

Riding for Rescues

Horseman plans a 400-mile horseback ride fundraiser for rescued horses

**Elizabeth McCall,
The Independent**

Twenty-five years ago, avid horseman Bud Kingston started a 400-mile horseback ride across New Mexico but never completed it. This time, his goal is to finish the ride and raise \$15,000 for rescued horses.

On Aug. 31, Kingston will start his journey, "Riding for Rescues." He will ride through Quemado, Pie Town, Magdalena, Socorro, Mountainair, Vaughn, Fort Sumner and Clovis on U.S. Highway 60 for 14 days.

"I've always wanted to go back and make the full ride," Kingston said. "I decided I wanted to do the ride and I wanted to try to make a fundraiser out of it for Walkin' N Circles because they can always use the money and I was going to do the ride regardless."

Walkin' N' Circles Ranch, founded in 2002, is a nonprofit horse rescue in Edgewood that rehabilitates and finds adoptive homes for abused, abandoned and neglected equines. The rescue also cares for donkeys and mules. In 2023, they rescued 41 horses and donkeys and found adoptive homes for 26, and they currently have more than 50 horses.

The rescue primarily focuses on rehabilitating and training horses to prepare them for a new home. The rescue relies on volunteers, donors, sponsors, legacy gifts, endowments, trusts and grants. They also have the Walkin' N' Circles Ranch Thrift Store in Edgewood, another income source.

Supporting the horses

Kingston supports the rescue by donating to the thrift store and



Bud Kingston riding his horse near Edgewood (Courtesy Walkin' in Circles Ranch)

attending horse clinics and adopt-a-thons but has wanted to get more involved.

"I would like to call [the fundraiser] a first annual but I don't know for sure," Kingston said. "At this point, I want to see what it's going to do. If it would make enough money for them, I would like to support them and do it again."

Lauri Michael, board president of the rescue, said the funds raised will go directly to the feed and care of their horses.

"It takes approximately \$3,000 a year to care for one of our horses, so whatever he raises will go right into that budget," Michael said.

There are several sponsorship opportunities and Kingston said they have sponsors already but still need more. One of the sponsors is Rangewood Reclaimers, an organization dedicated to reclaiming wood from old barns and buildings. Steve Huchting, co-owner of Rangewood, said he donated water gallons for the trip.

Michael said depending on the sponsor level, the rescue will recognize sponsors on the organization's website, social media platforms and flyers to show their appreciation.

Preparing for the journey

Kingston is training his mare, Roja, and a gelding adopted from the rescue in 2014, Houdini — who will serve as his packhorse — to be conditioned for the 400-mile trip.

"The packhorse that I'm using to haul water for the horses has never seen a packsaddle before," Kingston said. "Then I have to prepare them

for traffic and anything that might occur like police car sirens and honking horns. I need to get both horses conditioned for that and in shape to go day after day for that distance."

For the horses and Kingston's safety, a driver will follow him throughout the state with a trailer in case of an emergency and carry feed for the horses and other materials.

Riders can join Kingston for the whole trip or part of it. He will have riders from Pie Town, Quemado and Magdalena joining him for parts of the trip.

On Friday, Sept. 6, the riders will take a rest break in Mountainair and on Saturday, Sept. 7, they will have a donor recognition meal at the Mountainair JP Helms Rodeo Arena.

"We just really appreciate Bud getting out of his comfort zone and taking an initiative like this. I mean it is pretty epic," Michael said. "We rely on private donations. We wouldn't be able to do what we do without this sort of initiative, and when you kind of think out of the box like this and come up with an idea to generate interest, it really benefits our horses greatly."



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