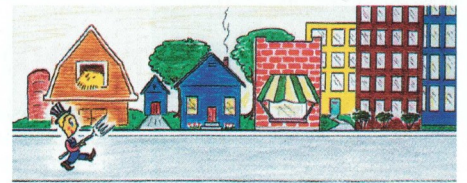


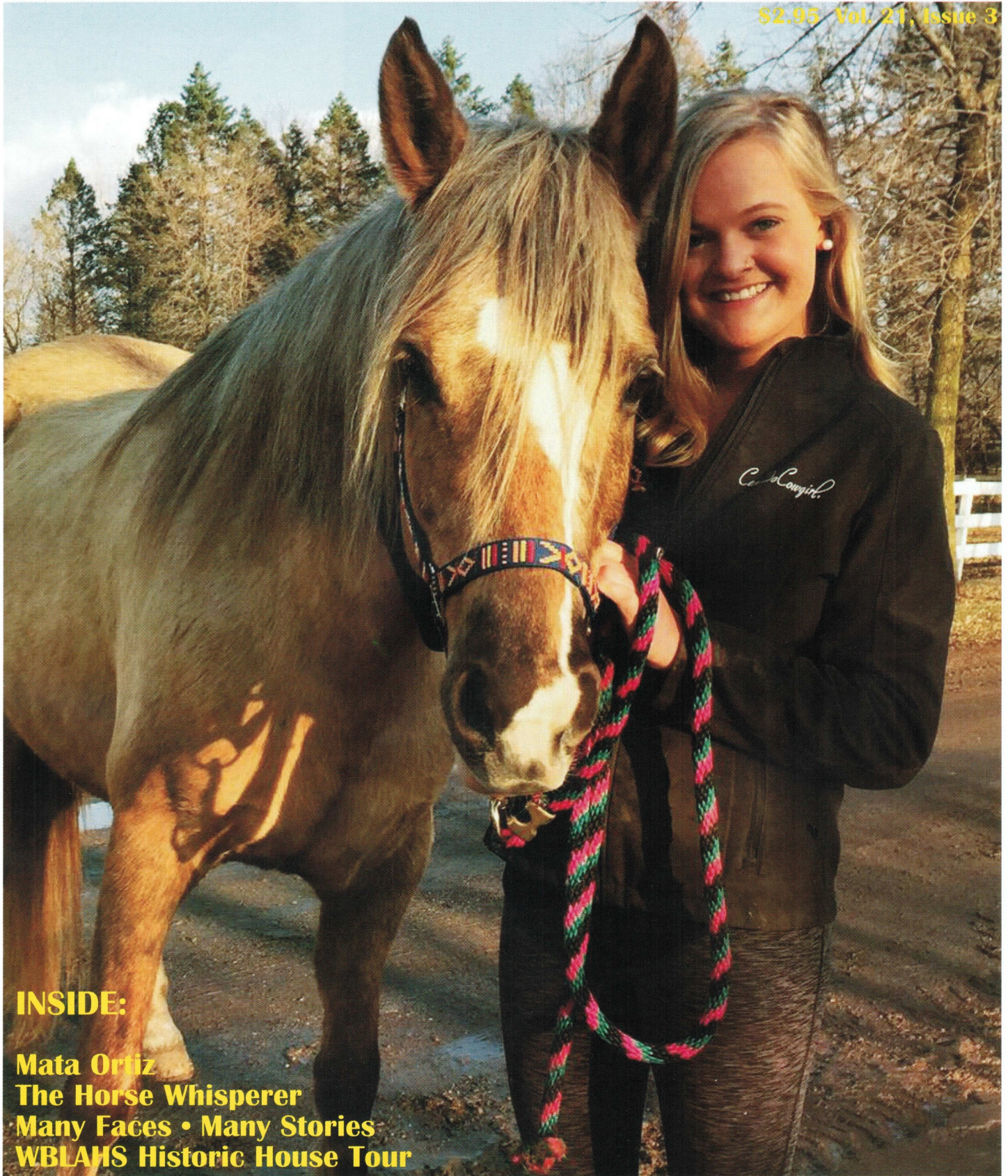
# Town Life

*A guide to living in the northeast metropolitan area*



Fall 2019

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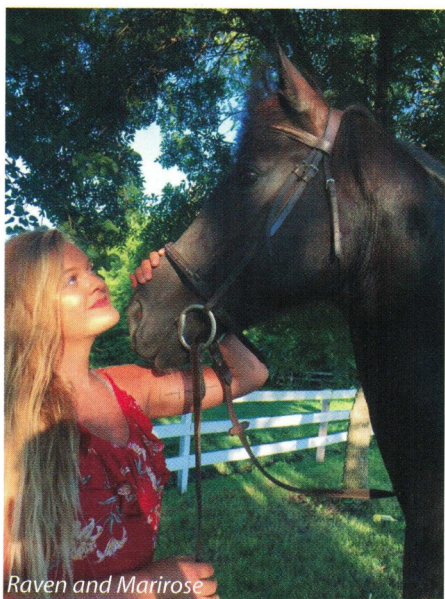
## INSIDE:

**Mata Ortiz  
The Horse Whisperer  
Many Faces • Many Stories  
WBLAHS Historic House Tour**



# The Horse Whisperer

by Catherine Carey  
photos by Sara Sadergaski



Raven and Marirose

**M**arirose Berner, 22, has been training horses since she was 15-years-old. She started riding when she was eight.

For the past four years, she's been the manager and trainer at Mel-O-Dee Stables in Hugo.

Berner also offers private horse training through her company, mjb-

horsetraining (search on Facebook).

## Minnesota Hooved Animal Rescue Foundation

In addition to her day job, she is a volunteer trainer for Minnesota Hooved Animal Rescue Foundation (MHARF), a nonprofit organization based in Zimmerman, Minn., which takes in approximately 100 abused, neglected or abandoned farm animals each year.

"In the mid-90s, I kept seeing humane cases with abused horses that had no place to go," said MHARF Director Drew Fitzpatrick. "I've been involved with horses all my life. I had three barns and a house on my property. So I started MHARF to meet a need."

Fitzpatrick cares for the rescues with the help of her significant other, Randy, and eight volunteers. Funding comes from donations, events and sales.

MHARF works closely with law enforcement and animal humane societies to rescue farm animals believed to be healthy enough to rehabilitate. Other animals have

been donated or surrendered by owners who simply cannot keep them due to personal, financial or medical hardships.

Many of the horses require veterinary care, proper nutrition, thorough grooming and a visit from the farrier to restore their health. Some need to be in foster care until they can increase their weight.

"I see a lot of bad things. People shouldn't be so thoughtless or cruel," said Fitzpatrick. "I also see a lot of good happening where people have a passion for animals."

"Someone donated 20 bales of hay this morning. Kindness is a good thing," she added. "Parents should teach their children to be compassionate. They could have birthday fundraisers to help the animals."

## MHARF Trainer's Challenge

Each April, Berner and other volunteer trainers participate in the MHARF Trainer's Challenge. Each trainer chooses one unbroken horse and, over the next five months, trains it in six categories: (1) Hands Class; (2) Pleasure Riding; (3) Trail Riding; (4) Freestyle Riding; (5) Veterinary Class; and (6) Farrier Class.

"Rescues are my heart and soul. You've got to get them to trust you, gently train them and show them how to love life again," said Berner. "You've got to use time, patience, understanding and good communication. I believe in being the leader but being a partner with the horse."

At the end of the five-month period, in early September, the trainers and their horses compete for ribbons and prize money in the Trainer's Challenge at the Leatherdale Center, University of Minnesota-St. Paul Campus.

First prize is \$5,000, second prize is \$3,000 and third prize is \$1,500. The horses (and ponies) are then available for adoption during a



Isabeau, Raven and Lyric (all MHARF horses) with Marirose



silent auction by those carefully screened and pre-approved in attendance.

Adoption fees are dependent upon age and temperament with trained horses in the \$1,000 to \$1,200 range and ponies going for \$300.

Berner won third place in the Trainer's Challenge the past two years. She is currently training a 15-year-old Palomino named Isabeau and planning to compete in the Trainer's Challenge on September 7. Fourteen horses are competing in the event this year. After the competition, Berner hopes Isabeau and the other horses will find forever homes.

"It's so special once they know they can trust you. When you 'get over the wall' with a horse they'll do anything for you," Berner said. "You need to show them that life shouldn't be miserable."

Fitzpatrick believes rescued horses who have been well-trained make incredible companions.

"Many people who adopt a rescued horse say they are the friendliest, most willing horses they've ever had," she states on MHARF's Facebook page. "We have seen these horses go on to become much-loved and valued members of an adopter's family."

### Success Stories

One of Berner's favorite horses to train last year was Raven.

"Raven came to me in December of 2018 covered in sweat and trembling. She went through two trainers who said she was 'dangerous' and 'unridable' prior to coming to the farm," she said. "I tried not to let that discourage me but, to be honest, I was nervous to work with her because I really didn't want to let her down."

"I could tell right off the bat that she was extremely misunderstood. I took things very slowly with her and patiently waited for her to trust me," she continued. "Once that trust was gained and she knew that I wasn't going to push her or hurt her, she put trust and confidence in me and I did the same with her."

"We touched on some dressage and jumping (jumping being her favorite thing to do). I will never forget the

feeling I had when I saw her begin to love life again and have confidence in herself," said Berner.

"Raven was one of the most amazing horses I have ever worked with. She taught me as much (if not more) than I taught her. We have to remember that yes, horses are very resilient, but they are also very fragile. She has now found her forever home and gets to live the life she's always deserved."

Berner also trained Dudley, an 18-year-old bay Thoroughbred-Quarterhorse mix (called an Appendix) and Lyric, a six-year-old black and white pinto American Saddlebred born at MHARF.

"Dudley was trained by another trainer and was adopted. Unfortunately, his owner passed away and he was sent back to MHARF. He's such a sweet horse so I adopted him," said Berner. "I trained Lyric and competed with her in the Trainer's Challenge last year. I fell completely in love with her. She's gorgeous. So I adopted her, too."

Berner lives with her parents in nearby Columbus. Her horses live there, as well.

"My parents and siblings don't ride, but they like horses," she said.

### Training Horses

"Why do I do it? It's what I feel I'm here on this Earth to do. There's no better feeling than helping horses," said Berner. "They're amazing, pure and powerful. They just want to love and be accepted."

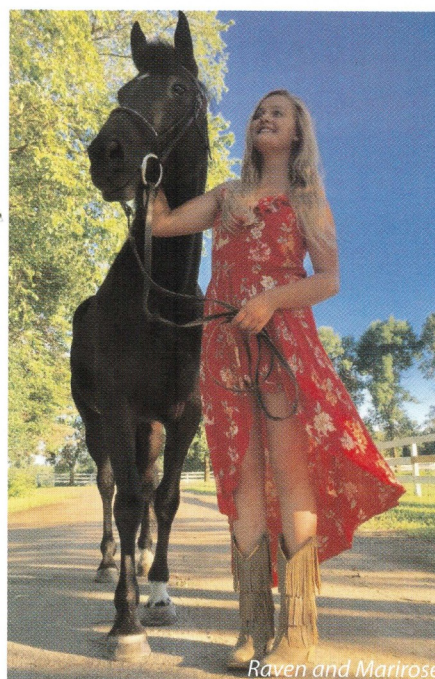
### How You Can Help

Each year, MHARF rescues as many horses as it possibly can. But for every horse they help, there are dozens they must pass up because the cost of caring for abused and neglected horses is so high.

You can help. Since their foundation is a non-profit (501C-3) corporation, donations are tax deductible.

MHARF can also accept gifts-in-kind. You may also make a stock gift to the foundation and get a full deduction along with avoiding capital gains taxes.

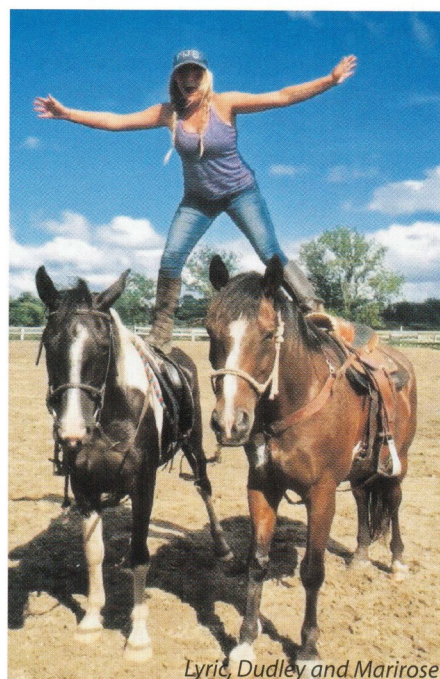
For information on the many ways you can donate, please use the easy "donate" tab on MHARF's Facebook page.



Raven and Marirose

## MHARF'S MISSION

To rescue horses and other hooved animals in distress, treating each animal with compassion and respect while acting in the animal's best interest, and to educate the public on the welfare of hooved animals.



Lyric, Dudley and Marirose