

MENTOR THE CHILD

# AROUND the FIRE

WINTER 2013

RESCUE the Equine ★ MENTOR the Child ★ HOPE for the Family ★ EMPOWER the Ministry

## ❄️ A CONVERSATION WITH MEGAN ❄️

BY MEGAN SEGSTRO, Age 17

*The difference in my life now compared to before I went to Crystal Peaks is night and day. God's love has no holes in it—no matter what we do or don't do. He loves us with a complete, perfect and unfailing love. I finally know that is true.*

### Spinning out of Control

It all started about three years ago, a guy at Cadets began stalking me. I was a freshman in high school. He would call me names all the time, and touch me. He constantly backed me into corners where I couldn't get away. Eventually, he threatened to kill me. When I told my parents, they talked to the officers who kicked him out of Cadets.

I can remember so many times crying out to God asking Him where He was when this was happening. Why didn't He stop it? I thought all of it was my fault because I couldn't stop it. I felt like I didn't have any control in my life, so I looked for things I could control.

I found cutting.

It's been three years since the first time I cut. I knew it was wrong and I shouldn't be cutting. But to be honest, I didn't really care. I didn't think God cared that much because I'd found something that made me feel better. So I told myself, "What's wrong with it? This makes me feel better. God must be happy, or at least not mind—now He doesn't have to spend any time on me because I can do this myself."

I've learned that's the amazing thing about God, He can spend time on you, and everyone else. He is everywhere, and He's never too busy. Eventually, I opened up to people at church and God started to work

*Continued on page 2*



in my heart. He convicted me about the cutting and helped me realize that it was wrong. *He wants to be our release, our joy, and the place where we find peace and healing.*

### **Journey toward Freedom**

So, I began my journey to find freedom. At first I would constantly promise people and God that I wouldn't cut anymore. By doing that, I thought they'd be proud of me. I was trying to earn God's love. I thought that by promising Him stuff, He would love me. I tried really hard to stop cutting, but I was trying to do so in my *own* strength.

"You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with **all** your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and will bring you back from captivity" (Jeremiah 29:13-14). It took me hitting the bottom, where all I could do was look up, to finally realize that I wasn't seeking Him like I should be, not with *all* my heart.

### **Crashing to the Bottom**

The hardest week of my life was in March 2013. I was having a difficult time and I really wanted to cut, so I went to God for help. I waited for Him for over an hour but nothing happened. So I gave up, and I cut again.

I got so mad at God. I yelled at Him, and told Him to forget about me because I didn't love Him anymore. I told Him how He didn't keep His promises, and how I thought that He hated me.

Fortunately, He is a God of second chances. After all my words, He showed me a song that let me know He did still love me, and His promises are true.

### **A Simple Cry for Help**

What a sense of humor God has, and what a sense of timing. He knew that my hardest week and darkest time, would be right before my family took a trip to Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch.

At Crystal Peaks, my sister and I each got to choose a horse to ride, and we each had a mentor. My mentor's name was Rachel. She was awesome.

Before riding, Rachel and I began our time by going to the top of the hill at the ranch to sit and talk. At the end of our conversation we prayed, Rachel started, and I was supposed to finish. Unfortunately, I'm not that good at praying out loud, especially if it has to do with something personal. As we sat on the hill, I was quiet for at least an hour as Rachel waited for me to pray.

Every once and awhile Rachel would ask me a couple questions, trying to help me, but I still stayed silent after answering the questions. Rachel told me later she'd thought at any minute I was going to yank my hand out of hers and leave, saying this was stupid. But she heard God telling her to wait. Rachel expressed later that she'd never been so patient in her life. Faithfully, she listened to God.

Eventually, she asked me, "If you could ask God anything, what would it be?" I said I'd ask for Him to help me keep my promise to not cut. So she asked me if I could tell God that, instead of her. Finally, I prayed, "God, please help me to keep my promise for more than a couple days."

There was something about that moment when I finally was able to pray. It was like it opened the floodgates for everything that has happened since. I'm so incredibly grateful to Rachel for waiting and trusting God. If she hadn't waited, I'm certain I would be in a completely different place right now. Things that have happened since seem to be a result of the faith God gave me to pray out loud. Even with the prayer being just one simple sentence.

Now, every time Rachel and I talk on the phone, we always end in prayer. We each take a turn to pray for each other—*out loud*. I've come a long way since that Thursday up on the ranch hill. I pray out loud in more detail and about different things, instead of only one sentence. But even still, I'll **always** remember those simple 14 words that changed my life. I feel like God's telling me that we don't have to try and sound professional or anything. All we have to do is believe, have faith and say the simple prayers.



### **Rescue... You Could Hear Chains Falling to the Ground**

After praying we walked down to the paddock to bring out Hero—he's an amazing horse.

When I first heard about Hero two years ago, his story gave me hope. If he could endure his pain and abuse, I could make it through also. It was absolutely amazing to meet him. He is my hero. Ultimately through spending time with him, I had an encounter with my REAL Hero—Jesus.

On Thursday, our last day, we came early to the ranch. While we were just hanging around watching the horses, Hero came up to get some water from the trough. After he took a drink, he reached over the fence and smelled me, and as I stroked him, he just stood there staring at me. Even when I stopped, he still stood there, watching me, seeing me . . . *really* seeing me.

For me, that moment was amazing because he could've gone off and done his own "horse stuff." Yet, he chose to be with me. I realized I was loved. I realized this is what Jesus does for us, He *chooses* to stand with us in our brokenness and in our pain. He looks inside and He sees us, not for who we are in that place, but for *who we will be*. And He chooses to stay. "*For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart*" (1 Samuel 16:7).

Hero illustrated for me the ultimate, unending love of my Savior. Jesus laid down His life to save me. "*Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends*" (John 15:13). And I know that Hero would do the same, he would lay down his life for **anyone** who needed it.

While riding Hero on the last day we were at the ranch, I'm certain of one thing. If we'd been quiet, we could've heard my chains falling to the ground, and the walls around my heart coming down. These are lyrics from a song I heard that literally describe what happened: "Love came down and rescued me, love came down and set me free, I am Yours, I am forever Yours" ("Love Came Down," Kari Jobe).

### **What Hero's Scars Taught Me about My Own**

The really amazing thing about Hero is that even though he went through so much, he loves life, and he trusts people. Even though he's missing an eye, he doesn't mind kids touching his face. He's an awesome horse to ride.

I can relate to Hero's scars. That's what really enabled God to speak to me through him. Seeing them helped me to let my guard down and open my heart to God. I have my own scars from the cutting, and I've always thought of them in a negative way. I wanted to get rid of them because I was scared of people seeing what I'd done. I was scared they would remind me of cutting and trigger a relapse.

But at Crystal Peaks, through talking with Rachel, riding Hero and praying, God showed me that our scars can bring Him glory. They show how He can bring us through something horrible—that His love carries us through.

Hero's scars helped me realize that someday I'll be able to share my story with someone and bring God glory, just like he does. They're what made him so trustworthy to me. It was as if he was saying, "You don't have to be afraid or ashamed of your scars. I'm not, and God's using them for His glory." Because he had scars too, I knew I could trust him.

### **God's Love has No Holes**

While at CPYR I learned so much. I learned that Jesus and Hero aren't afraid of their scars. They let God use them to bring glory to Him. I learned that if I let God be in control, He can use my scars for good

too. I also learned that no matter what we do, God is always pursuing us. When we're making mistakes and getting farther from Him—He pursues us even more. I learned that God is always there, helping us. We might not feel Him because we're focused on other things, like temptation and stuff like that. I also learned that, "God is still good, God is still in control, and God still loves us . . . no matter what" (Kelsie Woodford—CPYR staff).

This journey has been a long one. It's taken three years, and I'm still on it. Though I have not cut for a while now, I'm still finding freedom. I'm still in recovery and learning how to continually find strength in God, and to rely on Him no matter how I'm feeling. "If it all just happened overnight, you wouldn't know how much it means. If it all just happened overnight, you would never learn to believe, in what you cannot see" ("Overnight," Amy Grant).

I'm not going to say I don't have bad days. Sometimes all I want to do is cut, but I know that I can't let myself think like that for very long. I have to focus on God no matter what I'm feeling, or I won't be able to get through.

God has really been amazing to me. I have such a better relationship with Him now. He's always showing me new things that prove how much He loves me, and how much He loves everyone in spite of our circumstances.

One thing that I've struggled with has been believing that God could ever love me. What God is showing me is that He already knew what we would do—even before He made us—and He still chose to have Jesus die for us. Now that's TRUE love! Creating us even though He knew Jesus would have to die for our sins to save us. "But God demonstrates his Own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Before, I would always see my scars and think, "God you could never love me," or "I'm so worthless." Now, I see them and think, "God, you really do love me!" My scars show that God takes what the devil means for bad, and turns it into good. "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Genesis 50:20).

Now, I feel like it's my duty to show people what God's done in my life. "You, LORD, brought me up from the realm of the dead; you spared me from going down to the pit" (Psalm 30:3).

Even though I'm scared, I trust that God will not make me do something that He hasn't prepared me for. Now I know that He will help me with whatever I face.

Because God's love has no holes.



# CHOOSING TO PRESS IN

BY REBEKAH REHM

Every day at Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch is special. You never know which child is going to walk up the driveway and take a place in your heart. Nor do you know how God is going to work in each session. All you can be sure of is it's going to be good!

I had no idea that on a fine summer day a young boy named Johnny would be such a kid to hold a unique place in my heart. A beautiful story was about to unfold—a story of grace, redemption, second chances and hope.

Johnny is a bright, energetic, eight-year-old boy who captures hearts with his flashing brown eyes and lively spirit. But it was his story that really caught my attention. While doing chores, Johnny shared with me that he would soon be going away to a treatment farm far from his home and family.

As our session went on, we found ourselves in the woodshop building a birdhouse. Johnny opened up more, telling me that he has to take medication. As the pieces of his story worked their way into my heart the Holy Spirit softly spoke, *Share your story*. God's presence was near as I turned my full attention on a broken boy and simply shared what the Lord has brought me through.

"Johnny, when I was fifteen I began to have problems with my health. They made me feel very bad. I was tired and sad all the time. Sometimes I didn't even want to live anymore because I felt so awful. During that horrible time it was Jesus and His love for me that kept me going. He gave me promises through His word and what I needed each day to choose Him—and to choose life!"

"What I learned is that God chose to allow me to walk through those dark days because He had a special plan for me. By facing and walking through my struggles

with Jesus, I can now extend His love to those I meet who are hurting here at Crystal Peaks."

"I know you don't understand it right now buddy, but God has a special plan for you. That's why He's allowing you to walk through these things today." Johnny agreed by adding, "Yeah! And God can give us things like a Play Station and Xbox!" I smiled at a young boy's analogy of what God can give.

"God could give us those toys if He wanted to," I responded. "But they're not necessarily the things God does give us." I shifted gears, "Johnny, do your parents give you everything you want?"

"No!" he said with a quick frown.

"That's right, they don't. They recognize if they gave you everything you asked for it wouldn't help you become a man of character, gratitude and kindness. It's the same way with God. He could give us everything we ask for, but He doesn't. He's more concerned about us growing and becoming more like Him than He is about us having everything we want. Sometimes the Lord allows hard things in our life because those are the things that help us know and depend on Him."

Johnny's eyes were thoughtful, processing. Quietly, he added, "Yeah, He could give us His heart."

"Yes Johnny, He can give us His heart. What do you think is the best thing you can give Him?" I gently prodded.

With his eyes fixed on mine, he softly replied, "My heart."

There in the woodshop, a little boy took a step of faith toward the Lord. Wanting to be sure that he understood the purpose of the cross and his personal need for Jesus I asked, "Johnny, why do you want to give your heart to Jesus? What does that mean to you?" Stumped by this question, he remained silent in response.

Later in our session, I brought my unanswered question before him again, but he changed the subject. Giving him time to think, I reasoned that he might not be ready today. Side by side, we finished our session by having a lively time painting his birdhouse. Then he went home.

At the end of the day I shared with my supervisor, Josie, the interaction with Johnny, telling her when I was finished: "I thought you should know this because whoever works with Johnny in the future should be aware of his openness to the love of Christ."

With concern in her eyes, Josie said, "Bekah, there's been a shift in Johnny's life, he isn't coming back soon, if ever."

A heavy burden fell over my heart, I wanted to cry. *What if I hadn't listened to the Holy Spirit well enough? Why hadn't I pressed in for Johnny to receive the redemption of the Lord? I might never see him again! I should have done something more, said something more, been something more!* My jumbled thoughts poured out of my mouth as Josie listened.

"Oh Bekah," Josie consoled, "You did the best you could with the knowledge you had. You planted seeds and Jesus will not allow those seeds to return void. We just need to pray that God will put believers in Johnny's life no matter where he is."

Nodding in agreement, I asked, "Can we pray for him now?"

"Absolutely!" was Josie's ready reply. Bowing together, we poured out our burdened hearts for a little boy to know Jesus.

That night while processing the events of the day, the Holy Spirit spoke, *Will you trust Me—that I alone can save Johnny? Will you press in through prayer for his salvation?*

My heavy heart replied, *Yes!* Johnny might not be coming back. The only thing I could hold on to was the mercy of a

Savoir who loves Johnny far more than I ever could. So I pressed in and prayed. Every day I lifted Johnny up to the Father.

A week later, sitting in the office scanning the schedule for the day, my eyes froze on a familiar name. What? It couldn't be! He wasn't supposed to be coming back. I was overjoyed and overwhelmed at the same time. All day I felt the Lord saying, *It wasn't time for Johnny to go yet. He needs to be at the ranch. I have a special purpose.* I prayed that the Spirit would lead our time together.

For a second time, we ended up in the woodshop. I was rummaging through a bin of scrap wood when I heard Johnny exclaim, "Look—a cross!" I turned to see Johnny proudly holding a wooden cross that someone had carved in a previous session. I found myself staring back at it in amazement. God just opened the door to Himself.

"Buddy, do you know what the cross means?" I questioned. Wordlessly, he shook his head. I shared with him the problem of our sin, and how Jesus came to take away our sin so that we could have a relationship and friendship with Him. Johnny gazed intently at me, just listening. His expression spoke that he'd never heard such things before. When I had fully shared the Gospel, I asked him if he would like to pray to invite Jesus into His heart. Johnny simply said, "Yes."

His little hand gripped mine tightly as he prayed after me. "Lord Jesus, I confess that I have sinned. I need Your forgiveness. Please forgive me for my sins. Please come into my heart. I want You to have first place in my life. I want You to be my best friend! Amen."

Looking up, Johnny's eyes sparkled with excitement. He was so full of happiness he could barely contain it. My spirit

felt as if it was flying inside my chest.

I learned a powerful lesson through my friendship with Johnny. We serve a God of second chances. He mercifully gave me another chance to share His love with a broken little boy.

I could've said no to God when He asked me to pray for Johnny. I could've chosen to turn away for a multitude of reasons and self-justify walking away from a broken soul. But God in His mercy filled me with His Spirit and strengthened me to make the choice to press in. Because of that choice . . . I witnessed a miracle. . . a miracle of grace, redemption, second chances and hope!

Today, may we each look at those around us—the weak, the hurting and the lost—and ask the Lord how He would have us press in for them, in their lives and in prayer. Doing so, may we each remember that we serve a God of second chances.



Photo: Katie Jacobsen Photography

# Eighteen Years

BY TROY MEEDER

## **Eighteen years.**

Eighteen years have come and gone since the Lord raised a small ranch—a ministry to love and redeem broken horses, children and families—out of the ruins of an abandoned cinder mine.

Almost daily Kim and I walk hand in hand around the ranch. Amongst the busyness of the moment, we often speak of the early days when we were tirelessly struggling to transform our rock hole into a ranch for kids. In 1995 we had two ravaged horses, a hitching rail and our makeshift “tack room” was a boulder the size of our truck with a pair of halters draped across its breadth.

We each had three jobs, pooling our combined efforts into a meager sum and praying that our Almighty Lord would stretch it like “loaves and fishes.”

In the evenings we scoured local building sights scavenging bent nails, pounding them straight in the twilight. We built a barn. We seamed sod scraps together to make a lawn. We gathered discarded trees from local burn piles and planted them around the grass. And so it began, Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch was born.

Eighteen years later, Kim and I are still walking hand in hand. While mindful of the lines on our faces and gray in our hair, we stand in awe of all that our Amazing Lord has done. Instead of two, we are now nearly 20 staff. The seams in the grass are gone and the once diminutive trees now tower overhead. Our small barn no longer houses horses but families who come to fellowship and worship together.

We couldn't have known then that—in God's hands—the nine acres of rock that founded Crystal Peaks would literally become the cornerstone—the firm foundation of a multi-national ministry. In His perfect timing, our nine-acre quarry has now been conjoined to 51 more acres of productive farmland rich with possibilities.

As we walk hand in hand with you, our extended family, we are so keenly aware that this ministry—all of it—is only possible because of Jesus' mighty covering over all of us. Together within the purpose of our Lord's plan, your loyal support has come through the hands of tireless volunteers, the prayers of an army of warriors and the financial donations of those who have proven themselves faithful. The combined gifts of this strong, rare team has afforded us the great privilege of reaching forward into our 19<sup>th</sup> year—shouldered with strong hands, enfolded in a shield of prayer and completely unencumbered by financial debt.

The abundant faithfulness of our Lord in years past, compels us forward in unshakable assurance of all that is to come. Standing on the threshold of 2014, Kim and I eagerly anticipate how His grace will be revealed this next year.

We humbly ask you to join us as we once again celebrate the birth of the King of kings and Lord of lords. We warmly wish you a Merry Christmas and a New Year filled with the joy of our Savior.

**“No eye has seen,  
no ear has heard,  
and no mind has imagined  
what God has prepared  
for those who love Him”**

*(1 Cor. 2:9, NLT).*

# MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THE 2014 CLINICS

The 2014 Information Clinic will be held June 4-7. Registration will open online on January 15, 2014.

The 2014 Leadership Conference will be held May 21-24 and is open by invitation only to those who have completed our application process and are active Similar Ministries.

We invite you to prayerfully consider joining us for one of these inspiring events. Call our office at (541) 330-0123 or e-mail [similarministries@cpyr.org](mailto:similarministries@cpyr.org) with any questions.



*Yes! I would like to shoulder with Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch to support children, horses and families in need.*

Please use my donation for:

- Where it is needed most
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# 2014 CPYR CALENDAR



The 2014 Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch Calendar is now available for order through our website. It is with great joy that we once again offer this free gift to you. We know you'll love the photos and quotes capturing the essence of the ranch ministry. With great intention, we've put together this calendar with hopes that it'll be an encouragement to all who view it.

To order go to: <http://www.crystalpeaksyouthranch.org/ranch-life/2014-cpyr-calendar-order-form/>

