

A Note from Allyson - April 2016

This is our second year to participate in the ASPCA's Help a Horse Day contest. I love this event because it encourages us to become an even better organization and requires us to think outside the box and expand our focus.

This year in devising our plan for the Help A Horse day celebration, we thought long and hard about our role as a horse rescue. Of course, our key focus has always been on saving horses. Getting them safe, feeding them, loving them, training them, and turning their lives around one horse at a time. In this mission, it didn't take long to realize there is an ENDLESS stream of horses in need. We rescue one, and ten more wait their turn or run out of time. Without a change on the supply end of unwanted horses, rescuers across the nation will continue to fight an uphill battle.

What's the solution to this problem? It can only come through heightened public awareness and the changing of hearts and minds. Without public outcry and a shift in owner responsibility, the slaughter trucks heading to Mexico and Canada will remain full, and horse rescues like Pegasus will continue to overflow. With this in mind, we decided our focus for Help A Horse Day needed to be education through community outreach, with a concentration on youth.

(continued from eNewsletter)

Since *Wings Over Pegasus* is an event that appeals to young people, it serves as a perfect vehicle for us to reach out to high school groups with an interest in animals. As a result, we made contact with dozens of high schools in our area and scheduled appointments to speak to all of their animal science classes and FFA groups. Throughout the month of April, we are hitting the circuit, speaking to, on average, five classes per day. We talk to them about the unwanted horse problem, the importance of castrating stallions, responsible breeding practices, proper horse care, lifelong commitment to equine, auction houses, kill pens and the slaughter pipeline. We want to create an awareness and understanding regarding the plight of horses in America today. It comes as no surprise to us that these kids, and most adults in this country, have absolutely no idea of what is actually going on. ***Change begins with awareness.***

After laying out a description of the problem, we tell the students about the amazing work we are doing at The Pegasus Project. We show them a video presentation and before and after photos of our rescue horses and allow them to see that Pegasus is working to alleviate such suffering in our community. We offer the kids a chance to be a part of our work through volunteer opportunities at Pegasus, and we invite them to attend *Wings Over Pegasus* so they can experience first-hand the beauty of our mission.

Finally, we are offering these high school students an opportunity to compete in an essay contest and win an airplane or horseback ride at *Wings Over Pegasus*. Participants will submit a one-page written essay or a two-minute video essay explaining why horses may need help and set forth ideas on how members of our community can "come to their rescue." Or, alternatively, the student can choose a Pegasus horse, donkey or mule and write a story from the perspective of the animal. This level of engagement will force the students to give extra thought to the problems facing our rescue animals. The Pegasus board of directors will select the winners of the essay contest, and those students will receive recognition and airplane or horseback rides at the April 23rd event.

We are using *Wings Over Pegasus* as the hook to reach these kids, educate them about horse rescue, and engage them in our mission. Before the month is over, we will have spoken to more than 600 students in four different counties. We love the fact that competing in the Help A Horse Day contest inspires us to get creative and undertake this type of program. In this very difficult work, we have a tendency to focus strictly on the horses and forget that real change comes through focusing on effecting people.

How can you help The Pegasus Project win the Help a Horse Day contest again this year?

Since this year is the 150th anniversary of the ASPCA, they are doubling the prize money and offering a total of \$100,000 to horse rescues across the country. One grand prize winner will receive a \$25,000 grant!

Five rescue groups will win \$10,000 each, and five more will win \$5000 each.

In order to win we need to show a successful event, which includes: 1) a large event turn-out, 2) substantial funds raised during the month of April, 3) a high level of community collaboration, 4) significant effort made, and 5) great promotion of our event in the media. With your help, I think we've got this! Here are a few ways you can assist us:

1. Come celebrate *Wings Over Pegasus* with us! It's going to be a blast, and attendance is key to our success.
2. Consider donating this month and earmarking your donation for Help a Horse Day. Each donation, great or small, adds up to allow us to save more horses.
3. Buy raffle tickets to win those two round-trip tickets on Southwest Airlines.
4. Share this event through social media and tell your friends and family about it.
5. If you have access to any sort of media, please let me know and hook us up!
6. Take advantage of our Microchip Madness Day on April 26th and bring your pets (equine, dogs and cats) for low-cost microchipping. If you cannot come out on April 26th, please contact me so that I can help you get your pets microchipped.
7. If you are a Pegasus Partner, dedicate your monthly donation to Help a Horse Day. If you aren't a Pegasus Partner, go to the "Make a Donation" page on our website (www.PegasusRescue.org) and join!

Hope to see you April 23rd and April 26th! Thank you for your support!

Allyson DeCanio
President, The Pegasus Project

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