

East Mountain LIVING

**Walkin N Circles Ranch rescues
horses in the East Mountains**

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**Spring/Summer
Edition 2022**



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Saving Horses in the East Mountains

The New Mexico Horse Rescue at Walkin N Circles Ranch

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CLARKE CONDÉ

The New Mexico Horse Rescue at Walkin N Circles Ranch begins at the sharp bend in the road and continues on for about 30 acres of fairly flat land out in Stanley, New Mexico. On that land, 40 horses (give or take) at a time have found a temporary home to get their lives back under their feet. Some have come to the ranch having been abandoned. Some neglected. Some harmed, mentally or physically. It is awful if you think about it, but you don't really think about it when you are out at the Walkin N Circles Ranch. You just think about how the horses are doing now and where they are going to find their forever homes.

Lauri Michael is the board president and my guide for my visit to the ranch. As we wind through the stables and paddocks, she introduces me to each of the horses by name and gives me a bit of their back story. The organization is run primarily by volunteers with a few dedicated full-time staff, from the trainers all the way down to the folks that muck out the stables. One of the largest horse rescues in the state, Walkin N Circles Ranch is not a sanctuary, the ranch is a place for horses to get better after trauma and find a new, better home. Last year, 38 horses passing through the ranch did just that.

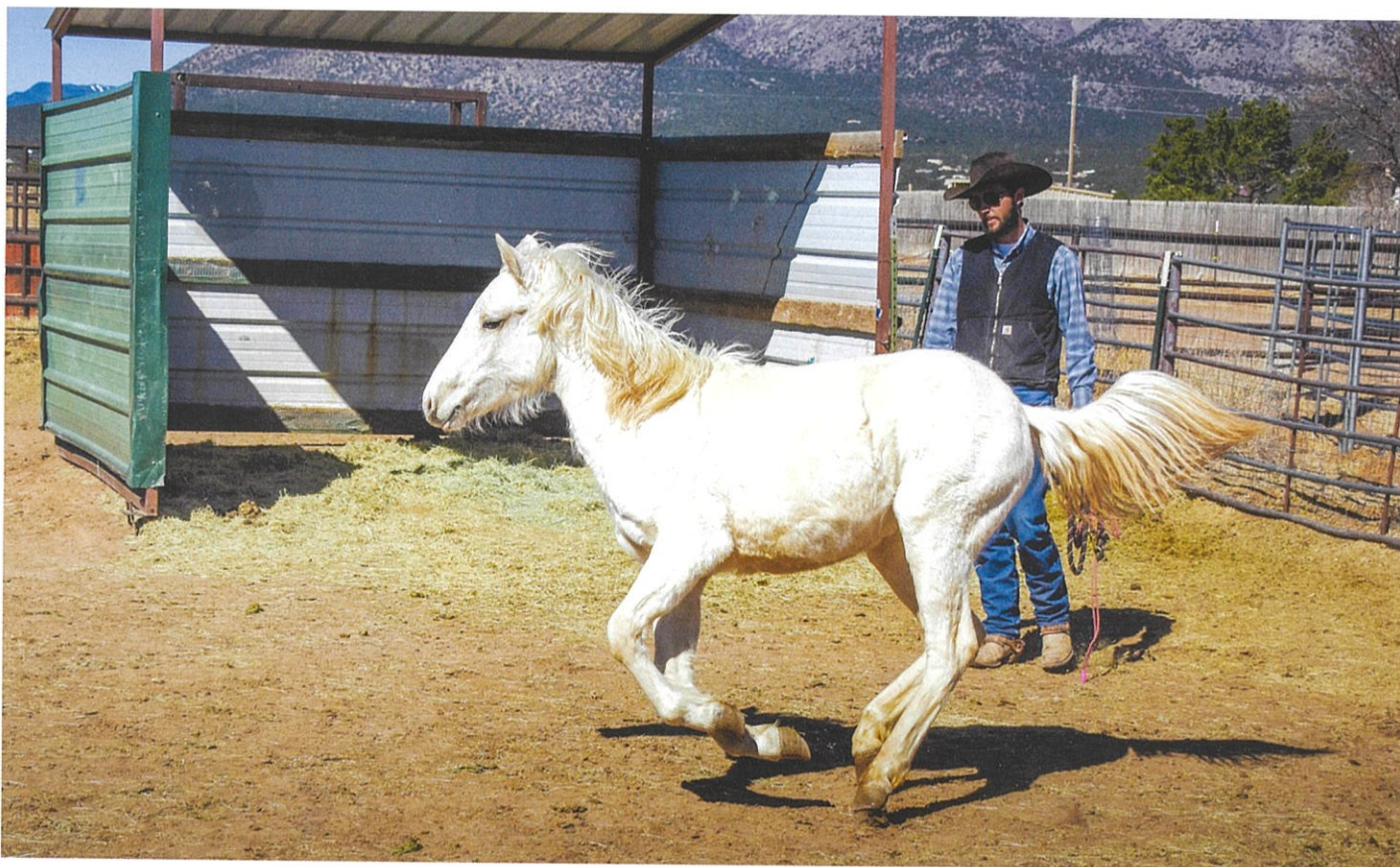
"Horses never forget trauma," explains Executive Director Larry Smyth. The horses that come to the ranch are as-

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ABOVE: Poppy heads to her forever home with her adoptive horseperson Beverly.

RIGHT: The sign marks the entrance to the Walkin N Circles Ranch in Stanley, New Mexico, where as many as 40 horses at a time find a temporary home.





Pinto in action at the Walkin N Circles Ranch, as horse trainer Colton Smyth looks on.

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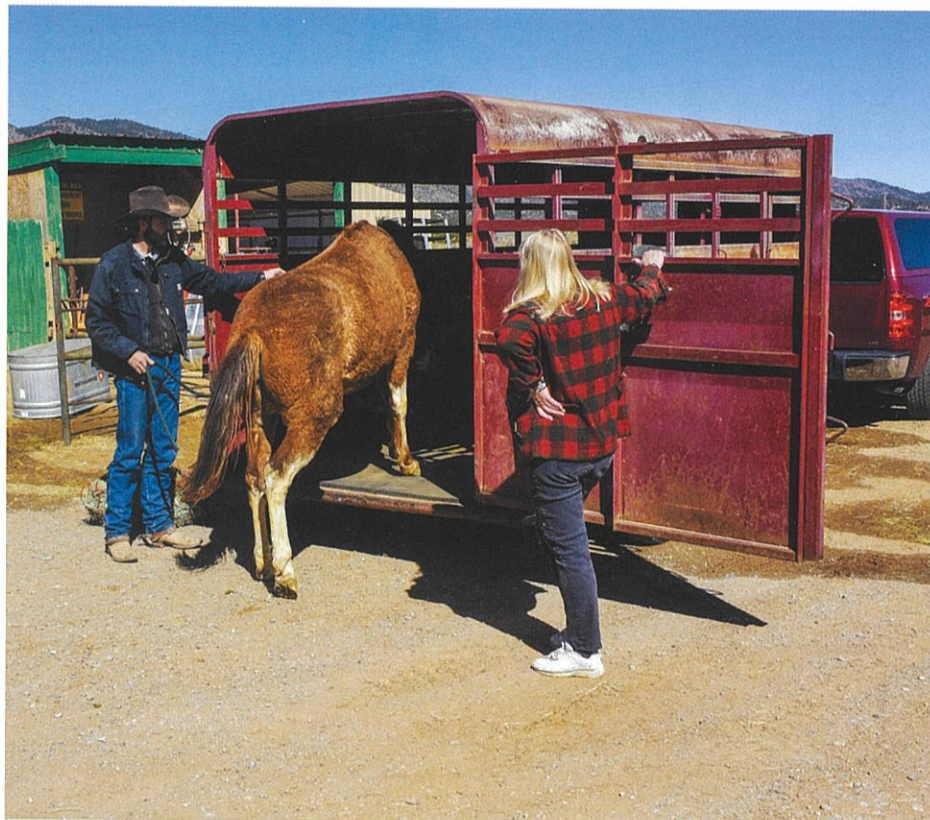
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essed for their individual needs and then begin the process of training to get them to the point where they can be adopted out successfully. But the training is not simply for the horses. Horse people come from all kinds of different backgrounds which is why the volunteer training is so critical as well. The entire mission of the organization is to help these horses regain their trust around people and that requires that all of the volunteers treat the horses the same way. The horses need to know what to expect from the people handling them. "Consistency is key," says horse trainer Colton Smyth. That goes for horse and handler.

As I imagined, keeping so many horses in food, medicine, shoes and shelter

ABOVE: New Mexico Horse Rescue at Walkin N Circles Ranch Board President Lauri Michael stands with a horse named Whiskey.

FACING PAGE, RIGHT: Colton Smyth helps Poppy the horse into a trailer to head to her new home.



Fresh new shoes make the horse.

is not cheap. The feed bill alone crests \$250 a day for the herd. The majority of funding for the New Mexico Horse Rescue comes from individual donors, with 40 percent coming from their thrift store in Edgewood.

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Beverly Knowles raised horses in Missouri before moving to Torreon, New Mexico. She had been keeping an eye on the New Mexico Horse Rescue website for a new horse to adopt. When she saw Poppy she said, "I think I can ride her." The two-year-old mare was born on the ranch and had been raised by the trainers and volunteers her whole life. This would be the start of her new life with three other horses in Torreon and the ultimate

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RIGHT: Horse trainer Colton Smyth with Pinto at the Walkin N Circles Ranch.

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result that New Mexico Horse Rescue hopes for every horse they rescue.

The adoption process differs a bit from the dog pound. The ranch makes sure the horse is healthy and ready for adoption, but also makes sure that the person adopting the horse has the capacity to care for their new horse. Facility inspections are standard procedure prior to adoption. Everyone involved wants to make sure that each adopted horse has found a happy, healthy forever home.

On the day I visited the ranch, Knowles was there to bring Poppy home. She was beaming. As Poppy made her way into the trailer, Knowles and I talked about where Poppy was going and her prospects for a happy, healthy life. Knowles had no reservations about her choice and was confident that Poppy would fit into life on her ranch in Torreon just fine. "I knew she had been raised here," she said.

BELOW: Horses on the Walkin N Circles Ranch enjoying the view of the East Mountains.

FACING PAGE: Pinto gets her first set of shoes at the Walkin N Circles Ranch.





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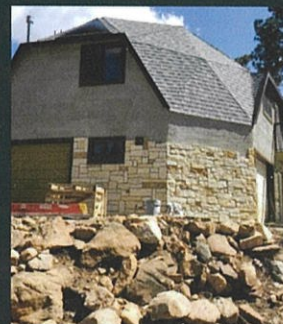
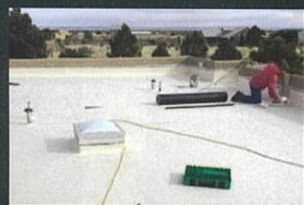
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