbow Meadows to have a level of care for all its natural life," she said.

Other members of the Rainbow Meadows Equine Rescue and Retirement, Inc., are: Jan Johnston, a veterinarian from Pawhuska who is medical director; Christine Abbott, PhD, Lenexa, Kan., Director of Education and Fundraising; and Kira Valentin, Manhattan, Director of Marketing and Communication. Karen Everhart serves as president of the non-profit company.

Services offered at the ranch include horse sitting, horse hospice, horse heaven, horse starting, horse connection and horse sense.

The ranch is located one mile north of Chautauqua on Dalton Road. The Everharts can be contacted for more information at 620.725-3402.