

Rescued Horses Provided Sanctuary, Given New Lease on Life

By Lillian Browne

KORTRIGHT — An equine rescue sanctuary in South Kortright is striving to raise awareness about the horse slaughter industry and facilitate permanent homes for abandoned horses. "We are trying to right the larger wrongs of the industry and restore dignity to a creature's life," said Dawn Petrluk, operator of Rosemary Farm Sanctuary Inc.

Rosemary Farm, Petrluk said, evolved as a horse sanctuary when she and her husband Robert purchased the 114-acre property approximately five years ago. The couple, artists by profession, bought the farm with the vision of an artist retreat. The horses started showing up shortly thereafter.

Rosemary Farm is an incorporated non-profit, whose goal, Petrluk said, is to save horses from the pain associated with traditional slaughtering methods. "Every living being has value," she said.

She accepts death as part of the life cycle, she said. However, she said, the horses which are being shipped through auction houses, where she rescues a majority of the horses, are often suffering from ill health, neglect or disease. These horses, Petrluk said, are being purchased for meat, put to death inhumanely and then sold for human consumption outside of the United States. "Russia has just banned the import of horse meat from the U.S.," Petrluk said.

The process involved, she said, is not like that of the beef, pork and other widely consumed industry meats, which are highly regulated. Horses that are suffering from neurological diseases



Dawn Petrluk, operator of Rosemary Farm in South Kortright, rehabilitates horses to provide them with a quality of life and a home.

who have medications in their systems or have been treated with other substances common in the horse industry, are being eaten by unaware consumers, she said. "If someone wanted to raise a horse for consumption, that would be different. I don't have a problem with that," she said. That practice is not customary in this country, which values a horse as a commodity, Petrluk said. She said horses in the U.S. are typically viewed as having a job to do. When the horse can no longer perform, or the owner's

circumstances change, a horse is often sent to auction, where they can be bought cheaply and resold for meat.

There are currently 43 horses, of all breeds and ages living on the farm. Many are available for adoption, others are not. Petrluk said a priority for her is for a horse to have a quality life. If, she said, a horse adopted from Rosemary Farm is "just not happy" with a foster or permanent home, it has an open invitation to come back. Adoption fees range from \$200 for a compan-

ion horse to \$650 for a riding horse.

Rosemary Farm is hosting two fundraisers to assist with the daily operation, veterinary, dental and farrier expenses for the sanc-

tuary. There will be a tack sale, rain or shine on Saturday, April 20, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the farm.

A second fundraiser, a sanctioned American Competitive Trail Horse Association (ACTHA) trail ride, will be held on Saturday, May 4 on the Catskill Rail Trail, beginning at The Plum Tree catering hall in South Kortright at 10 a.m. Petrluk said there are six approved obstacles for a rider to negotiate with his or her horse. Petrluk says she has been preparing a band of five rescued horses for the trail ride. Those horses will be wearing "rescue horse" saddle pads and are available for adoption. In addition to the standard obstacles, there will be contests for best dressed, oldest horse and rider, best groomed, youngest horse and rider and best score. The fees to participate in the ACTHA ride vary from \$25 upward. Participants must register online at www.actha.us. The deadline for registration is May 2.

Rosemary Farm is located at 1646 Roses Brook Road in South Kortright and is open for tours on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Appointments are not necessary. Petrluk said keeping horses out of the slaughter pipeline is what motivates her. She said, "Searching for forever homes and allowing these animals to live and die with dignity is what keeps me going."

Lillian Browne/The Walton Reporter

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