

Miracle Farm bids farewell to a faithful friend

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BRENNHAM—Annie, one of [Miracle Farm's](#) most beloved horses, has been retired after nearly 14 years of service and countless indelible impressions on boys at the ministry near Brenham.

Annie was one of the first horses donated when Miracle Farm began its horse program in 1998. At the time, she had never been ridden, and trainers soon discovered how obstinate she could be.

Travis, Micah and Chris (left to right) are three of the boys at Miracle Farm who had a special relationship with Annie, who recently retired. (PHOTO/Cindy Davis)

"As an example of her ornery streak, Annie once sat on a Mercedes in protest of participating in a local parade," said Tim Webb, a former Miracle Farm campus administrator at Miracle Farm, a residential program affiliated with Children at Heart Ministries.

Annie gave birth to a foal not long after the incident. Through the process of becoming a mother and caring for her colt, Annie was humbled and became receptive to training, Webb noted.

"Her colt just wore her out, and she quickly realized, as many of us do after we become parents—that she couldn't just lay around and do whatever she wanted all the time," he said.

Just like many of the boys she served, Annie gained a sense of purpose

through her role at Miracle Farm, Webb observed.

"When a young man arrives at Miracle Farm, he is overwhelmed with life and has often times already failed in many ways," he said. "When a boy is assigned a horse, it gives him the opportunity to succeed."

In having the responsibility to care for a horse, the boys learn to thrive by taking it one day and one step at a time. Once they've mastered their horse, their self-esteem is rebuilt, and they have the confidence to transfer those same skills into their schoolwork and their relationships.

"The key to horses—really to all relationships—is consistency," Webb said. "If the boys act rude to a horse, the horse bucks them. But if they communicate and develop a relationship with their horse, the horse cooperates and gives back."

During Annie's nearly 14 years at Miracle Farm, she became a consistent friend to more than 20 boys.



Chris formed a special bond with Annie, the first horse he was assigned at Miracle Farm. Ironically, Chris completed his goals and reunited with his family the same day Annie retired. (PHOTO/Cindy Davis)

"To me, Annie was the best horse on the Farm. She listened, never threw a

fit and knew exactly what to do," said Jon Snow, former Miracle Farm resident. "I treated her right, so she treated me right. ... She taught me many things including responsibility, patience and how to care for someone other than myself."

Since leaving in 2004, Snow has returned to Miracle Farm frequently to visit staff, friends he made through church, and—of course—to see Annie. He's not alone, since many other boys feel the same.

"Many times when a boy comes back for a visit, it's because they're facing a crossroads in their life and they need to reconnect to a time when they were making some good progress," said Mike Gallaway, Miracle Farm equestrian and vocational trainer. "Seeing that horse and feeling that emotional bond again helps them remember what they're capable of, and they can walk away knowing, 'I can do this.'"

"The emotional bonds our boys naturally form with their horses through caring for them each day often results in the boys' first steps in learning to consider the needs and feelings of parents, siblings and others at home," said Alex Hamilton, Executive Director of Miracle Farm.

Annie continues to be a blessing in retirement, Miracle Farm administrators noted. She has joined a family with a little girl who's just learning to ride.