



The Celebration of a Rescue

by Elaine Hutchison

Many people find it hard to believe that there is a rescue organization for Lipizzans. Familiar with the renowned stallions of the Spanish Riding school and knowing that Lipizzans are an uncommon breed, folks can't understand how these wonderful animals end up in kill pens.

But they ARE found in kill pens, and in auction lots, and in conditions of great neglect. How does this happen?

It happens because they are horses. And although they are a rare and precious breed, Lipizzans share the same fate as other horses—they depend on humans to care for them, and humans often fail in doing so.

Consider Hope and Faith, one half-Lipizzan, and one possibly full Lipizzan - two mares that ended up in a very bad place.

We first heard about them in February 2018. An LRF supporter told us that some Lipizzans had just been auctioned off at a sale in Maryland. We contacted the auction house to find the location of these horses. One horse, a gelding, had gone to a private buyer and two mares had sold as one "lot" to an auction house buyer from New Jersey.

It didn't take long for the mares to show up in the listings for the New Jersey auction house. Only two days later, they were up for sale.

That's how fast these horses can slip through the net of "safety." They can be auctioned off quickly and pass through several auction lots in a matter of days.

Faith and Hope were lucky. Intent on saving these two mares, we had been watching for them. Then Faith and Hope got even luckier. The LRF bid on them and won! We now had the chance to give these mares a new life.

Although we were joyous at saving the mares, things were not all sunshine and roses. After their exposure to multiple disease-ridden auction lots, these girls were sick—so sick that they couldn't be moved.

The mares had to remain at the auction house for weeks. Their respiratory infection was a bad one, requiring repeated courses of antibiotics to get well enough to travel to their new foster home.

Once there, they faced another challenge. They were very underweight. They were not in great weight when they arrived at the auction lot, but they dropped more pounds during their illnesses. Their respiratory issues also required that they remain in quarantine, away from the farm herd.

What followed was weeks of vet checks, farrier work, and dental visits. It took a team of health care professionals and a committed foster mom to get the mares back to health. Approximately one-and-a-half months after they arrived at their foster home, they were finally allowed to be part of the herd.

Their story does have a happy ending. Both Hope and Faith were adopted separately and now live with people who love them. And the LRF is honored to have helped them find their way to health and good homes.



Faith and Hope arrive in their foster home.

Working in animal rescue is tough. It's hard on the heart and on too many days, it's easy to get discouraged about the fate of these beautiful horses that are found in bad situations. But that's also the thing that keeps us going—that chance to rescue another Lipizzan in need.

There are those in the world of horse rescue who point fingers at a purebred rescue, implying that we think only purebred horses matter. That simply is not true. We wish we could rescue ALL the horses in all the auction lots across America. We really do.

There is a fable about a master and a young disciple walking along an ocean beach; a beach covered with thousands of starfish that had washed ashore. The master was silent as he walked along, bending down every few steps to toss a starfish back into the ocean. The young disciple was also quiet for a long time as he followed his teacher, who was walking slowly, continuing to pick up starfish and throwing them back into the sea.

He grew frustrated at their slow progress and finally blurted out, "Master, why do you do this? There are thousands of them. You cannot save them all."

As his teacher tossed another starfish into the water, he replied, "Because it matters to that one."

When we do our rescue work, this is the truth that we hold deep in our hearts. We cannot save all horses, but we can save some of them. And each time we do, we celebrate—because we have given a Lipizzan a new life.