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Dear ESS Friends,

A year ago at this time ESS shut down due to the COVID-19 outbreak. We thought it would be a temporary closure. But here it is, a whole year later, and we still are not yet reopening completely or restarting our usual programs and activities.

With the easing of restrictions and the coronavirus case numbers going down, we are looking forward to being able to provide our programs again this summer. ESS is currently open by appointment for visitors while we prepare for the coming months. We are still following the New Mexico Safe guidelines with requiring visitors and volunteers to wear masks and practice social distancing. While the past year was difficult and it was not fun to have to follow all these rules, we are thankful that none of our volunteers tested positive for the virus. But we still take it very seriously, as we all know friends whose lives have been affected by COVID-19.

We get many calls from people who want to come out to visit and asking when we'll be ready to give lessons and get back to our regular activities. I understand that people have been cooped up at home, unable to go places and do things like usual for a long time now. I sympathize especially with the kids who have had an entirely different way of life imposed upon them. Everyone is anxious to get back to going places and doing things. I am, too. But also – I am tired. The past year has been draining and stressful. Despite having far fewer volunteers and assistance, the day to day horse care work was ongoing.

We are gradually welcoming visitors and volunteers back and striving to ease into the coming months and program work, doing what we can handle without taking on too much, too soon. We appreciate everyone's patience and understanding.

Our first priority will be to offer our Read to the Donkeys program to children who have had a tough time with the home schooling. Many, many kids are behind now academically. Learning should be fun for them, not a lonely, isolated thing as it has been all too often the past year. We look forward to having kids come out as soon as the weather is warm enough to be outdoors, to read Bindy's book with a volunteer and one of our little donkeys. The intention is to provide a safe, healthy setting with an enjoyable activity, with the goal of the child improving their reading skills and making reading fun for them. If you know of kids who could benefit from this program, please ask their parents to contact ESS so we can get them out here. There is no charge for this program.

The past year we did much more work with horse rescue and rehab. The cycle of life continues, difficult as it is at times. Many of you knew Foxy, our sweet little Arabian gelding that had come to ESS two and a half years ago. Foxy was in very sad shape when he came. Emaciated, sick, neglected. We did everything we could for that beautiful horse. At one point he was back to a healthy weight and he was sound enough to be ridden by a couple of our little riders. During that brief time, he showed us a glimpse of what a magnificent horse he had once been. Despite all his health issues, Foxy had an optimistic outlook and kindness to people and other horses.



Unfortunately, Foxy suffered a big Cushings crash and foundered badly. We spent another year tending to his lameness issues, nursing him through the crisis, doing everything we could. Eventually his hooves were in good shape again and it was a joy to see him trotting or cantering up the little hill to his stall in the barn at night for feeding. He started gaining back all the weight he'd lost again. Just when we thought he'd be fine, a few weeks ago his heart began to fail. And there was nothing more we could do, except to say goodbye.

After the past year of struggles and stress, having Foxy put down was hard. Really, really hard. It was the last and the only thing that we could do for him. Too often, that is what horse rescue is all about. It doesn't always work out as we wish it would. Sometimes there really is no comfort in knowing that we did all we could do, when it just isn't enough. But I do believe that Foxy left this world knowing that he had many horse and human friends that loved him. He is another one of our rescues that left his special hoof print in our hearts and our memories, along with Lucky, who was his best friend until the end.



On a more cheerful note, a little one has returned to ESS that we had adopted out several years ago. This tiny miniature horse came back to live with our family of other mini's. However, she had other ideas and promptly fell in love with Scout, the big paint horse that had come with Foxy. They make an unlikely couple! But they have bonded and are constant companions now. Who woulda thought?

I will send out updates in the coming weeks to let everyone know of our reopening plans and progress. In the meantime, you can check our Facebook page for news and photos. If you want to come visit, please call or email. We look forward to seeing people again as we continue with our mission at ESS to improve the lives of both horses and humans.



As always, we are grateful for your support and friendship.

From all of us at Equine Spirit Sanctuary,

Ruth Bourgeois
Director, Equine Spirit Sanctuary

*Spring will come, and so will happiness.
Hold on. Life will get warmer!*

P.S. ESS is not a dog rescue, but occasionally it is necessary. Recently a friend passed away. Over the years, she had given ESS many gifts of items for our programs and shared her love and knowledge of horses. She asked if I'd take her dogs when she was unable to find homes for them. So they are here, and one really needs a new home where he'll get lots of love and attention.



“Digger” is a Manchester/Jack Russell mix. He is about six years old, is mostly deaf, super high energy, and has tons of personality. He deserves to be with someone who can appreciate all this! If you have room in your home and in your heart for this sweet dog, let me know.