

If you're lucky enough to know Kristine, one of our volunteers, you'll know that she is incredible at working with people. Her ability to listen and connect to participants makes her a very effective greeter, and gives her a special role at the farm. However, Kristine hasn't always been as ready to work with horses as she is with people.

When Kristine began volunteering at the farm, she was nervous around the horses. She'll laugh about it now, but she never wanted to give a treat or really touch the horses at all. Her job at the farm was only to communicate with the participants and keep them safe. She was content with being near the horses, but didn't feel the need to interact with them more.

As time went on, Kristine became more interested in learning about horses. She'd ask questions, and be excited to learn the answers. Slowly, you could see her confidence as well as curiosity rise. One day during winter, Mint the mule found himself stuck on a sheet of ice out in the pasture. Kristine surprised all of us and herself when she jumped in to help him off the ice. After the rescue, she was glowing with pride and shock that she had really done something that was out of her comfort zone.

Slowly, Kristine became more comfortable working with and handling the horses. She could hold the leadrope while participants groomed and learned how to walk the horses- all with a smile on her face! Her genuine joy and pride was clear as she was realizing how much she enjoys being around the horses. Kristine would even use her story as an example to participants who were nervous about the horses. She'd explain that she used to be nervous too, but the horses and people at the farm helped her overcome her fear.

This Fall, Kristine's journey in the horse world took an unexpected, but amazing, turn. When she felt like she was ready, Kristine asked if she could try sitting on one of our horses, Emmy, for the first time. Her request was met with excitement and awe that she had come so far! Before we knew it, she had done it! Kristine sat on Emmy bareback, with the trusted barn girls by her side to help her feel safe. With an ear-to-ear smile she sat up there in disbelief that she was really on a horse! Everyone could see how proud she really was, and what a special milestone it was for her.

Kristine's journey at HRHF reminds us that it isn't only the participants who benefit from the horses. We always talk about the amazing transformations that the participants go through and all of the progress that they make. But horses can bring out the best in everyone, participants, volunteers, or visitors alike! Kristine was already an amazing greeter, but through the farm she realized she could be a horse person too. She has become an inspiration to all who come to the farm with fears, because she showed that you can overcome them and that you'll be so proud that you did.