

About Wasatch Humane's Retraining and Adoption Program By Misti Seppi

Wasatch Humane Horse Rescue and Adoptions started with four people willing to rescue horses in their "spare" time. All have full time jobs. The plan: to rescue one, rehabilitate that one, adopt it to a good home, and find another horse in need. Fast forward three years, and we have seven dedicated volunteers, dozens of foster homes and 39 horses in the program. If growth is the measure of success, Wasatch Humane Horse Rescue and Adoptions has been wildly successful.

Some horses have come into the program with wonderful ground manners, and are easy, pleasant and safe to ride. However, other sound-for-riding horses that come into the program have either, never been ridden (and usually have minimal ground manners) or have been ridden and have developed bad habits such as rearing, bucking or running off; which is why we get them.

Those horses that come into the program and are safe to handle on the ground and from the saddle, are immediately available for adoption, with every effort made to match up the horse with their perfect human partner, with the goal being a lifetime home for our horse. These horses are not retrained nor is there any requirement made for the new home to pursue a particular method of training.

Those horses that come into the program with serious bad habits are retrained by one of our volunteers. This takes a great deal of effort, time, and risk for the volunteers. The training program that all of the volunteers are most familiar with is the Parelli Natural Horsemanship method of training. Most of our volunteers have studied this method for over five years before coming together to help rescue horses. This works out very well as all volunteer trainers can discuss a horse with each other and understand exactly what the other person is saying. It also works out well, as they can each work with the other's horses and build on what has already been accomplished. And the other benefit: we all have a lot of fun in the process, making our volunteer efforts rewarding and worthwhile.

Using Parelli Natural Horsemanship, we have been able to convert all of our horse-hooligans into equine good citizens. It takes time and it takes patience but it is so rewarding to see a volunteer safely riding a horse that was previously labeled as impossible, worthless, or incorrigible. Once these horses have been deemed safe by the volunteer working with the horse, we offer that horse for adoption with full disclosure of his history and the methods used to bring about his change of attitude. Our volunteers willingly spend hours with a new home showing them how to communicate with the horse in a way the horse understands and respects. This is done at no charge to the new home. The volunteer is available 24/7 following the adoption, to answer questions or just

to share in the joy of continued successes with the horse. Very often, lasting friendships are created.

Once a horse has experienced success with Natural Horsemanship, it would be unfair to the horse to adopt them to a home that is unwilling to learn what the horse knows and understands. Therefore, for the previously troubled horses, Wasatch Humane will require the new home to commit to learning Parelli Natural Horsemanship, which includes investing in the natural horsemanship tools and self-teaching dvds and booklets, available at parelli.com. This is the best chance the horse and the human have of developing a long term partnership...and thus a satisfied adopter, successful adoption, and forever home for our horses. Other methods of Natural Horsemanship developed from the teachings of Bill and Tom Dorrance and Ray Hunt are acceptable alternatives as all are based on the same foundation principles of using the least amount of training pressure necessary to get the desired result: a willing horse that softly yields to the slightest amount of pressure.

Wasatch Humane Horse Rescue and Adoptions has received criticism for this stand. We have received an equal amount of praise for standing firm to our principles. Our first responsibility is to the long term well being of the horse and the safety of the human. Parelli Natural Horsemanship is not the end of the horses' training. It is a solid foundation on which the adopter is encouraged to build amazing results in a particular discipline; be that dressage or reining, combined training or cutting, barrel racing or show jumping, endurance riding, competitive trail riding; wherever your dreams with horses will take you.

We welcome your questions and comments about our program as well as inquiries about horses currently in the program. See our horses available for adoption at

www.wasatchhumane.org