



MENTOR THE CHILD

AROUND the FIRE

WINTER 2011

RESCUE the Equine ★ MENTOR the Child ★ HOPE for the Family ★ EMPOWER the Ministry

Make the Difference

BY SARAH DROST AND KIM MEEDER

A life can change in a moment. Whether it be quick like a lightning strike or slow like water gradually overtaking an earthen dam, a life can be completely transformed... and one never knows when that moment might be.

Growing up, my life was simple. Thankfully, I'd never experienced the terrors of abuse or neglect that others spoke of. My childhood years were quiet and peaceful. I was fortunate enough to be raised by loving parents who lived off a dirt road in the country. They taught me many valuable lessons, including how to work hard for my dreams. At eleven years of age, my dream was to own my own horse. So, I

worked for an entire summer at a ranch down the road in exchange for a small yearling Arabian colt. I named my new gray horse "Mojave," and in no time we became inseparable friends.

Without peril or drama, my life appeared normal enough from the outside, but on the inside I was very unsure. Because I was quiet, I was often misunderstood, labeled, judged or worse. Like many kids my age, I retreated even further inside myself, looking for a place where I felt safe and accepted. Despite my seemingly normal life, deep within, I still felt... lost.

Time went by, days marched on. My existence continued to be very ordinary... until something extraordinary happened.

Perhaps to some it wouldn't seem like much, but at that critical time in my life, a single consistent friendship became the hand of hope that reached into my heart and broke the bonds of my loneliness, my uncertainty and my silence. Because of the redemption of Jesus Christ, that defining friendship exists between Kim and I to this day.

Continued on page 10

*"Trust yourself
to the God
who made you,
for He will
never
fail you."*

— 1 Peter 4:19

Beautiful Brokenness

BY KATHERINE TEAGUE

The world is full of brokenness. I too am a broken woman in need of saving grace and love. God's love "always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (1 Cor. 13:7). Having discerned this truth in my own life, I've realized what a shame it would be if I kept it for myself. The women who've taken the time to communicate this good news of Jesus to me in my younger years have been a powerful force in shaping who I am today. I am deeply grateful to God for each of them.

Based on my own experience and work at Crystal Peaks, I now know there are few people in this world that do not desire such intimate friendship and community. I recognize that assuming the role of a "mentor" in the life of another is one of the most important acts of tangible love anyone can give.

No matter what expression a child wears, mentoring can have many different faces. Just spending time with another, whether their heart is whole or broken, is a multi-faceted gift. Sometimes the gift is the validation of being heard. Sometimes the gift is being asked hard questions. Sometimes the gift is simply knowing you're loved unconditionally.

As our God, the great Harvester, plants seeds, He privileges His people to be the "farmers" in His Kingdom—actively involved in caring for the tender new growth. God has designed mankind to live in community. We need to support each other and be vigilant to protect and care for "the little gardens" in our midst. Whether the "harvest" comes quickly or years are spent tending and cultivating, we can rest in the truth that hope is not confined to a season.

This "growing hope" leaves me to consider all the gifts poured into my heart. Combined they have produced personal fruit in my life—fruit that could wither if not invested into the heart of another. I can give testimony to the transformation brokenness undergoes when planted in the rich soil of God's love—something redeeming is produced. When such love is then sown in the heart of a child, God grows something not only redeeming, but something beautiful as well.

WHY MENTORING IS BEAUTIFUL TO ME...

Words from girls being mentored by ranch staff



Debanee, age 16: "One of the things that has been most meaningful to me in my time with my mentor is learning to trust. When I was new here I didn't trust people. When I came to the ranch I didn't feel like I had value. Sometimes I still struggle with it, but I'm loving life a lot more than I was then. I've learned that I am important. I didn't know then, but I know now that life is worth living."

Riley, age 14: "Before coming to the ranch I was not very confident in myself. There was a lot of stuff I didn't think I was good enough for, that I thought I couldn't do. Now, in working with my mentor and the horses, I have proved to myself that although I am far from "perfect," I can do whatever I want. Their horses are my horses. I can do anything!"

Tiffany, age 16: "I love that my time with my mentor is a time that I can authentically be myself, and not only is it ok, but it's encouraged to talk about what is going on in my heart and mind. When I first started being mentored, I was afraid that if I said something or did something wrong, I would no longer be wanted. But I have made mistakes and my mentor has stuck with me. I am steadily beginning to believe that I am worth the effort and that I have value."

Kendall, age 14: "I have gotten a lot closer with my mentor, learned more about horses and I've grown closer to God. I have also become more outgoing and confident. We get to learn about each other in so many different ways. Before being mentored, I was more of a follower and just did what everyone else wanted. Now I'm more confident and don't care as much whether I am the only one doing it or not."

Marina, age 16: "I like that I can be honest in my relationship with my mentor, and I know that she won't judge me. My mentor always helps me with my problems and helps me to live my life for God. Life in general was a huge struggle, both before being mentored and still even now. But the difference is that my mentor has helped me to be confident in God, and now I feel comfortable going to Him with my problems and trusting in Him."

Dear Kim,

Thank you so much for a wonderful time last Monday! Thank you for giving me your new book. I loved the chapter about Hero! Another one of my close friends and I read it together and we were both in tears. It represents him so well, and I love that I get to be a part of the chapter!

My time together with you was a perfect ending to the summer. I'm now going full force with school, working hard and dancing plenty. Again I'm feeling a turning point in my life. That whole conversation you and I had on the lawn while I was sitting on Hero, "The Grass Eating Machine" (haha!), what you said about "choosing joy" really hit me. After coming home and thinking about it a lot, I wrote this post on my blog (now titled "Choosing Joy"):

"Well, you may have noticed my blog has a new name! It's because over these last few months, my life has totally changed, and since this blog is a small reflection of my life, its title needed to change too.

When I began this blog, I lived step-by-step, day-by-day. It was a start, but that was it. But since then, things have changed! I'm now trusting in God. Instead of just walking cautiously through life, hoping I'm doing things right, I now want to RUN, FULL THROTTLE, into his perfect plan! This change has been gradual, but it suddenly made sense when I was blessed to get to go to Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch on Monday to ride Hero. Kim and I were talking about how Hero and I are alike. She said, "Both of you have endured a great deal, and society has given you every reason to be full of anger, bitterness, resentment, and depression. But both of you—through Jesus' grace—are CHOOSING JOY!" This really hit me, and made me so happy. I realized that I have come a long way. Through the amazing healing of Jesus, I have that option... to choose joy... and I've made up my mind to take full advantage of it!"

I love you,

Heather, Ephesians 3:14-19



THE KING AT WORK

BY MARSHALL TEAGUE

I remember standing in this exact spot back in March when Oregon was still snowy. It's a young October now and gray clouds spread themselves all about the sky. A light rain drifts in amongst us every now and then but continues to retreat before we become noticeably wet. I'm momentarily lost in memories of all that has happened here in the past seven months.

My initial visit to this home had been in early March. Troy and I had come on an errand wreathed in misfortune. Word had gotten around to the ranch that Pam, a friend of Crystal Peaks, needed help. To say that it had been a hard year for her would be an understatement. She had lost her husband to cancer several months before. Then in the spring, among various other hardships, a friend had stepped through her decaying deck. The friend had walked away unscathed but Pam was left with a deck that needed to be removed for mere safety's sake. With a full-time job, her teenage son away, and her daughter in school, I imagine taking the deck down was a daunting task for her to accomplish.

Pam met us that morning with gratefulness and, out of an unassuming



heart, asked only for our opinion on what sections needed to go. After several minutes of inspecting the surface boards, joists and supports, Troy remorsefully informed her that the whole deck would need to be taken down. I think that she had expected that diagnosis all along. Though, even as I watched her speaking with Troy, I detected something like defeat roaming behind her eyes. Perhaps she was simply absorbing yet another blow in life.

Laughter arrests my mind from memories of that first day here. Now as I look up before me, I don't see Pam receiving ill news from Troy, but I see her huddled with five teenage boys, their laughter filling the yard. Beneath their feet, glistening from the soft rain of the day, shines a very golden, very new, cedar deck.

The deck itself was a solution to more than Pam's household demise. It was an answer to my own prayers from the preceding cold winter months. During most of the ranch's 2010 season, I met with these same boys that are now telling stories and jokes with

Pam. We called our group "PICK UP THE PHONE" for reasons that are too lengthy to describe now. I loved my time with the group that year, but during the winter I found myself searching for a new vision and trajectory for them. I felt compelled to stray from the conventional greet-game-lesson approach that is so often used with young people. I was restless to offer them something fresh.

It was only when Troy and I initially visited Pam to look at the deck, that I finally knew what direction the group would take. Service. It took no effort at all to convince Troy that rebuilding a deck for Pam was something the ranch should and could do. In fact, I think that the Spirit was already drawing up plans in Troy's head before I spoke. Needless to say, the very day that we removed Pam's sodden boards from her house in March, Troy had quietly told her that the ranch would fund the material cost of a new one while PICK UP THE PHONE would construct it throughout the ranch's summer season.

The months of building Pam's deck were more than I could have asked for. Though I certainly had hopes for the boys and the project, I wasn't quite sure what to expect. Yet as we spent the summer days at Pam's house, the Lord's high purpose became abundantly clear. Let me simply tell of my two favorite aspects of what the Lord did. First, the time with the boys, though only sparsely peppered with formal "scriptural teaching" moments, led to several incredibly poignant conversations with different members of the group. Secondly, the most clear and resounding aspect of the Lord's goodness manifested



BEING A MENTOR

BY JEFF GORHAM

IT'S SUCH A BLESSING to share in the lives of a younger generation. The world these kids are growing up in isn't even a shadow of the world that I knew as a boy, it's much darker. For me, being a mentor in this day and age doesn't mean always having every right answer, an elaborate plan or the latest ideas—being a mentor is simply being a guy willing to invest in younger men. I want to be a resource for the boys I mentor at the ranch. I want to be there for them to ask questions and gain knowledge from one who's gone before them and has already experienced the good, the bad and the ugly of this world. Most of all I hope to demonstrate to them that I'm an older friend who's experienced the goodness of God.

Not only do I have the opportunity to help the boys understand the importance of being a steadfast warrior for Jesus and becoming the man God is calling them to be, I also get to see the world through the eyes of someone younger. I'm certain I learn more from them than they learn from me. As a mentor I often become the student as well. I'm consistently amazed at the exceptional and even profound insights these young men share. It's exciting to watch the boys growing into godly men. By being a mentor, I'm humbled and honored to be a part of their lives.



itself completely outside of the group's leaders. It came in the form of a friendship born between Pam and these boys.

Now I stand watching Pam as she laughs with these teenagers on a newly built deck even in the absence of her son and the loss of her husband. What plays itself out before me is something of radiance. I would guess that the disciples must have felt similar to me as they watched Jesus bring life to dead limbs and smiles to faces of the outcasts. In this I am witness to a small piece of the goodness of God playing out in the lives around me. I am witness to His coming Kingdom of redemption in the laughter of a widow and teenage boys. I am witness to the King at work.

Thoughts from members of **PICK UP THE PHONE**

- ★ *The best part of building this deck is getting to hang out with friends and have fun with it and to give a deck to Pam. — Derek, 15*
- ★ *I love getting to build a deck for Pam because she didn't have one before. — Ben, 13*
- ★ *When you're building a deck if you do it yourself it won't get done right—you need to work as a team. — Joseph, 13*
- ★ *When we think God is calling us to do something, we pick up the phone and go straight forward rather than avoiding it. — Derek, 15*



MARSHALL, BEN, DANIEL, JOSEPH, PAM, DEREK, JEFF

OUR WORDS CAPTURED ON VIDEO!

PICK UP THE PHONE has provided readers with the unique opportunity to listen to testimony from some of the boys and Pam about the project completed this summer. The following are simple directions to access these incredible interviews on our website.

- 👉 Type in <http://www.cpyr.org> in your web browser.
- 👉 Look for "PICK UP THE PHONE INTERVIEWS" under the **Latest News** section of our Home Page.
- 👉 Click **Read More** under this heading and enjoy "uncut" video footage that you won't want to miss!



WHERE THERE'S HOPE



BY HEIDI JOHNSON · HILLS

I remember a time in our lives when I thought there was no hope.

I had recently gone through a divorce and was trying to find my balance as a single mother with two broken hearted children. We were all home one day when I heard my daughter Brittany crying in her bedroom. Concerned, I went to see what was wrong. While standing in the doorway, I saw my eleven-year-old little girl sitting in the middle of her bed with her head lowered. Moving to sit beside my daughter, I asked her what was wrong. The tearful plea that followed crushed my heart.

"Mom, I have no friends . . . I hate myself . . . I don't want to live anymore."

It was then I realized, while struggling with my own brokenness after the divorce, that I hadn't made good decisions or lived a good life. Now my children were suffering for those choices. During this time, we'd also found out that Brittany had epilepsy, a condition that had been misdiagnosed before and could have cost my daughter her life. Compounding her already low self-esteem was the fact that she had very crooked teeth and would potentially need to have her jaw surgically broken and reset. At the same time, my son Matthew was diagnosed with autism.

Needless to say, these were very dark days in all our lives.

During this season, we heard of a place not too far away that offered free horseback riding lessons. Knowing Brittany's strong love for horses, I decided to take a chance, longing for something to help my daughter. Walking up the hill toward the ranch, we knew nothing about its ministries, our only goal was to find hope—somewhere.

Turning into the main yard, the kids were mesmerized by all the tall, beautiful horses standing nearby. Together, we took a simple tour of the grounds and learned a few of the horses' stories and how they were rescued from many hardships. We also met several of the staff members and realized how special this place really was. They made us feel welcome, accepted and loved.

Returning home, the kids and I talked with excitement about possibly going back to the ranch to ride. A few days later we received a phone call from Crystal Peaks. They asked if we would like to come back and spend time with the horses. The kids were overjoyed!

Arriving for Brittany's first riding session, we walked up that long hill again, full of anticipation. We met the leader who would be working with her, an amazing woman who treated us with love and kindness. By the time the session ended, I could already see a difference in my daughter. It was later that we realized her leader was Kim Meeder, the founder of Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch.



MATTHEW, KIM, HEIDI & BRITTANY

Now things were starting to make sense. Clearly, God was in control—even during our desperate times—He was guiding us. We couldn't wait to go back to the ranch because we felt safe and happy there. Our new "family" was helping us rebuild our lives again.

After coming to the ranch for two-and-a-half years, my shy, unsure, quiet, unhappy little girl has been transformed by God into a talkative, happy, confident teenager. We've also started going to church regularly and our lives are now stronger, more joyous and full of love.

Today, Brittany still has many medical challenges and Matthew still has autism, but together we have love, assurance, joy, security, safety, fellowship and most important of all... we have Jesus.

Each week the kids and I can't wait to go to CPYR to see all of our friends. We're so happy and thankful for all God has done for us, and for leading us to a place... where there is hope.



**BRITTANY AND KATHERINE,
HER FRIEND AND MENTOR**

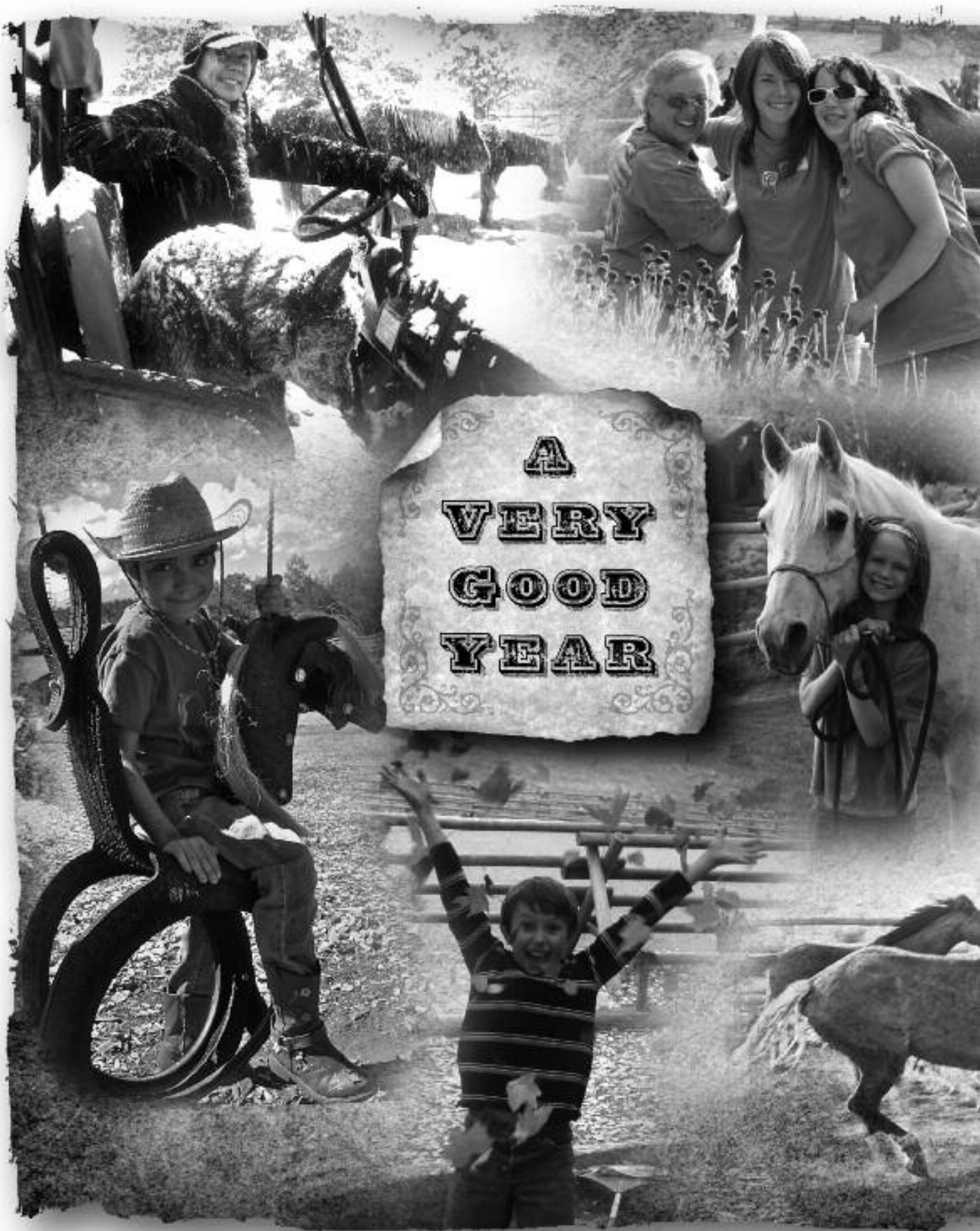


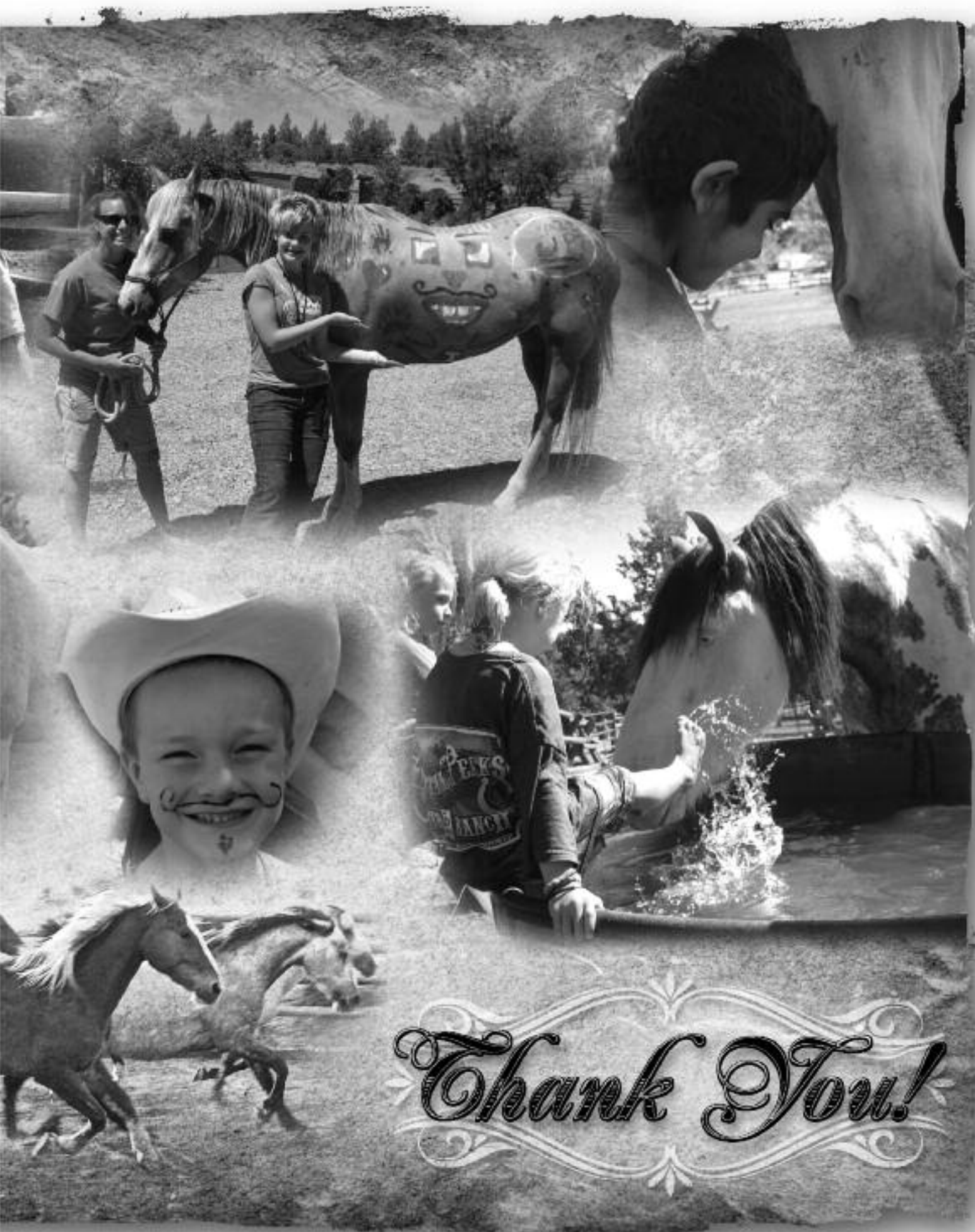
MATTHEW WORKING IN "BUSTED KNUCKLE" RANCH REPAIR SHOP

I go to Crystal Peaks
for 2 1/2 years. I used
to live in Colorado and
~~our~~ parents got divorced.
Then we moved here, started
the ranch, and ~~our~~ whole
life changed. We met a
lot more friends, and everyone
at the ranch loved and
cared about us. When
I met Kim, I thought
she was a amazing one
of my favorite workers
is Jeff. Jeff and me
usually build when we see
him. I also love Katie!
we get to hang out a lot,
and we like going back to
groom temples, the ranch
fun. I love the ranch,
I love central Oregon, and
I love all the wonderful
people at Crystal Peaks.

Matthew

"I have been going to the ranch for two-and-a-half years and before I came I felt a little bad and down about myself. But after I have been going to the ranch I feel good about myself and not so shy. I have also made a lot of friends like Tiffany, Riley, Katherine, Kim and many others. I go to SAGE almost every Wednesday and it is so much fun. We do fun and awesome games and activities and also talk about God which is great and I love hanging out with the girls. I love it when Jeff and Troy call me beautiful when I say hi to them. I am always looking forward to coming to the ranch to see all the people, staff and the horses. The ranch makes me feel safe and even more happy when I go." — Brittany, age 13





WHEN I FIRST MET SARAH, she was a tall, reed-like waif all of twelve years old. She rode her new colt up my driveway and wanted to know if I would ever be interested in riding with her. I was, and we did. Even for a little girl, she was a deep well, hallmarked by a quiet and intensely private nature.

Often, our times spent together were shrouded by long periods of silence. Sometimes I wondered if I was somehow squandering these precious moments by not pouring in more words, more teaching moments and more of the beautiful hope of Christ. At times, I also pondered if my friendship was making a difference in her life or if my presence mattered at all. Yet, through my self-doubt, there was one thing I was certain of: I intensely loved the quiet, green-eyed girl that lived down the road.

On one summer evening, we had just finished our last training ride before our first endurance race together. We were cooling our horses off shoulder to shoulder, just as we had trained them. It was during this interlude that I sensed a rare urgency from my young friend; there was something she wished to share:

Her emotions were so guarded, so deep—churning like a subterranean river through caverns of stone. All too often she retreated into a locked silence. Her internal conflict was evident in her downcast eyes. I could tell all that she held inside; all that she wanted to express was reaching toward the surface, straining desperately to be free. It was agonizing to watch.

After long moments she finally looked back at me. I could see that her internal dam was crumbling beneath the weight of what she wanted to say. Then, like a life-giving spring seeping to the surface in a high mountain meadow, the words began to flow.

“You know what would really be great?” Her voice was barely audible as her gaze dropped to the ground. “When we cross the finish line... will you... hold my hand?” Silence. Her soft green eyes were veiled by her eyelashes as she continued to look down. She seemed to be whispering to herself as she added,



“That... would be the best.”

Through the long shadows of the evening, I reached my hand across the gap that separated us. She reached back and laced her slender fingers through mine. Her slight Mona Lisa smile could have split rock. Actually, I’m quite certain that it did.

(Excerpt from the story “Run Through Fire” in *Hope Rising*)

Word by word, minute by minute, brick by brick, and so was forged a friendship that helped to shape an uncertain child into an unwavering adult. We rode hundreds of miles together, we spent thousands of hours in the company of each other and we shared a million dreams. For the next eight years, Sarah and I worked side by side to build a small ranch for hurting horses and hurting kids to come out of the storm, and just like her, find a place where each could feel safe and loved.

From the beginnings of the ranch in 1995, Sarah worked tirelessly at my side until she left for college in 2003. Striking out on her own, she moved to Colorado, endeavoring to become a veterinary technician. Even though I deeply missed my friend, I was proud of her and the woman she was growing into.



Becoming a veterinary technician was a dream fulfilled. During my time in Colorado, I finished college, met and married a wonderful, God-loving man and then moved back to Central Oregon to begin a new career. There were so many aspects of my job that challenged and

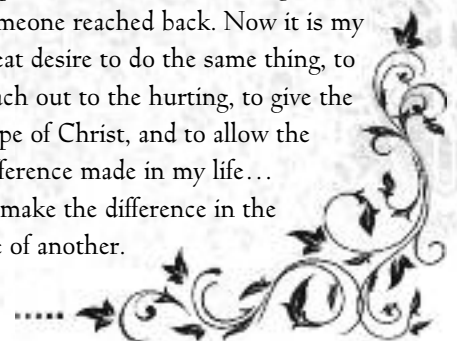
encouraged me to try, stretch, grow and reach. I liked the “puzzle-piece” effect of working in the pharmacy. I adored many of the clientele who faithfully brought in their four-legged family members. I enjoyed the farm calls and going to ranches and working with veterinarians who I’d grown to deeply respect. In general, I loved my job.

But over time, I realized something. That deep desire I’d felt as a child started to rise up again. The consistent, focused love I’d received at the ranch had helped to fashion and change my life. It was at the ranch that I’d fallen in love with Jesus Christ and chosen to give my heart to Him. Since that moment, my life has never been the same. Although I’ve made many mistakes, Jesus has been there to help me grow through each one. It is His redeeming love that has saved me, that has given me lasting hope and peace. I realized that the best life I could live, the best gift I could give to those I care for... was Him.

Although I could do this through any job or vocation, after much prayer, I felt it was time to return to my foundations. A few months ago, while Kim and I were once again riding side by side through the forest, I shared one of my deepest dreams... to return and work at the ranch.

As of August fifteenth that dream has come true. The ranch I once helped to build, the ranch that helped to build me, has again become my job, my family, my ministry.

Over the years, I’ve come to realize that during a pivotal season in my life, someone took the time to reach out to me and pour in love. It was within that moment my life was changed. Once, I was the child who was reaching out for hope. And because of God’s grace... someone reached back. Now it is my great desire to do the same thing, to reach out to the hurting, to give the hope of Christ, and to allow the difference made in my life... to make the difference in the life of another.





Dear Family,

Thank you for all you've given to Crystal Peaks—your financial gifts, words of encouragement, friendship and prayers. Without your faithful support there would be no means to “Rescue the equine, Mentor the child, offer Hope for the family or Empower new ministries.” Without you, it's likely that Crystal Peaks would still be an old abandoned cinder mine, capable of producing nothing.

Thank you for loving us in such a committed and tangible way. Thank you for shouldering with us to pour the hope of our Lord back into the broken hearted. Thank you for being the “beautiful feet” that have helped us to bring the Good News to those who frequent the ranch.

So, dear friends, within all that you currently do to make a difference, perhaps you will consider one more thing. As you look forward to the coming new year, will you think about the young ones around you and how you might pour love and the hope of Christ into their lives? Within this life, this single, simple action is the greatest gift you could ever give.

Merry Christmas to you, our extended family. May the love, hope and peace of Jesus be yours today, tomorrow and every day of the year to come.

With deep gratitude and love,

*Troy & Kim
Meeder*

Yes! I would like to shoulder with Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch to support children, horses and families in need.

Please use my donation for:

- ☐ Where it is needed most
- ☐ Rescue the Equine
- ☐ Mentor the Child
- ☐ Hope for the Family
- ☐ Empower the Ministry
- ☐ Potential Property Expansion
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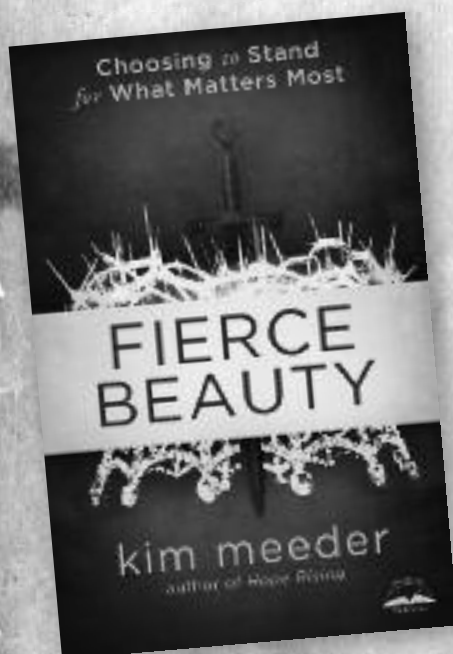
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KIM'S 4TH BOOK HAS BEEN RELEASED!



Recounting stories from her life, Kim's message to readers is direct, "When we choose to live our life for Christ first, we have worth and beauty *not* because of how we look or what we do—but because of what Christ does *through* us. When we reflect Him, this is the most beautiful *any* life can become. Friends, it's time for each of us to lay down our crown of entitlement, pick up our King's sword of encouragement and fight for those around us who are losing their battle for hope!"

Meredith Andrews, recording artist, says of *Fierce Beauty*, "Her words will open your heart to receive and embrace truth from God's Word, truth that is able to set even the most captive heart free."

This is our continuing prayer for everyone—that all would find freedom in Christ. And this is our prayer for you as well. *Fierce Beauty* is a book about such a journey, one that will challenge, encourage and inspire hope.