



Horsin' Around the Ranch

HYR Mission Statement: Encouragement for the child. Healing for the family.
Empowering the ministry. Caring for the equine.

Answered Prayers and a Step of Faith by Christine Thom

Summer 2022

At the beginning of my third term of nursing school in Oregon, I (Christine) received the news that I wasn't going to be able to complete the program due to Covid restrictions. This news was hard to swallow as I have dreamed of being a nurse since I was around 3 years old. I knew that God had something else in mind for what was next. I began praying and asking Him what He desired in this new season – what was the next step? For the past several years the Lord had laid on my heart to begin a ministry someday for foster teens in a farm/ranch setting. I had grown up doing 4-H with sheep and pigs, but I knew I had a lot more to learn as far as farming and ranching. The search began for any ministries that would have an internship I could participate in to learn more about how a ranch ministry runs on a daily basis. I had heard about Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch in Bend, OR and looked under similar ministries as their internship season was full

already. I searched in the state of Nebraska as I had always wanted to go to that state, and Heartland Youth Ranch popped up. I researched their website and decided to call, praying that they would need or want to begin an internship. I left a message saying that although I didn't see any current internship opportunities, I wanted to inquire about the possibility. Four days later, I woke up to a call coming in from Nebraska; I was so excited. I jumped out of bed and called back. I listened as Susan explained that they had just been praying about starting an internship. God was answering! Over the course of the next couple of months, logistical pieces to the process had to get ironed out – the biggest being housing. I called Susan to check in and found out that her aunt had just passed, and the internship might not work out. I continued praying, seeking the Lord, and asking Him to open this door if this is where He

had me; it was a walk of faith. Less than a week before I was to leave for Idaho for my cousin's wedding, Susan called, sharing with me that the board had voted for me to come to Nebraska – it was really going to happen. I quickly began to pack for the next three months I would be on the ranch. I arrived with my mom and met Susan and Curt at church on June 12th. I drove my mom to the airport, then came back to Heartland Youth Ranch, pulling into the driveway with excitement and uncertain anticipation of what the next three months would hold.

Coming to HYR, having only received a couple seasons of summer lessons from my neighbor and her horse and riding a couple of times with friends, I knew there was going to be a lot to learn. I began to have training sessions with Laura and Susan; I was amazed at how much the horse could sense my feelings, and Laura assertively recognized this. After

many deep breaths and prayers, I was able to learn how to connect with the horse and control every step the horse took. I learned the importance of taking leadership of the horse as one can never out-muscle a horse. Horses seek that leadership and wait for you to lead, otherwise they assume that role over the handler. I realized that I needed to gain that confidence from the Lord and lead the horse just as He leads us tenderly and purposefully.

As I have been here, the presence of the Lord and the working of the Holy Spirit is evident in daily life – from watching the healing and encouragement that is seen in a child’s face when they work with a horse to witnessing the heartfelt prayers of the staff for God’s ways and will to be accomplished here. I never imagined that I would see so visibly how a horse changes and accommodates to a person’s feelings and emotional state. During the week of camp here, it was amazing to watch one of the horses which is normally a very distracted horse, bond with and follow a teen around

without a lead rope, submitting completely to his tender leadership. It is an unexplainable sight to behold when you see the joy and excitement of kids on top of a horse when they had come to camp with an unsure and solemn countenance.

This time here at HYR has taught me that God’s ways are higher than our ways, and He has a perfect plan for each of us. All we need is to seek Him, trust, and step out in faith when it is His timing. The Lord is faithful and will not let anyone go unseen or unnoticed. He uses us and sometimes animals, such as a horse, as instruments to reach hearts and share His unconditional love with others.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’” Isaiah 55:8-9

“A man’s heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.” Proverbs 16:9



Star Following Teen At Camp

Upcoming Dates and Events At Heartland Youth Ranch:

October 1: Women’s Day Retreat on the Ranch

October 8: Fall BBQ and Fun Day



Connect with Heartland Youth Ranch!

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