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START A**

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Flare



Former Premarin mare, delivered her baby in the spring of 2006 at the sanctuary. Both have been adopted to loving homes.

"SO YOU WANT TO START A RESCUE?"

by Karen Pomroy

THERE ISN'T A WEEK THAT GOES BY THAT I DON'T RECEIVE A CALL FROM SOMEONE ASKING ME HOW TO START A HORSE RESCUE. FOR MANY, STARTING AND RUNNING A HORSE RESCUE IS A GLAMOROUS IDEA. THE PASSION IS THERE, AND SO IS THE COMPASSION, BUT WHAT DOES IT REALLY TAKE TO CREATE A SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATION SO THAT THE HORSES DO NOT END UP BACK IN THE SLAUGHTER OR ABUSE PIPELINE?

CASE HISTORY:

EQUINE VOICES RESCUE & SANCTUARY

In 2004, I started Equine Voices Rescue & Sanctuary by rescuing four Premarin® foals



Sky under saddle.

from slaughter. At the time, I had already rescued a three-year-old Arabian who was destined for slaughter and a big, beautiful bay who was being abused by his owner. When I purchased my property, which already had a six stall barn, my intention was not to start a horse rescue, but to give these six horses a safe home, the care they needed, and all the love they would allow. But one day, I looked at the horses and thought, "I can do more to help horses like you," so I decided to file for my 501(c)(3) paperwork, name the organization Equine Voices Rescue & Sanctuary, and be their voice. After learning of the plight of the Premarin mares and foals, I made rescuing them my primary mission, vision and goal in life. I was unprepared for the ups and downs, the emotional turmoil and the financial stress that goes along with making running a rescue a primary mission in life.

What started as a glamorous thought turned into a very stressful—yet rewarding—undertaking that has taken on a life of its own. I was unaware of (and unprepared for) the emotional roller coaster that comes with such a major undertaking. The cycle of abuse, the desire to help each and every horse... knowing that you can't... and the long hours required to begin and maintain a rescue was something I hadn't anticipated. Not to mention ensuring funds continue to come in so the horses will never go without again. I vowed twelve years ago that I will always have the necessary resources to care for those who cross my path, because no



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Dreamcatcher. He and his mom were being discarded because they were "stupid Arabians" in an area dominated by Quarter Horses. They were being shipped to auction. Dreamcatcher had an injury to his cheek caused by a t-post; his saliva squirted from his cheek each time he ate.

Photo: Angie Wilson

matter how painful, no matter how many sleepless nights, we cannot save them all. But the quality of care they receive will never be jeopardized because I couldn't say no.

A SUCCESS STORY

Equine Voices has morphed into an organization that is run primarily by volunteers; it is nationally recognized by the Homes for Horses Coalition, the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries, and is closely involved with the Arizona Coalition for Equines and the Animal Cruelty Task Force.

Over a thousand equines have been saved by and through Equine Voices, all of this because of our dedicated volunteers, staff, board of directors, and countless hours spent fundraising, rescuing, rehabilitating, and managing the business aspect of running a rescue. Starting and running an equine rescue is not for the faint at heart. Ethics, transparency, proper care of the animals, strict management philosophies and hours of hard work will ultimately assist in creating a solid sustainability plan, and most of all, will allow a rescue to be there responsibly, and in perpetuity for the equines that have been desperately rescued and given a safe home.

I WAS UNPREPARED FOR THE UPS AND DOWNS, THE EMOTIONAL TURMOIL AND THE FINANCIAL STRESS THAT GOES ALONG WITH MAKING RUNNING A RESCUE A PRIMARY MISSION IN LIFE.

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If you are thinking of starting an equine rescue, here are some things to consider:

- Will you be a nonprofit or will you run a private organization? If you decide to become a nonprofit, are you prepared for the tedious paperwork? Are you prepared for the mandatory annual reports and returns?
- Paperwork to consider: bylaws, articles of incorporation, legal name, organization's policies and procedures (such as your adoption policy, euthanasia policy, employee handbook, volunteer handbook, office procedures, disaster preparedness, etc.)
- Will it be a rescue, sanctuary or both?
- Do you own your property or will you lease space to house the animals?
- What is your capacity? In other words, how many animals can you take in? When do you have to say *no*?
- Will you rescue only horses, or will you also rescue other equines?
- Will you focus on local rescue? National? International?
- What will your mission, vision and goal statement be?
- Who will be selected to be on your board?
- Will you have a membership?
- Do you have the startup funds needed? How will you sustain your organization financially?
- What types of programs will you offer? For instance, will you offer a volunteer program? Youth program? Adoption program? Therapy program? Who will manage these programs?

- How will you manage burnout?
- Will you have a staff or only volunteers?
- How will you promote your organization? Website? Social media? Direct mail service? Grant writing? Newsletters – mail and email?
- Have you thought about volunteering at a rescue and working closely with the executive director before embarking on such a huge commitment?
- What will your succession plan be?

These are some things to think about before deciding to embark on such a life changing, challenging, responsible and emotional undertaking.

Suggested reading: *How to Start and Run a Rescue* by Jennifer Williams, PhD. ♡♡

About the author:

Born in Nuremburg, Germany, Karen Pomroy, Founder of Equine Voices, traveled extensively around the world in her younger years. In 1994, after working in sales and marketing in Los Angeles, CA, Karen embarked on a backpacking trip to several developing countries, which changed her life forever. An avid animal lover, Karen has always had a passion for rescue and philosophically assisting in raising the level of compassion for all living beings. In 2004, Karen embarked on her lifelong passion by creating Equine Voices Rescue & Sanctuary, a nonprofit equine rescue located at the foothills of the Santa Rita Mountains in Amado, AZ. Today, Equine Voices is run primarily by volunteers, a very small staff and a board of directors, and currently has 65 equines at the sanctuary and 16 Premarin mares in Canada. For more information on Equine Voices, log on to www.equinevoices.org.

Photo: Jolie Guinta



Dominic and Bindi Sue, wild burros rounded up in northern Arizona, headed to auction until we stepped in. Part of a 19 burro rescue.



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