How to Place Special Needs and Unrideable Equine
Megan Hall
Equine and Livestock Specialist
Russell H. Perry Animal Care Center
SPCA of Texas
mhall@spca.org

Maura Davies
VP, Marketing & Communications
SPCA of Texas
mdavies@spca.org
• 2 shelters
• 3 spay/neuter clinics
• 2 mobile spay/neuter vehicles
• 1 mobile adoptions vehicle
• 1 animal rescue center

Located in Dallas and Collin counties

Maintains a team of animal cruelty investigators who respond to thousands of calls in 7 North Texas counties.

*The SPCA of Texas is dedicated to providing every animal exceptional care and a loving home.*
Who We Are and What We Do

• All current horses come from Animal Cruelty Investigations
• Body condition score of 1-2
• Can house 40-50 horses onsite
• Utilize boarding facilities for overflow
• 3 FTE, 1 PTE (3 FTE joining soon)
• 15 active volunteers (2x/month)
Path to Adoption

- Rehabilitation Process
  - Horses are seen by a veterinarian ASAP
  - Individualized veterinary care plan, including basic care and addressing any specific medical needs
  - Teeth are floated when horse is BCS 3
  - Stallions are castrated at BCS 4 (30 days recovery after)
  - When medically cleared, training level evaluated
Rehabilitating & Training Special-needs Equine

- Identifying, training, rehabilitating and making special-needs equine adoption-ready
  - Companion only – shy/fearful
  - Limited riding
  - Behaviorally challenged horses
- Professional trainers start our horses under saddle
Adoption Process and Policies

- Application approval process
- Prerequisites required for adoption
- Fees are $100 - 1,500
Recruiting, Nurturing & Maintaining Volunteers

- All volunteers recruited by Volunteer Department
- Equine Volunteers receive general safety training
- Past equine experience not required
- Must be 16 years or older
- We ask volunteers to help network our special needs equines
- Volunteers help with medical rehab and with our refeeding program
- Constant reinforcement through appreciation
Marketing and Messaging

- Website
- Social Media
- TV/Newspaper/Radio
- Horse-specific adoption websites
- On- and off-site events
- Collateral

Most effective messaging
- Glamour shots
- Specific details
Marketing and Messaging
Promoting & Matching Special Needs Equine

- Providing rehabilitation and training is key
- People adopt horses with stories
- Details are important
- Being honest and realistic with adopters
- Post-adoption support and returns welcome
Resources for Effective Marketing

- Resources to increase reach and/or defray costs
  - Seek funding from foundations and individual donors
  - Engage board
  - Partner with local trainers, barns, milling company, feed stores, veterinarians, etc.
  - Show off equine or even just trailer at events
Lessons Learned, Moving Forward

• Accuracy matters
  o Openness and honesty is key
  o Post-adoption support
  o Don’t be afraid to steer people towards the right match
  o Don’t rush horses through the process
  o Don’t limit yourself to volunteers who only have equine experience
Bluebonnet Equine Humane Society

Jennifer Williams, PhD

jenn@bluebonnetequine.org

www.bluebonnetequine.org
Bluebonnet Equine Humane Society

• Founded in 2005
• Serve the state of Texas
• Focus on law enforcement cases
  o 1 paid staff
  o 60 foster homes
  o 150 volunteers
Horse Statistics for Bluebonnet

• Intake over last five years (276 horses total)
  o 63% from neglect cases
  o 16% donated
  o 10% stray
  o 6% born at Bluebonnet
  o 5% transferred

• Adoptions
  o 415 adoptions – 12% were unrideable
Getting Horses Ready for Adoption

- Intake procedures
  - Donated horses
  - Law enforcement cases

- Foster Homes
  - Application
  - Match-making
  - Mentoring
  - Adoption priority
Getting Horses Ready for Adoption

• Basics
  o Re-feeding
  o Farrier and deworming schedule
  o Routine veterinary care
  o Non-routine veterinary care
Getting Horses Ready for Adoption

- Training
  - Foster homes
  - Training Fund
  - Deciding who gets training
  - Bluebonnet Rescue Horse Training Challenge
Finding Homes

• Advertising
  o Website
  o Social media
  o Local horse publications
  o Internet ad sites
Unrideable Horses

• Therapy programs
  o Therapeutic riding
  o Equine-assisted therapy
• State or charter schools
• Pets/Companions
• Pasture ornaments
Lessons Learned

• DO give horses value.

• DON’T believe a history of abuse is insurmountable.
Lessons Learned

- Give adopters a chance.

- DON’T fall into the trap of believing you are the only one.
Lessons Learned

• No one timeline for getting horses out the door.

• DON’T rush the process just to increase adoption numbers.
Equine Webinar Recordings

ASPCApro.org/webinars

• Expert Tips for Telling, Pitching & Sharing Your Stories
• Horse Matchmaking 101: Evaluation and Training
• Recruiting and Keeping Equine Volunteers
• Supercharge Equine Adoptions with Innovative Marketing