



Horsin' Around The Ranch



Heartland Youth Ranch

Fall 2015

Transformed by Susan Schauer

On our ranch we have always had a cat or two or more. As with any other animal on a ranch they have a purpose and are expected to earn their keep. The job of a farm cat is to keep the mouse population down. The cats that currently reside on our ranch do a great job. Two cats we have on the ranch have a very odd habit. They think that they have to eat everything in their feed pan. So if they catch a mouse or gopher they bring it back to the barn, put it in the pan and then proceed to eat them.

When our children were growing up they always looked forward to spring when a new litter of kittens would come. They would wait and watch the mother cats with anticipation for the arrival of the new kittens. The only problem: those mother cats were masters at hiding their litters. They just wanted to be left alone to raise their family in peace. Our children would search and search for those kittens; sometimes they would find them and sometimes not until the mother cat chose to reveal where they were hidden. Once they found them our children would have those kittens all named and tamed in no time.

Well, times have changed and our children are all grown now. We still have cats on the ranch and usually a litter of kittens will arrive sometime in the spring. We now have a new group of children that are the kitten tamers. All the children that come to the ranch for sessions love to see the new kittens and take their turn at holding and taming and naming them. I cannot keep track of the

names the kittens have because each one has three or four names. Before and after each session the children can be found in the barn playing with the kittens. For some of the children that is their session, just sitting holding and playing with the kittens for over an hour.

This spring we had a new litter of kittens in early May. In early June, Katie came to visit the ranch for her riding sessions. Her grandmother would bring her and her cousin Peyton would also tag along. Peyton is not old enough to participate in our riding sessions so she found something else to do. Tame kittens. She was the most determined kitten tamer I had ever seen. The kittens didn't like being held and were not used to it and would squirm and claw their way out of her grasp. Grandma would help by bringing a towel and wrapping those kittens up like a little papoose. Peyton would lovingly cuddle and talk to the kittens while they growled, hissed and squirmed, trying to escape her grasp. In their efforts to escape they may have left a battle scar or two for Peyton to remember them by. But by the end of the week her efforts had paid off. The transformation in those kittens was amazing. It appeared that they looked forward to Peyton's visit and any other child that visited the ranch and held them. They no longer clawed or hissed or growled but curled up in their arms and purred and fell asleep.

As I was thinking of the kittens and the transformation I saw in them it

made me think of how many times I have resisted the touch of the Master. So many times I have heard Him ask me to come closer to Him. To listen and learn what He was trying to teach me for my own good. But like those kittens I resisted, thinking I can handle things myself or get it done faster on my own. Sometimes it's not until He allows something in our lives that we have no control over and it hurts so bad and is so overwhelming that we have no other choice but to cry out to Jesus. When we surrender our will to Him that's when it



happens. We can be transformed. He can now work in our lives because we are willing to submit to His touch and be used for the purpose He created us for. That's when we can live a life of joy. I Thessalonians 5:16 says, "Be joyful always." It doesn't say if things are going great and you have no problems - it says always. Living a life of joy is a choice. It is not based on circumstances or emotions. It is having the confidence that God is in control and has my best interest at heart, no matter the circumstance or challenges I face. As with the kittens the transformation doesn't happen overnight and through the process it may not always feel good. But it will happen when we say yes to Jesus and allow Him to work in our lives and choose to walk in His ways not ours. I Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come." Give your life to Jesus and let Him take care of the transformation.

UPCOMING DATES AND EVENTS **AT HEARTLAND YOUTH RANCH**

December 11: HYR Board Meeting and Appreciation Supper for Volunteers

December 15: Country Christmas At The Ranch: Open house from 6:00-8:00 pm, with live music, food and crafts for the kids

February 2016: Fun Day (date to be announced)

March 2016: Volunteer training (date to be announced)

Ministry Update

Our 2015 season has been busy and brought about many new changes. Construction of an activities building started in March and it amazed us how fast the Morton crew had the building up. We had many opportunities to visit with Scott and Andrew the construction crew during the construction of the barn. We shared about the ministry of Heartland Youth Ranch and what the building would be used for. They were also able to watch some of the children during riding sessions in the arena. We were so surprised and humbled when a few weeks after they finished the building and were on to another project somewhere else that we received a letter from them with a note and two one hundred dollar bills for the ministry.

We held our volunteer training in March. This was the first year we had an official volunteer training. Heartland Youth Ranch has many opportunities for volunteering and as we grow those opportunities continue to expand. We value our volunteers and the gifts and talents they bring to the ministry.

Rescuing horses is a part of the ministry at Heartland Youth Ranch and several new horses have been added to the band this year. Diamond and Wings came to the ranch in the late summer. The owner passed away and one of her last requests was that her horses go to Heartland Youth Ranch. Diamond is too old to be ridden so will not be in the riding program but Wings is quickly becoming a favorite for several of the children. Both horses are Missouri Fox Trotters so are a little different to ride and get used to. Abby and older paint mare came to us from the Hastings area. She is a true sweetheart. She has a big heart and will give all that is asked of her. She too has become a favorite for several children and volunteers. We took in one last horse this fall. Colby is a big gentle sorrel gelding. He came to the ranch after riding season was closed the end of October so the children have not met him yet. He is getting acquainted with us, his new surroundings and the rest of the band. He already whinnies to us when he sees us in the morning always a beautiful sound.

In August we held a similar ministry retreat. Ministries that have a similar program as Heartland Youth Ranch were invited to attend the retreat which was held August 7-9. Ministries from Minnesota, Kansas and Missouri came for the weekend. Kim Meeder, co-founder from Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch in Bend, Oregon was the guest speaker. It was such an honor and privilege to have Kim come to Heartland Youth Ranch. This was actually her first visit to Nebraska and they (Judy Jeffres, her assistant) enjoyed their visit to our community. On Saturday evening everyone was invited to a barbecue and then Kim shared her life story. What an impactful weekend it was.

We are so humbled to serve God through the ministry of Heartland Youth Ranch. It is challenging, exhausting, hard work but rewarding in so many ways. Each and every child and family that come to the ranch are very special to us. Whether they visit one time or come for sessions throughout the summer they become like our second family.

Another group that is very special to us is our donors and supporters. We know people are praying for this ministry and we cherish those prayers. We cannot do this work on our own and your prayer support is so precious to us. We would also like to say a special Thank You to all who have supported us financially this year. As the work of the ministry increases so does the monetary needs. God has blessed this ministry through every donation. We consider you our Champions and you are a huge part of God's work at Heartland Youth Ranch.

We held 311 sessions this year, had 724 visitors to the ranch and logged 1,196 volunteers hours. God continues to use and bless the ministry of Heartland Youth Ranch. We look forward to serving everyone in 2016 and have some exciting changes and activities in the planning.

Connect with Heartland Youth Ranch!

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