



## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

June-July 2017

*Published periodically by Intermed XP*

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### FINDING BEST FRIENDS

Stories abound about dogs, horses, cats, even farm animals helping humans to cope, heal emotionally and find new hope after trauma, physical illness, loss, depression, grief, or other stress.

Beautiful bonds are formed and numerous are those who have found a purpose and sense of being needed when the right animal enters their life and allows them to relax, find companionship, improved health, exercise or a way to socialize better with other humans.

Many of these are rescue relationships which pair lost, ailing or abused animals with stressed or hurting people who flourish once they receive the attention and devotion of a rescue animal. The unconditional love experienced by the new master can heal and revive a human heart.



When Laura Hildebrand was just 13, she rescued her first pony, *Allspice*, from the slaughterhouse remembering, "She was so appreciative and loving. She slept outside our window and was totally devoted." Almost 40 years later, Hildebrand has rescued 15 horses and in 2015 became passionate about saving a retired racehorse named *Genuine Reward*. [Craigslist](#) was selling GR for \$500.00. She was the offspring of thoroughbred *Genuine Risk* who won the Kentucky Derby in 1980.

Hildebrand quickly contacted a retirement and rescue facility called [Old Friends Equine](#) in Georgetown, Kentucky. Its founder, Michael Blowen, agreed to house and board *Genuine Reward* when Hildebrand proposed paying for transport and keep etc.

The first encounter between this rescued horse and rescuer was love at first sight. Hildebrand recalls the initial fond connection and how when she said goodbye, "he ran over to the fence and gave me the biggest head hug. It's like he knew."

The calming effect that a horse brought to the set of the CBS series [2 Broke Girls](#) amazed actress Beth Behrs, 31, whose lifelong love of horses was revived and spread to her crew. "When the horse was on set, we just felt more centered," she says. Behrs went on to found [SheHerd Power](#), a program that uses horses to help heal women who have suffered abuse bringing them relief from panic attacks and anxiety among other symptoms by fostering better body awareness, serenity and trust. Riding is not even required.

Retired racehorses are not the only animals who have proved therapeutic to humans who have resisted or failed to thrive under traditional medical or psychological treatment. Numerous hospitals and convalescent facilities are seeing the difference that pet therapy brings to many of their patients or residents. Patients and even staff respond well to the affectionate presence of dogs whose temperament is appropriate and enhanced by training.

Other overweight or inactive people discover the benefits of exercise, sunshine and socializing when they find their canine match. Various breeds have found success in this role from greyhounds to labradoodles.

*(With thanks to Nicola Bridges, author of "We Rescued Each Other" p 6-10 of Parade, June 25, 2017. Parade.com Nicola Bridges is the founder of Capability Ranch Special Needs Activities & Events center in Ramona, California.)*

*The Editor*