

abused kids and wounded horses

How one couple worked together to fulfill a dream of caring for both

BY **BENJAMIN HAWKINS**

PHOTOS BY **REBECCA CAIN**



KIM TSCHIRRET'S DREAM to help hurting children grew from her own childhood pain and her love for a horse. Her father was an alcoholic, and he would often abuse his wife and children emotionally and verbally. But Kim found one safe place, one outlet for processing her confusion and hurt. She loved to spend time riding and grooming her American Saddlebred horse, Country.

"There was a bond and a connection that we had," she says. "The barn was my haven. It was the place where I didn't get yelled at, where my life wasn't turned upside down."

As God would have it, Kim's love for Country prompted her, in 2010, to begin Hope Reins, an equine therapy ranch that aims to help children who have suffered abuse and other forms of trauma and pain. During the past decade, the ranch has offered 30,000 individual therapy sessions, at no cost, to hurting children.

'I believe in you'

Years before, Kim moved to Chicago to start a business career. There she met and married her husband, Mike. As their family began to grow,



Twinkle and Avolina

A horse named Twinkle

Having watched God bring comfort to children through the horses at Hope Reins for more than a decade, Mike and Kim stand in awe.

“We have seen kids’ lives completely transformed,” Kim says. “Kids themselves have said, ‘I wouldn’t be alive if it weren’t for Hope Reins.’ It’s very humbling . . . to know what God is doing.”

For example, Kim recalls the connection between Twinkle, a brown micro miniature horse with a sandy mane and white spots, and Avolina, a young girl with curly black hair.

Both horse and girl had lived through horrors. By age 4, Avolina had faced starvation and physical abuse, and she watched helplessly as a family member beat and drowned her little brother in a bathtub. After being rescued and adopted by a police officer, Avolina came to Hope

Reins. There she met Twinkle, who’d been rescued out of a junkyard from starvation and ill treatment.

When Avolina saw Twinkle for the first time, the tiny horse still couldn’t walk. Sympathizing with Twinkle’s pain, Avolina sought to comfort her. As a result, Avolina slowly found healing for her own hurts.

Alongside days of sunshine and blessing, Kim and Mike have seen days of sadness and rain. On April 13, 2020, Twinkle passed away. But this tiny horse left a legacy of courage for the children who have known her.

“Even living in her pain, she had a purpose,” Kim says. “She showed people what it looks like, even though you’re hurting, to continue walking in hope.” ●

Benjamin Hawkins is a freelance writer and associate editor of *The Pathway*, the news journal of the Missouri Baptist Convention.



LISTEN NOW!

Listen to a Focus on the Family broadcast where Kim Meeder shares how hurting kids have started to heal after being paired with abused horses.

FocusOnTheFamily.com/Horses