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## Community

January 4, 2007

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### Rancho St. Francis helps children

By Nancy Needham [nancy@theacorn.com](mailto:nancy@theacorn.com)



**DAVID NEEDHAM /Special to the Acorn HORSE CRAZY—Ed Hogan knows each of his rescued horses by name, history and personal temperament. He's studied each breed's characteristics and is fascinated with their unique nature. The self-made successful businessman lends his horses to help children in need find a purpose in life, improve their self-esteem and learn about the payoff of hard work and determination.**

Those who might otherwise find it hard to navigate through life are finding their way, thanks to Rancho St. Francis in Hidden Valley, where abused horses and children nurture each other until they all feel like champions.

The combination of horses and children traveling the road to happiness comes from a man who became very successful leading millions to paradise.

Lake Sherwood resident Ed Hogan founded Pleasant Holidays LLC, a company that earns about \$500 million annually. He sold it in 1998 and is now the chairman of the nonprofit Hogan Family Foundation. He also stays busy serving as chairman of Pleasant Travel Service, Pleasant Aircraft Leasing and the Royal Lahaina Development Co. along with two resorts in Hawaii.

Still, he finds time to keep a watchful eye over his 22-acre ranch with 38 carefully trained horses. Together, he and his horses at 15 Hands Rescue Sanctuary provide a way for children in need to feel a sense of purpose and build their self-esteem.

It would be hard to find a better role model for children not born of privilege than self-made businessman and philosopher Hogan. His dedication to Lynn, his wife of 55 years, shows devoted love. He teaches by telling stories. He quotes great philosophers and shares what he calls "Hoganisms" of his own.

He was the ninth and last child born of Irish immigrant parents on Sept. 28, 1927. His mother, a registered nurse, caught tuberculosis—called consumption at the time—from her patients and died when her youngest was only 2. Hogan's older sisters had to become live-in maids. His family worked hard during the Great Depression to survive, he said.

That work ethic stayed with him throughout his life, and at 79 he still works 12-hour days. He appreciates surrounding himself with others who like to work hard and pay their own way. Those who want something for nothing he calls parasites. He has great compassion for children, as he still remembers what it felt like to not have the money to do what other children could.

He tries to instill his work ethic into the children who come to the ranch for riding lessons. They have to work hard, but the horses reward them with unconditional love. Those who learn to ride well can participate as St. Francis Rangers in equestrian show competitions.

"Let's educate kids. They are the future of America," he said.

Hogan has a keen mind that sees past what is happening now to look at what hard work could accomplish in the future. He knows the children at the ranch by name. He speaks well of them and their abilities. With help from champion riders he's hired as trainers, his St. Francis Rangers sit tall on their saddles.

"The most important goal I have for the kids is to build their self-esteem," he said. "When the other children at school have cool places to go with their families over the weekend, these kids can say, 'I have a riding competition.'"

If they understand how amazing they are, they're on their way to success. He brings in

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counselors to help the children understand what they need to do to get into good colleges. Some of the children who've come through his program are in college now, looking forward to bright futures. One who's focused on his talents and education has a job with a sixfigure income waiting for him upon graduation.

That is the outcome Hogan wants for these kids in need who come to the ranch. He knows firsthand what it's like to feel lost, alone and in need of a break. He left home when he was 14 after his stepmother beat him up, he said.

He found his first break when a kind man named Phillip Steinberg took him in and became his legal guardian. Under Steinberg's guidance, Hogan became the first of the nine siblings to graduate from high school. His next break came when he met Lynn while in school studying art. And his third break came when he went into the Naval Air Corps at age 17 during WWII. That's where he learned aviation, which enabled him to become a commercial airplane pilot.

His aviation career led him to open the Pleasant Travel Service in 1959 on the East Coast, eventually moving it to Southern California.

Meanwhile, horses that have been neglected or abused by past owners are being rescued and rehabilitated at the ranch, which runs on a \$250,000 a year budget.

His interest in horses began when his older brothers joined the Cavalry during WWII, he said. But he didn't personally get involved with the animals until 15 years ago, when he met an Arabian stallion named Merlyn at a charity auction, fell in love at first sight and purchased him for \$26,000.

When he speaks about his rescued horses, Hogan knows them all by name, and he sounds like an encyclopedia. Since buying Merlyn he's learned so many facts about horses one would think he had studied them all his life. Learning everything he can about what's important to him is what he does, and that's what he wants the children at the ranch to know how to do.

He established the Hogan Family Foundation to promote the entrepreneurial spirit he's enjoyed and to help others understand the importance of education. The ranch is just one of the civic-minded and humanitarian programs he's designed to encourage others to be more productive and contribute to society.

Other foundation programs include the Hogan Angel Flight Program, which assists with travel arrangements for needy medical patients, and the "My Bag" Children's Foster Care Support Program. The foundation also built the Gardens of the World, a 4.5-acre community park across from the Civic Arts Plaza in Thousand Oaks.

Westlake Community Christian Church invites you to a

**BENEFIT CONCERT for**  
Breath of Life Maternity Ministries

Sunday, June 8, 6 PM  
29295 Agoura Rd. at Kansas Rd., Agoura Hills



Call for more information  
805-660-8883

**Church to host  
benefit concert for  
maternity ministry**

Westlake Community Christian Church will host a benefit concert for Breath of Life Maternity Ministries at 6 p.m. Sun., June 8 at the church, 29295 Agoura Road, Agoura Hills.

Jeannine (Greenlee) Floores, the founder and executive director of Breath of Life, will sing.

For more information, call the Rev. Mike McDonald at (805) 660-8883.

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