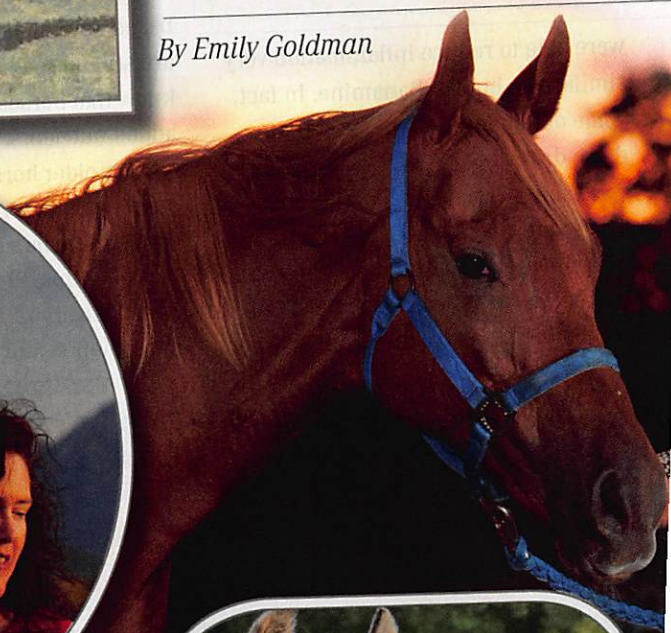
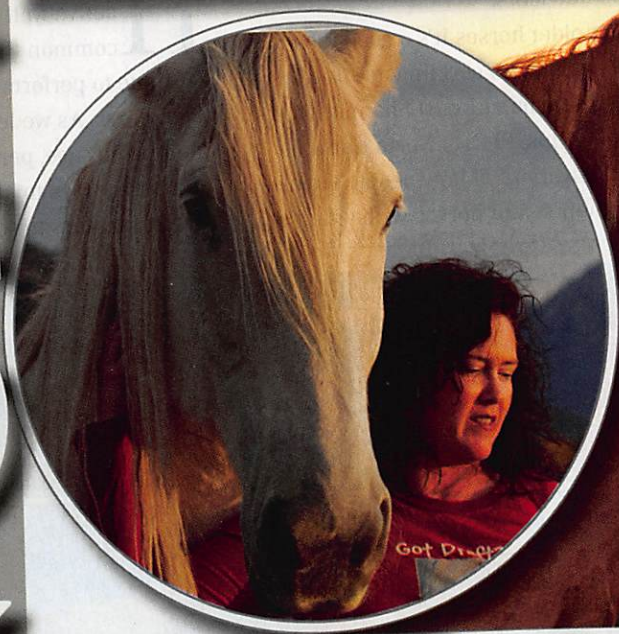
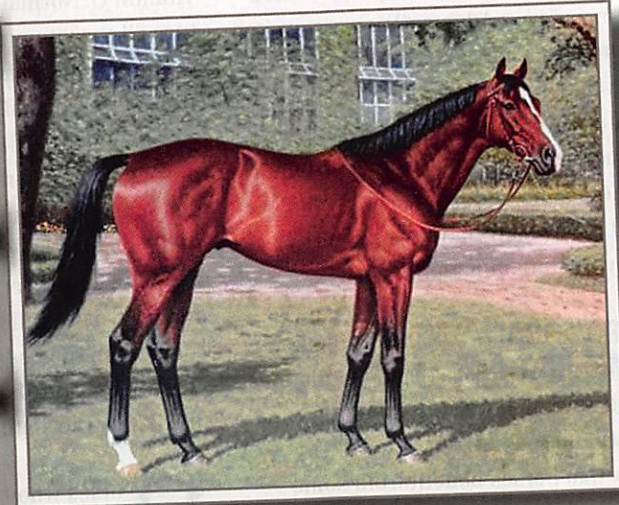


# LONGEVITY

The length of a horse's life doesn't determine his legacy. Here are eight organizations—inspired by particular horses—that will benefit others for generations to come.

*By Emily Goldman*





Malinowski. "In the older horses heat-shock protein response was significantly lower. Even though it did rise after exercise, there was an age difference."

How these observations might translate into better care for our horses is not yet known, but Malinowski can speculate: "Exercise is necessary for older horses," she says. "One of the possible therapies in the future for older horses might be heated water in the underwater treadmill. The heat would probably increase heat-shock proteins in the older horse. Walking slowly in the warm water might have a very positive response in these horses."

were able to reduce inflammation very similarly to bute or Banamine. In fact, some of them were better at it than these drugs."

Eventually, studies like these may lead to alternative methods of treating inflammation that would not run the risk of the side effects drugs like bute and Banamine can cause. "Most owners

would love to be able to put their older horses on something that is safe and works in terms of reducing inflammation and perhaps improving any lameness or soreness due to age-associated arthritis," says Adams. "We were excited to show that some of these compounds are very good at reducing inflammation in vitro, and we're hoping now to do more in vivo work looking at some of these compounds in aged horses. We want to see if any have the potential to modulate inflammation."

• **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS** Specific dietary recommendations based on nutritional immunology are still on the horizon. But we do know that horses benefit from some added nutrients.

"For older horses it's a good idea to supplement with certain vitamins," says equine nutritionist Shannon Pratt-Phillips, PhD, of North Carolina State University. "Many people supplement their senior horses with vitamin

E and/or fish oil [for the DHA and other omega-3 fatty acids]."

Another common supplement, which is also included in many senior feeds, is vitamin C. Normally, horses manufacture all the vitamin C they need in their livers. However, says Pratt-Phillips, "A study found that older horses had lower vitamin C status. It is unknown whether the older horses are deficient because they can't make their own vitamin C as well anymore, or whether they have a higher turnover because they are older and have more inflammatory processes going on in the body. Perhaps the older horse simply needs more vitamin C and this is why the status is low."

**H**orses who remain healthy and active well into their 30s are common these days—many can continue to perform well in a number of disciplines. As we learn more about how their bodies age, perhaps we'll find more and better ways to keep them going strong for years to come. ●

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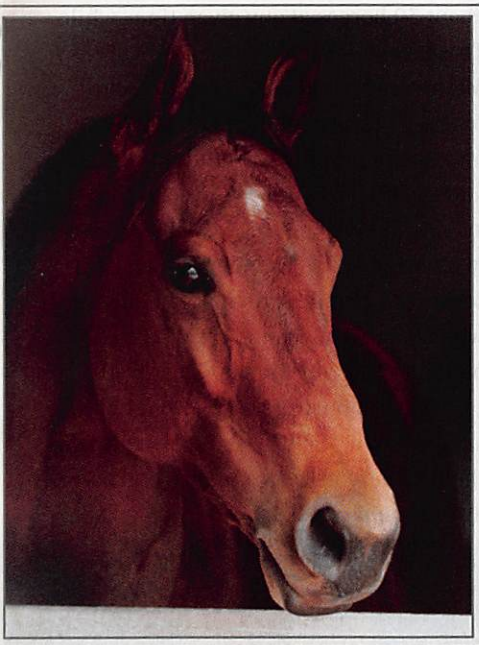
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# LIVING MEMORY



## SECOND CHANCE RANCH

### *Hope for blind horses*

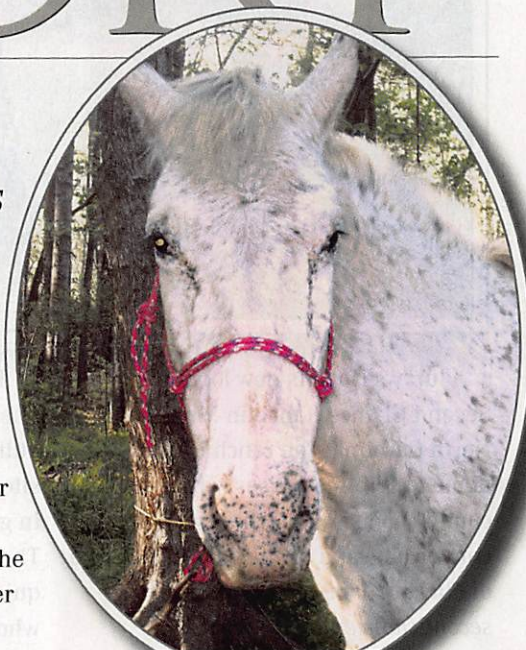
When Emilie Storch, PhD, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis almost 10 years ago, her entire world was shaken. A practicing psychologist as well as an author, mother of three and a motivational speaker, Storch had a busy and successful life. But, suddenly, her illness left her partially bedridden.

Then came Flurry. A friend gave the little Appaloosa to Storch shortly after her diagnosis, but there was a catch: Flurry was blind.

Still, Flurry coped surprisingly well in her new home. She quickly learned how to navigate her turnout area without bumping into trees or fences, and she even became the dominant mare in a three-horse herd.

She was also a trustworthy companion for Storch, who was able to ride her around the farm. Flurry showed Storch that “a disability is not an inability,” and that her life could still be full of love and enjoyment despite her disease.

“Flurry gave me hope that I could



**FLURRY**

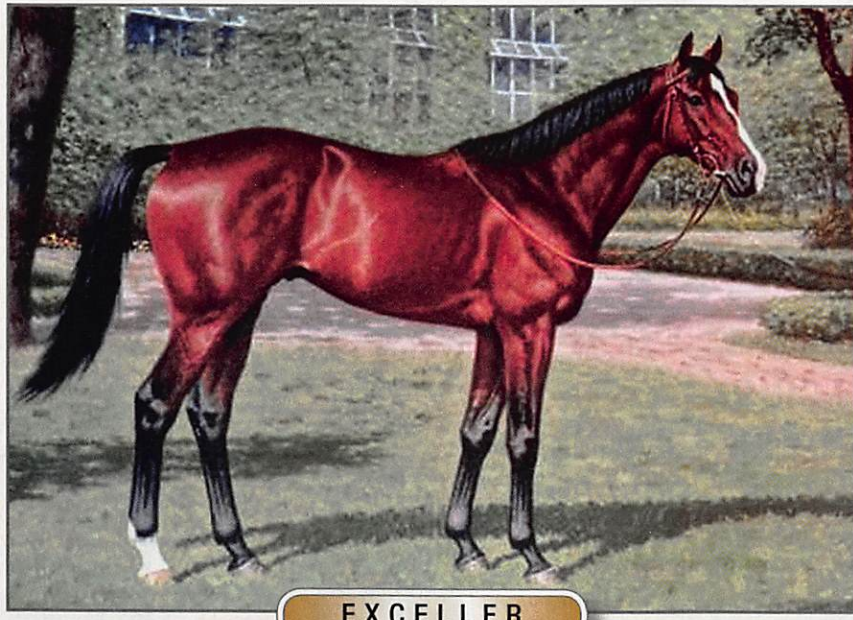
have a second chance at life.” Storch said. “She had a disability and it didn’t stop her at all.” But just three months after her arrival, Flurry died. Storch was devastated. And she was further saddened when she learned how many other blind horses are sold for slaughter. “A blind horse had given me a reason to keep going,” Storch recalls. “I knew I had to do something.” So she did.

Storch founded a rescue she called Flurry’s Hope to take in unwanted blind horses who are otherwise healthy and rideable. In an effort to keep more of them in their original homes, she also educates owners of horses who are losing their sight to help them make the transition safely.





# LONGEVITY



RICHARD STONE REEVES

EXCELLER

Flurry's Hope is now located at Second Chance Ranch in Madison, North Carolina. The ranch is currently home to 16 blind horses, with two more coming soon—all of whom will have comfortable and fulfilling lives because of Flurry. *For more information go to [secondchanceranchnc.com](http://secondchanceranchnc.com).*

## THE EXCELLER FUND *Saving ex-racehorses from slaughter*

In the history books, Exceller is listed as the only horse in history to defeat two Triple Crown winners in one race: Seattle Slew and Affirmed in the 1978 Jockey Club Gold Cup at Belmont Park in New York. But today the handsome bay colt, who won \$1,654,003 racing from 1975 to 1979, is mainly remembered for raising the public's awareness of how uncertain a racehorse's future can be.

Exceller was retired to stud in Kentucky in 1980 and was eventually sold to a breeder in Sweden. In 1997, at the end of his breeding career, he was killed in a slaughterhouse.

The Internet was a relatively new phenomenon in the mid-1990s, and bulletin boards and other networking sites were connecting people together in great numbers for the first time. The news of Exceller's death spread quickly among racing fans, most of whom were outraged and appalled to discover that his fate was not uncommon for ex-racehorses.

Bonnie Mizrahi learned of Exceller's story while browsing a message board frequented by fellow racing fans. She was both sad and outraged. "How he died hit me like a sucker punch in the gut," she says. "I was horrified to learn that his grisly fate was occurring every week to Thoroughbreds." She had to do something.

Mizrahi and a group of like-minded racing fans got together and organized The Exceller Fund—each promised to donate \$15 per month to a Thoroughbred rescue organization in memory of Exceller and all of the other Thoroughbreds sent to slaughter. Mizrahi, who had some previous experience working with

nonprofits, also began raising funds through eBay auctions.

Today, The Exceller Fund, which is based in Lexington, Kentucky, is a certified 501(c)3 organization that acquires Thoroughbreds at risk for slaughter; those who might be adoptable are trained for second careers, while others are provided sanctuary for life. Horses are kept at 15 private farms and therapy programs in eight states, which house about 50 horses at any given time, while The Exceller Fund pays for their care. Mizrahi, who still serves on the Board of Directors, also helped create alliances with other Thoroughbred rescues, such as CANTER and Old Friends, to save as many horses as possible. True to its origins, The Exceller Fund is still organized around individual members who pledge a minimum of \$15 per month to help the horses.

"There is no quit in a Thoroughbred," says Mizrahi. "So why should we quit on them?" *For more information, go to [www.excellerfund.org](http://www.excellerfund.org).*





## UNITED IN LIGHT

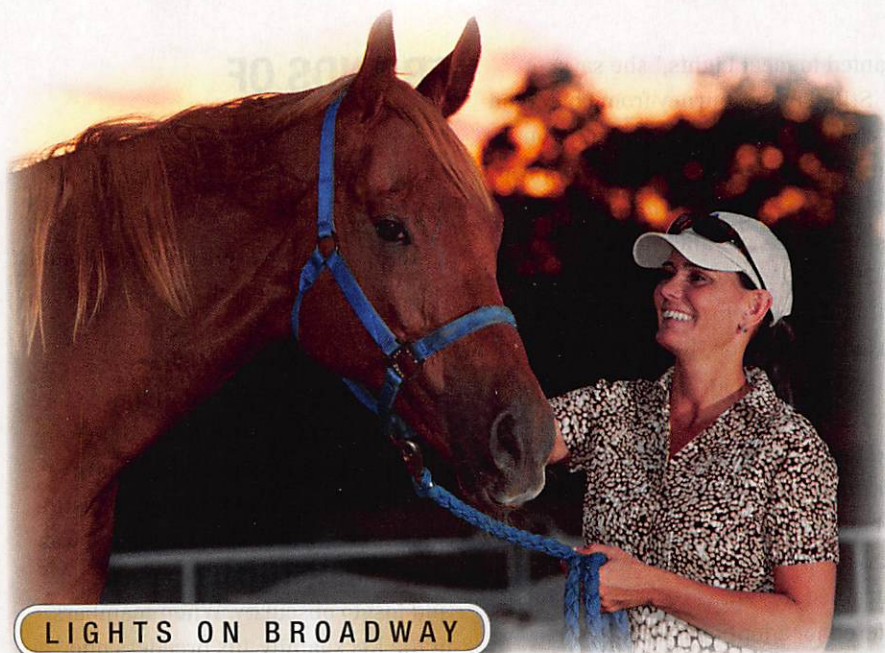
### *A refuge for gentle giants*

Deborah Derr, DC, was a Southern California chiropractor who served both people and animals when she met a horse who would change her life.

One of Derr's patients introduced her to Jedi, a 10-year-old, 19-hand Percheron who had just been rescued. The gelding was in need of special handling. "He had tremendous injuries and would jump a foot away from me as I touched his withers," Derr says. "He also had many whip marks across his skin."

Derr began working with Jedi, and the more time she spent with him, the calmer he became. I was working on his "body, mind and soul," she says, but perhaps "it was he who was working on my mind, body, and soul! I can't really explain the connection he and I had. Looking back it was almost a secret agreement

**In 2003, Deborah Derr sold her chiropractic practice and founded United in Light, a sanctuary for draft horses who are unadoptable due to age, injury or other issues.**



TERRI CAGE

### LIGHTS ON BROADWAY

he and I had made lifetimes ago."

One day while working on him, Derr says, "I took the time to linger and love on him. And as I closed my eyes two visions came to me: One was seeing Jedi, all cleaned up, brilliant looking, strong and healthy, and the second was standing in a grass pasture surrounded by 20 or more gentle giants."

Moved by her vision, Derr purchased Jedi from her client and renamed him Knight of Dreams. In 2003, she sold her chiropractic practice and founded United in Light, a sanctuary for draft horses who are unadoptable due to age, injury or other issues. The organization also helps connect adoptable draft horses with suitable homes.

Derr relocated United in Light to Livingston, Montana, in 2007. Currently, 11 horses live on the 10-acre sanctuary. Knight of Dreams passed away in July 2013. "His message, spirit and soul are still amongst us each day here," says Derr. "I am so grateful for the whispers of a draft horse called Knight of Dreams."

For more information, go to [www.draftrescue.com](http://www.draftrescue.com).

## REMEMBER ME RESCUE

### *Retraining racehorses for a better future*

Lights on Broadway was "a kind, gentle soul who stood a towering 17 hands tall," says Donna Keen of the chestnut Thoroughbred who would change her life. "He didn't have a mean bone in his gigantic body, and he loved everyone he met."

After some success—Lights had been the 2001 Texas Horse of the Year—the gelding's racing career had waned by 2008, and he was at risk of being sent for slaughter. A group called Fans of Barbaro raised enough money to purchase Lights for his asking price of \$3,000, and Donna and her husband, Dallas Keen, volunteered to foster and retrain him for free until he could be adopted.

Instead, Lights became Donna's personal horse—she rode him in demonstrations and could jump him bridleless. Keen says his kind personality and athleticism were a huge attraction to their farm. "Everyone who visited

DANIEL WOODS

### KNIGHT OF DREAMS



# LONGEVITY

wanted to meet Lights,” she says.

Still, Lights’ journey from champion to cheap claimer “weighed heavy on our hearts,” Keen says. The Keens had always retrained retired racehorses on a small scale, but after meeting Lights in 2008, they knew they had to do more, founding the Remember Me Rescue, based in Burleson, Texas.

Although the inspiration succumbed to colic in August 2014, the Remember Me Rescue continues on in his honor, taking in retired racehorses. Care and rehabilitation is provided to horses who need it, and all are eventually retrained for new careers before being offered for adoption.

For more information, go to [www.teamkeen.com](http://www.teamkeen.com).

**Today, Friends of Ferdinand operates a retraining and adoption program for donated racehorses, which are kept at their facility in Dayton, Ohio, as well as in foster homes.**

## FRIENDS OF FERDINAND

### *New homes for retired racehorses*

In his relatively short life, Ferdinand came to represent both the best and worst of the horse racing industry. The chestnut colt won the Kentucky Derby and placed second in the Preakness Stakes in 1986, and he went on to be named Horse of the Year in 1987. But, later, after he failed to distinguish himself as a sire, Ferdinand was exported to a breeding farm in Japan and lost to obscurity. When members of the Keck family, his breeders and original owners, tried to track down Ferdinand, they learned that the champion had been sent to a slaughterhouse sometime in 2002.

The news horrified racing fans throughout the United States, including two horsemen from Indiana, who were moved to found an organization they called Friends of Ferdinand to save other racehorses from that fate.

Today, Friends of Ferdinand operates a retraining and adoption program for donated racehorses, which are kept at their facility in Dayton, Ohio, as well as in foster homes. Potential adopters undergo a strenuous screening process to ensure good matches with available horses, a process that pays off, says Sara Busbice, current president of Friends of Ferdinand. “Our return rate on horses—because they are not a good match—is zero percent,” Busbice says. “Taking time allows people to make good decisions.”

Retraining the horses can be intensive, and many are taken to local shows, hunter trials and cross-country schooling events before they are offered for adoption. “We are trying to send the message that [retired racehorses] are very rideable, competitive mounts, not problem horses,” Busbice says.

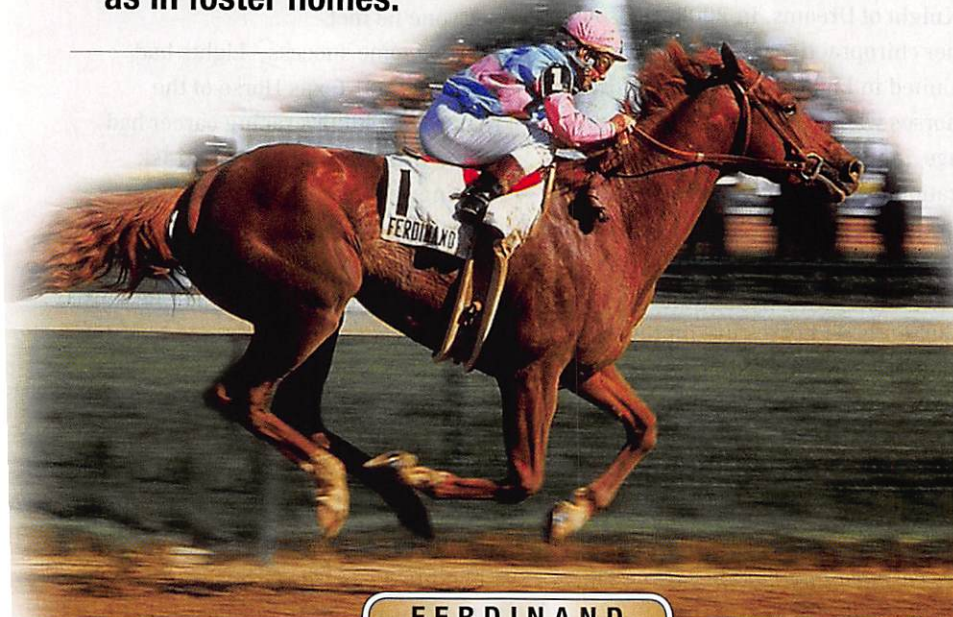
For more information, go to [www.friendsofferdinand.com](http://www.friendsofferdinand.com).

## NETPOSSE

### *Bringing home stolen horses*

Debi Metcalfe knew something was wrong when she walked into her pasture and called for her horse, Idaho, on the morning of September 26, 1997. “Idaho demanded attention,” says Metcalfe. But on that day, the mare was nowhere to be seen. At first, Metcalfe and her husband Harold thought maybe she had jumped a fence. With the help of some neighbors, they searched the local area but found no sign of the missing mare. Alarmed, they called the police, and during the officer’s visit, they found where the pasture fence had been cut. A horse’s footprints led out of the pasture and ended abruptly at a set of tire tracks.

Idaho had been stolen. It felt like



FERDINAND





## IDAHO

their own child had been taken, says Metcalfe. But the local police had few resources to deal with stolen horses, the Metcalfes were told, and they realized that if they wanted to get Idaho back, they would have to find her themselves.

So began a yearlong odyssey. The Metcalfes contacted and visited sales barns, auctions and horse traders all over North Carolina and Tennessee. They posted thousands of flyers and talked to hundreds of people. They also discovered that Idaho's story wasn't uncommon. In fact, about the same time their mare was stolen, six other horses in surrounding counties had disappeared, too—one per county. The thieves were well aware that police in neighboring jurisdictions rarely share information, so no one would notice the trend.

At every step, the Metcalfes received help from volunteers who reported possible sightings, followed up on tips and even donated money for more flyers. Finally, a woman who had seen a flyer called in a tip—one that paid off. Idaho

had been found.

But the 51 weeks that Idaho had been missing had been traumatic for the Metcalfe family, and Debi was determined that no other horse owner should have to go through this ordeal alone, so in 1998 she founded Stolen Horse International, also known as NetPosse. The organization offers a range of assistance for victims of theft, including an Alert System that

notifies law enforcement, the news media, and a network of volunteers when a horse is reported stolen or missing. NetPosse also educates horse owners and offers tips for preventing theft in the first place. Thefts of other livestock as well as trailers, tack and equipment can also be reported.

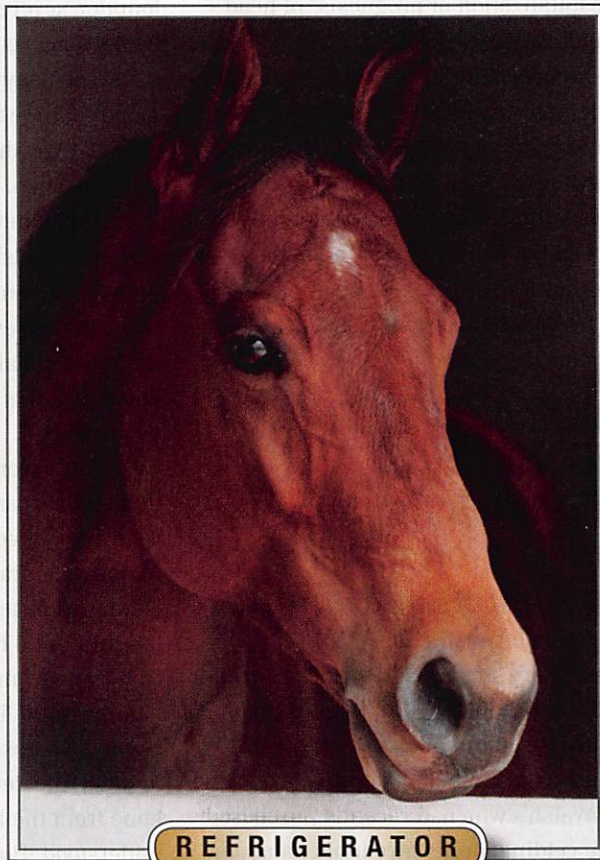
Thanks to the efforts of Debi Metcalfe and all of the NetPosse volunteers, thousands of stolen horses have been returned to their rightful owners—and it all started with Idaho. "We are who we are today because of her," Metcalfe says. "She changed our lives."

For more information, go to [www.netposse.com](http://www.netposse.com).

## THE REFRIGERATOR FUND FOR EQUINE HEAD TRAUMA

### *Seeking to make head injuries less devastating*

Refrigerator dominated Quarter Horse racing between 1990 and 1995. The bay gelding won 22 of 36 races and earned \$2,126,309—an all-time-high earnings record that remained unbroken until 2010. But the gelding retired from the track young, sound and energetic, so his owners, Jim and Marilyn Helzer, set a new goal for him: to become an AQHA Supreme Champion—a title awarded to a horse who reaches high-performance speeds in racing and also earns points in halter classes and two different performance classes,



## REFRIGERATOR



# LONGEVITY

earning at least two Grand Championships. Only 51 horses have earned this award in the open division since it was introduced in 1966.

Working toward that goal in February 1999, the then-11-year-old, in training to compete in roping, sustained a head injury in a freak accident. He was put down a few days later.

Devastated over their loss, the Helzers endowed the Refrigerator Fund for Equine Head Trauma through the American Quarter Horse Association. The Fund raises money that is awarded as grants to researchers doing work targeted toward “prevention, treatment, diagnostics and hospitalization or prognosis” of head injury trauma.

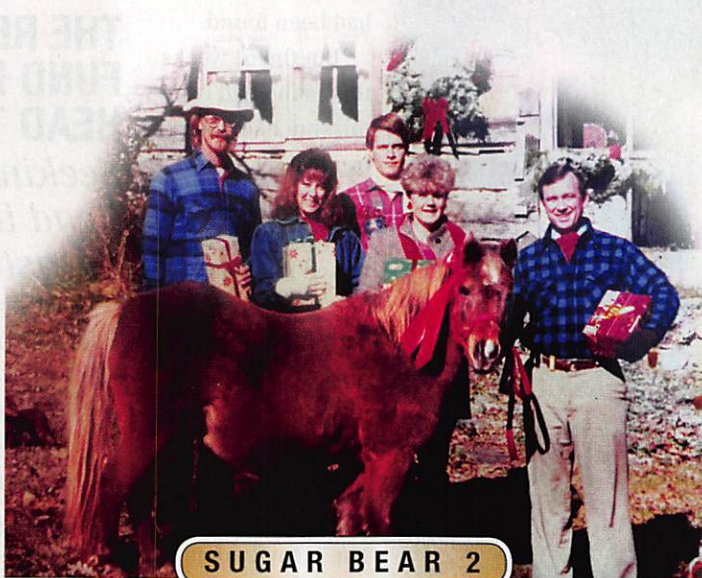
Between 2000 and 2005, the Helzers personally matched contributions of up to \$20,000 per year. Today, the endowment holds over \$316,000 and has already funded two research studies, one at Ohio State University and another at Cornell University.

For more information go to [www.aqha.com/foundation](http://www.aqha.com/foundation).

## ANIMAL HEALTH FOUNDATION

### *Research for the prevention and treatment of laminitis*

Donald Walsh was a third-year veterinary student at the University of Missouri Equine Clinic when a pony named Sugar Bear was brought in. The owner happened to be a good friend of Walsh's who had recently purchased the gelding for his 6-year-old daughter.



They'd noticed that the pony had difficulty walking, and his hooves were oddly shaped.

The veterinary team took x-rays of Sugar Bear's hooves, which revealed founder, severe rotation of the coffin bones that occurs as a result of laminitis. The pony would most likely be in pain for the rest of his life, and the clinician told Walsh that they would have to put him down.

“I didn't know what to say—I was shocked,” Walsh recalls. “As a third-year vet student you're hoping you're going to cure everything, then when the first animal walks in, they say, ‘Put it down.’ It was baffling why we couldn't do anything.”

Walsh never forgot that feeling of helplessness as he graduated with his veterinary degree in 1969 and went into private practice. Over the years he continued to see many patients with laminitis, and he was continually frustrated at how many he had to put down. Laminitis, the inflammation of the soft connective tissues within the hoof, and founder, the detachment of the coffin bone from the hoof wall, were poorly understood. Horses like Sugar Bear

were crippled and dying in tremendous pain, and little research was being done.

In 1984, Walsh, along with a group of his clients, founded a nonprofit organization called the Animal Health Foundation to raise money for laminitis research. Since then, the AHF has provided a total of over \$1.8 million in research grants to universities in the United States and Australia.

Walsh still thinks about Sugar Bear to this day. The pony most likely developed

laminitis as a result of equine metabolic syndrome, a disorder that can lead to elevated levels of insulin in the bloodstream and is now known to be the most common cause of this foot disease. Today, a pony with this disorder could be diagnosed early, and with a carefully managed diet and exercise, he might never develop laminitis. And even if he did, his veterinarian could employ several strategies to help prevent founder.

“I doubt we would have to put this pony to sleep today,” says Walsh.

For more information, go to [www.ahf-laminitis.org](http://www.ahf-laminitis.org).

**T**hese eight organizations are just a beginning. Thanks to rescues and nonprofit organizations all over the nation, thousands of horses are living better lives because a small number of people were moved to dedicate their lives to helping them. Most rely on volunteers, foster homes and donations to get their work done. If you're interested in helping horses like yours, consider getting in touch with an organization near you. You'll find a directory of equine welfare organizations at [www.horse-welfare.org](http://www.horse-welfare.org). 🐾