

BEHIND THE MISSION: GRACIE'S PLACE



If you've never heard about Gracie's Place, you're missing out on an incredible organization dedicated to protecting vulnerable equines while providing fun and educational opportunities for anyone who is willing to learn. Their passion, determination, and dedication to their mission is awe-inspiring. You can see it for yourself. Below is an excerpt from our Q&A with the team at Gracie's Place:



Q: How did Gracie's place get started/where did it get its name from?

Gracie's Place is named after our very first horse, "Gracie." She was a 14-year-old Tennessee Walking Horse we purchased in 2016 from a rescue organization in Marsing, Idaho. She was purchased with the intention of being our personal family horse, but with her history of years of neglect, she taught us more about rescue and rehabilitation than we ever anticipated. She was the inspiration for what eventually evolved into what it is now. When we began, we just happened to stumble across horses that weren't in good shape. With our experience from Gracie and her variety of health concerns when we purchased her...we naturally had a lot of expertise and compassion dealing with vulnerable horses and their situations. Purchasing Gracie, giving her high quality care, and providing the best care possible for her was such a rewarding experience. As we acquired several more horses, people found us through word of mouth and began to reach out to us about helping with their horses.

Q: What was your vision for Gracie's place when it started vs. now?



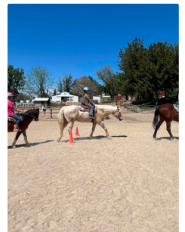
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-and we are now approached about horses that need help as opposed to reaching out and initiating ourselves. These days, we have a wait list and we are approached by people in the community who need help, often due to life changes (moving, health, finances, death, divorce, etc). Most of the time, our spots are strictly saved for these situations. Horse owners seek us out to help their horses. As we do not rehome horses, this provides them assurance that they will not only receive proper care, but that our place will also be their final stop until it's their time to cross the rainbow bridge.

There has always been an educational component to what we do, which has progressed as we have had more experiences as well. We want to provide a safe haven for horses and people, and teach people willing and wanting to learn about horsemanship and horse care. Of course horses and horse activities are fun, and they help provide the necessary funding to help the horses we are able to, but in addition to that, we realized that educating the next generation of horse owners and handlers will help horses' care and well-being long-term. We want our compassion and care to affect the next generation and hopefully inspire some to continue doing what we do. The longer we have done what we do, the more we have also realized the importance of the activities we offer for the horses. It's enrichment for the horses as much as for the people! The horses love having the interaction as much as the people do. We aim to teach people that when you are kind, clear, and fair to the horses, they reward you with their patience and enthusiasm in your interactions with them!...

Q: What keeps you going when the work/rescuing feels difficult/hard/exhausting?

We are relied on by the many horses we have agreed to care for until the end of their lives. It's easy to feel discouraged when you can't help every horse, or when people aren't as supportive as we'd hoped. At the end of the day, no matter what people say, no matter what we lose, and no matter how hard we work, we have horses that rely on us to care to them every day. They don't take a break from eating on the holidays. They don't pick and choose when to get sick. They don't decide that they need medications to survive. They aren't in control of these things, but we absolutely have control when it comes to helping and supporting them. At the end of the day, they rely on us no matter what happens, and the love that they give back to us keeps us going. It's the transformations that you see when you spend every day with them. It's the difference we are able to make in horses physically, emotionally, and mentally. It's the frisky trots and canters after months to years of joint pain. It's the tasty meals and full bellies after years of malnutrition. It's the shiny coat and healthy skin from getting rid of parasites. It's the nickers you begin hearing at feeding time after years of silence. It's the bonds we create when brushing them, treating their conditions, riding them, and trusting that we will take care of each other. It's the softness in their eyes that says "thank you." They don't get to choose their-



-situations, but they come to rely on us for their well-being. Ultimately, the empathy and compassion for something so powerful, but so vulnerable, is what encourages us to keep going.

Q: What do you wish people understood about rescues/rescued horses that they might not realize?

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Q: What are some of the programs that Gracie's place offers?

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Q: What are some ways people can help support Gracie's place?

We have lots of available opportunities for folks wanting to support Gracie's Place. A few ideas would be making donations, shopping our Amazon or chewy wishlist, sponsoring a horse or a student's riding classes or camps, following our social media (Facebook and YouTube), interacting with our posts through shares, likes, and comments, or volunteering your time, equipment, or expertise to help maintain our property and facilities. We also have a fundraising event that we would love to meet new people at! It is our 5th Annual Barn Social Fundraiser on October 9th at 5pm. If people want to donate items or services to the silent auction, share our event on Facebook, or come meet us at the event, those are all great ways to support what we do.

If people realized how much we need their support, we would be able to accomplish so

much more! Even though we work hard and we try to do a lot for people and horses in our community, we are only 2 people and we desperately need the public's support. When our activities slow down due to winter weather, we are strapped for funds and resources. The horses' needs remain despite the lack of funds. Every stack of hay is \$1,000. Every horse's trim is \$60 (every 6-8 weeks), every pair of shoes-



-is \$110 (every 6-8 weeks). Our Prascend for residents with Cushing's disease is over \$500 every month! This just scratches the surface of recurring expenses. Without support from our community, our efforts would never be enough to support all of the creatures who need us. Your support, in every way, absolutely makes a huge difference and is necessary to our future! The horses depend on it!

Q: What's one thing you want people to remember about Gracie's Place?

We want people to remember us as caring, compassionate, and honest. We provide excellent care to the horses entrusted to us. We provide exceptional educational opportunities for anyone looking to learn. We want people to know how much we care and the quality we strive to provide in every endeavor we take on.



This was only part of the Q&A we had with the team at Gracie's Place. To read more about what they do and the stories, horses, and lessons they remember, read the full Q&A on our website MadeInTheValleyIdaho.com and be sure to check out, visit, and support Gracie's Place!



You can find Gracie's Place on  **Facebook** or visit their website ***GraciesPlace.net***



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Q & A

Q: How did Gracie's place get started/where did it get its name from?

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Q: What was the very first rescue horse you took in, what do you remember about that experience?

The first horse we acquired with the intention of rehabbing was an older Paint mare with severe Cushing's disease, a tumor on her pituitary gland affecting hormone production. When Cushing's disease becomes severe in horses, you can see obvious physical symptoms. For example, she had a long, matted coat because the hormones responsible for telling her body to shed out with the heat and daylight, were not effective. Her hooves were overgrown and cracked from desperately needing a trim, her skin was infected from her thick coat, and her belly was filled with worms, preventing her from absorbing proper nutrients. Under her shaggy coat, she was scrawny and underweight. Unfortunately, the Cushing's disease had permanent effects to her immune system and bone density that we were never able to combat. She acquired pigeon fever, infected bacterial abscesses spread from flies into wounds, and she ultimately ended up breaking her short pastern bone in her back leg in 3 locations from her poor bone health. She was truly the kindest mare, deserving of all of the attention and care. Despite losing her in light of all our efforts, it only inspired us to try and help other horses like her find a better situation. We realized after helping this mare, we had a passion for rehabbing horses and often stumbled across opportunities to help others like her.

Q: What was your vision for Gracie's place when it started vs. now?

We always knew we wanted to help folks with horses they couldn't care for anymore, or couldn't care for properly. The details for what that looks like now might look a bit different as we've learned things. When we started, we would often see horses that needed help through social media or sale sites, and we would reach out about helping. The longer we've been doing this, the more people find us, and we are now approached about horses that need help as opposed to reaching out and initiating ourselves. These days, we have a wait list and we are approached by people in the community who need help, often due to life changes (moving, health, finances, death, divorce, etc). Most of the time, our spots are strictly saved for these situations. Horse owners seek us out to help their horses. As we do not rehome horses, this provides them assurance that they will not only receive proper care, but that our place will also be their final stop until it's their time to cross the rainbow bridge. There has always been an educational component to what we do, which has progressed as we have had more experiences as well. We want to provide a safe haven for horses and people, and teach people willing and wanting to learn about horsemanship and horse care. Of course horses and horse activities are fun, and they help provide the necessary funding to help the horses we are able to, but in addition to that, we realized that educating the next generation of horse owners and handlers will help horses' care and well-being long-term. We want our compassion and care to affect the next generation and hopefully inspire some to continue doing what we do. The longer we have done what we do, the more we have also realized the importance of the activities we offer for the horses. It's enrichment for the horses as much as for the people! The horses love having the interaction as much as the people do. We aim to teach people that when you are kind, clear, and fair to the horses, they reward you with their patience and enthusiasm in your interactions with them! To conclude these examples, our visions haven't necessarily changed, but the applications have evolved as experience has guided our journey.

Q: What were some of the challenges you faced starting your nonprofit/rescue?

Putting it simply, the logistics of how to become a non-profit were the most challenging when we began. It was a bit intimidating trying to navigate the business aspect of the organization. We wanted to make sure we did everything correctly with the right paperwork and filing. We ended up consulting with people we knew who had started non-profits. We received some excellent counsel and help from a law-firm referred to us by a colleague.

Q: What keeps you going when the work/rescuing feels difficult/hard/exhausting?

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Q: How do horses typically come to Gracie's place? (i.e. how do you find the horses you rescue, etc.)

Most horses find their way here when their owners can no longer care for them. This often happens due to life changes like moving, finances, health, death, divorce, etc. Most people find us through word of mouth, or a recommendation from social media. We have a Facebook page and website that most people contact us through.

Q: What are some of the most common circumstances that lead a horse to potentially need rescue/intervention?

At our facility, people most often need assistance due to life changes. Even horses in big neglect cases often end up there because of life changes and financial issues. It is a sad but common occurrence that many people don't get the resources they need when they find themselves in that situation. By the time the situation is severe, many people are too scared or embarrassed to reach out for help. Our goal is to give people a resource for surrendering before they get to that place.

Q: Can you tell us about a horse/student whose story has made a big impact on you?

We took in an ex-racehorse in 2024 from an email we received about desperately needing assistance. This mare was a very great granddaughter to the famous racehorse "Secretariat," but the poor mare was in such poor shape. When her owner went into a memory care facility, she and her horse herd were left behind. As the other family sorted out her owner's property and belongings, she and the other horses were forgotten about. Eventually, the family tried to make arrangements for the horses, but they couldn't find anyone to take them. Eventually, this mare was the only one left. She outlived the others waiting around. When I went out to the property to take her in, even I was surprised. She was absolutely emaciated, her hooves were long and cracked, her mane and tail her knotted, she had an assortment of cuts and scars, and she absolutely did not want anyone touching her. It took a little over an hour to catch and load her, and I was definitely concerned for my safety at several points. The whole time, I couldn't help but think how an expensive racehorse went from valuable to completely unwanted. Some people believe that only horses not worth a lot of money end up being neglected, but she reminded us that just isn't true. Hard times can happen to anyone and it's important to have a plan for what happens to your animals if you're not around, even your expensive ones! I took her to the veterinarian 2 days after getting her home as I was suspicious of her gait. It turns out, she had fractured her pelvis some time ago and there was nothing we could do. Unfortunately, her story did not have a happy ending, but it was positive being able to give her a peaceful ending no longer sore and hungry. This wasn't a happy story, but it had a big impact on how we educate people and knowledge we've taken onto other rescued horses.

Q: What do you wish people understood about rescues/rescued horses that they might not realize?

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Q: What have you seen horses teach people through your programs?

Horses are very good mirrors; what you see is often a result of what you are. Your weaknesses as well as your strengths will generally be revealed by how a horse responds to you. This can teach self awareness as well as motivating people to work on their weaknesses. They can reveal when you need to be more patient, exercise more self-control, or maybe assert yourself more or establish boundaries. Of course, these teaching aspects are in addition to the more obvious teaching opportunities like how to handle horses safely and how to conduct yourself when working with them, how to cue them and establish expectations, how to care for them, and positive experiences that build confidence.

Q: What are some ways people can help support Gracie's place? (monetarily, also ways they can help non-monetarily)

We have lots of available opportunities for folks wanting to support Gracie's Place. A few ideas would be making donations, shopping our Amazon or chewy wishlist, sponsoring a horse or a student's riding classes or camps, following our social media (Facebook and YouTube), interacting with our posts through shares, likes, and comments, or volunteering your time, equipment, or expertise to help maintain our property and facilities. We also have a fundraising event that we would love to meet new people at! It is our 5th Annual Barn Social Fundraiser on October 9th at 5pm. If people want to donate items or services to the silent auction, share our event on Facebook, or come meet us at the event, those are all great ways to support what we do. If people realized how much we need their support, we would be able to accomplish so much more! Even though we work hard and we try to do a lot for people and horses in our community, we are only 2 people and we desperately need the public's support. When our activities slow down due to winter weather, we are strapped for funds and resources. The horses' needs remain despite the lack of funds. Every stack of hay is \$1,000. Every horse's trim is \$60 (every 6-8 weeks), every pair of shoes is \$110 (every 6-8 weeks). Our Prascend for residents with Cushing's disease is over \$500 every month! This just scratches the surface of recurring expenses. Without support from our community, our efforts would never be enough to support all of the creatures who need us. Your support, in every way, absolutely makes a huge difference and is necessary to our future! The horses depend on it!

Q: What has rescuing horses and teaching taught YOU about people and yourself?

It has definitely taught perseverance, patience, and dedication. There are countless situations and challenges one would never anticipate when dealing with desperate people, vulnerable horses, and clients who are receiving a service along with expectations. There are days where it feels like you can't do anything right. There are months where it feels like the unexpected expenses won't slow down. There are moments of confusion and concern that only time will reveal with clarity, and then of course there are the disappointing outcomes. Combating the feelings of not being able to help every horse and not being able to make everyone happy can be very challenging, especially being someone who leads with compassion. These moments have definitely taught us to rely on each other for support, turn to prayer, and to do the right thing even when no one sees it. Some of the challenges with rescue are not ones I initially anticipated, but they certainly teach you how to better yourself.

Q: Where do you see Gracie's place in the future?

We would like to continue operating how we do. We like our small-scale so we can control the quality of care and services. We would be thrilled if in the future we received more grant and sponsorship opportunities. This would enable us to be able to offer more services, activities, and visits to facilities in need (hospitals, nursing homes, schools, etc) as well as students and folks in our community who can't afford the opportunities we offer otherwise. Currently, our activities are what fund 88% of the horses' expenses (12% are donations). If we didn't have to worry about the horses' needs being covered, we could focus on more community outreach.

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