that connection I couldn't help but size him up. I decided who I thought he was. Maybe I didn't know him well, but I had to ask myself right then—who he was going to be to me.

Holding my reins, he had my most vulnerable part in the palm of his hands—the leather that connected to that metal bit in my mouth.

I thought about my past—I wasn't always dependable, knowing how to buck or spook off, leaving a rider in a heap of dust. I know the power of my weight and muscle and felt lucky the lady took the time to teach me I can be confident in myself—safe and kind toward others while staying true to myself. I've learned to be patient, gentle and playful—not too judgmental of those who hold my reins a bit harshly. I know they're just learning, doing the best they know how while trying to communicate with me.

Somehow I've learned to relax, helping them through those clumsy times without blame or defensiveness. There was a time when I'd thought about bucking a rider off for not knowing what I needed from them. It never left me feeling good about myself, seeming like everybody lost while blaming everybody else.

For a year, I've been carrying the weight of boys of many shapes, sizes and temperaments. It goes against my instinct of self-preservation, but the more I do this, the more I see how good it is to be strong for others, helping them be faster, stronger and braver than they were before meeting me. I am proving that I can be trusted and reliable, even though once I wasn't.

The boy took my reins, holding the bit comfortably in my mouth. He rubbed my shoulder, smiling as we began our trip up the hill. The lady and Skipper went ahead, moving quickly, making it look easy, although I noticed an unsteady rhythm in his gait.

The boy and I moved more slowly, stopping sometimes while the boy looked far away, studying the desert and horizon. I sensed his thoughts as he considered the vast stillness while the wind whipped against our faces. Many times along that climb he seemed to go someplace else in his mind, but his hands remained steady, connecting us so I went with him to those places deep within himself and far away to other places — out there somewhere. I wondered if he knew I was there with him.

Sometimes the climb tired me. The rocks were hard under my feet and the frost on the grass made the footing uncertain. When I'd begin to slip, he'd catch me with the reins, steadying my steps, keeping me from falling.

As we neared the big rocks I grew tired. The way was steep and reaching the top seemed far away, maybe impossible. I stopped more often, resting longer. The boy expressed concern that I wouldn't make it further. He didn't know if I could.

I knew that the lady knows my strength and ability. I knew she was gauging the circumstance, environment, time and future events, considering how far to push, how fast to progress—and whether it was about this particular hill we were climbing—reaching that one specific goal, or if the day's conditions required a change of direction. She might have known that sometimes unexpected destinations prove better than our own plans.

The lady spoke to the boy about this briefly, and, just as she had wrapped my rope at the standing rail earlier, gave this boy options, asking if he wanted to continue our climb to the top of the mesa. This meant slowly picking our path through the rocks under the shadow of the tall hill as the sun quickly sank behind its back. Or, did he want to go where the sun still shone brightly over a smoother, more gradual trail, away from the sharp rocks and scrub brush.

The boy chose where the sun shone on a path with fewer obstacles to bruise my heels. I wondered if he knew how much I thanked him for choosing that way and considering me. Did he knew how much easier it was on both of us? Did he realize how cold and long and difficult the other path might have been had he chosen only to reach the highest place that day?

We still had to work as we walked on the path the boy had chosen. The wind still beat against us, making our skin feel cold, but the sun was there, softening the frozen ground and warming the air. We could have run, playing with ease, had we decided to. It wouldn't have caused us any harm.

We saw herds of deer with the ranch dog trailing them. We stopped after some miles at the top of the furthest peak from our original goal. .

Looking over the valley and water, the boy enjoyed some trail mix the lady had brought, talking about the hopes and dreams he has for his future. He thanked the lady for the time he'd had with me. I knew then I was a very lucky horse. As my stride quickened as we headed home, the boy noticed I was actually much stronger than he'd first thought.

I knew the way home, remembering the path he'd chosen for us. Remembering our journey, I reflected on how difficult the path had been sometimes, and how it made me question myself and the boy, wondering whether he really cared about me or if I was just a way to pass the time. I knew he had doubted my abilities for a while—but then he chose the way he thought would be best for me.

I remembered my first thought back at the pasture that I'd rather not even go, that it was a waste of my time and energy and I'd be missing out not being where I'd always been. Being there with that boy, I realized that I was so glad we had experienced the journey together.

Spending time with the boy—knowing he really cared about the path I took and how it affected me—made me thankful. I knew I was in good hands. The time it took and the choices we made together reminded me I was stronger than others knew and more capable than I gave myself credit for. I was also more willing than my nature would have chosen on its own without the determination of others who were choosing to wait it out with me and go alongside to places more peaceful and rewarding than I'd imagined they could ever be.

About Cherry Gulch: Cherry Gulch is a ranch-style, therapeutic boarding school designed specifically for 10 -14 year old boys. Their supportive, encouraging and respect-based approach is designed to build students up-rather than tear them down. Cherry Gulch is passionate about providing early intervention and prevention to help boys reach their full potential and become well-rounded, pro-social young men. They are dedicated to providing outstanding therapeutic and academic services to students and their families in the context of a safe environment working toward "Building Brighter Tomorrows for the Boys of Today." For more information, contact: Andy Sapp, PhD, Founder and CEO, 208-365-3437 ext. 502, DrSapp@CherryGulch.org, www.CherryGulch.org.

Speaking of Japanese college students... I have a feeling young people's writing skills are affected by writing email. They are good at dragging on and on about whatever pops into their mind, but they are not so good at saying what they want to say in a logical, organized way.

~ Naoki Kamisaka

SEEN N' HEARD



Congratulations go to **Jason** and **Serena Hull**, from **Nawa Academy** on the arrival of your son, **Caeden Travis Hull**. He was born on September 21, 2009 and is already curious about the outdoors.

During the last month, the following news was posted on Strugglingteens.com.

Timpview RTC was closed, and we were notified January 19, 2010.

On January 21, **Deck House School** evolved into a year round school.

January 25, **Sage Star Center** launched a new student-centered development course at **Cherry Gulch**, **Vista Counseling Services** partnered with **Utley Family Farms**, **Turnabout/ Stillwater** offered financing options to families and **Newport Academy** opened a boys program.

On January 28, **Aspen** announced **Susan Cambria** would be the vice president of eastern division and would be responsible for overseeing operations at Aspen's 10 eastern facilities including Academy at **Swift River, Adirondack Leadership Expeditions, Bromley Brook School, Camp Huntington, Four Circles Recovery Center, New Leaf Academy of North Carolina, Phoenix Outdoor, Stone Mountain School, SUWS of the Carolinas** and **Talisman Programs**.

January 30 **Benchmark's Richard Brimhall** retired as the Dean of Admissions.

Many press releases came in on February 1. **Sheila Tart-Zelvin** joined the business development team at **Memorial Hermann Prevention and Recovery Center (PaRC)**, **Discovery Academy** welcomed **Phil Scoville**, LMFT, **Dr. David Smith**, Chair of Addiction Medicine at **Newport Academy** will be presented the ASAM annual award in April, **BestNotes** announced the integration of its treatment program information management system with **Family Bridge**, an online tool for families of troubled teens created by the aftercare experts at **Homeward Bound** and **Pasadena Villa** welcomed **Dr. Myrtho Branch**. Also, **Elan** received NIPSA accreditation.

On February 5, **Elk Mountain Academy** celebrated their 16th year in operation. **Bridges Academy** launched a music appreciation class, **Vista at Dimple Dell Canyon** began offering enhanced programming involving DBT (dialectical behavioral therapy) and **Russ Pryor**, LCSW, MBA, accepted the position of Admissions Director at the **Aspen Institute**, with **Randi Nelson** stepping into the role of admissions coordinator. Also on February 5, we were introduced to an **EAGALA** program called **Fresh Steps**, EAP, owned by **Darcie Kelly**, LCSW.

On February 9, **Marla Simon**, educational consultant, opened an office in San Diego, CA, and **College Living Experience** addressed the 30 percent college dropout rate with an article announcing their summer opportunities.

February 11, **Recovery Plus** opened a substance abuse and addiction treatment center near Salt Lake City, UT, **Ironwood** submitted a Press Release explaining therapeutic boarding schools in their view and **Parth Gandhi** told us about **Peter Isquith's** presentation on Executive Functioning. Also, **Tiffany Wynn** of **Camp Mary Orton**, announced the 6th Annual Research and Evaluation of Adventure Programming (REAP) Symposium would be held March 17-19, 2010.

On February 16, **Teen Challenge Columbus Girls Academy** sent a press release stating they had the privilege of hosting Base Camp 2010 earlier in February where seventy staff members and presenters were in attendance representing 17 Teen Challenge facilities from the Southeast region, and **Discovery Ranch** welcomed **Jeanette Brown**, LCSW, LSAC to the therapy team.

Tree Andrews announced February 18 that she had left **Robert Meltzer's** Educational Consultant practice to start her own. We also learned that **Cherokee Creek Boys** School's LEGO League team was headed to state finals.

Other news that was shared with **Woodbury Reports** included **Father Ralph Groskoph**, Episcopalian chaplain at the **Family Foundation School** retired and the annual **NAWA** Rescue Spring Training course was announced and will be held March 29 through April 3, 2010. Ten students from the **Grove School** received "high honors" and were awarded breakfast with **Peter Chorney**, Executive Director and **Robert Ruggiero**, Principal.

Visitors included **Julia Andrick** of **Catherine Freer** and **Dan Doyle** of **Santiam Crossing**.



