

"RESCUE" is only a part of our name IERAL

As many of you know, the IERAL (Iowa Equine Rescue & Awareness League) has been trying to raise money to help one of our rescues, Colton, receive surgery to hopefully correct his eyesight. I'm sure many of you have questioned why a non-profit would spend this kind of money on just one horse to give him sight? Well, I would like to attempt to show you the reasons why:

by Karla Sibert

Every time the Iowa Equine Rescue & Awareness League rescues or seizes a new equine, we are presented with a different set of challenges. In the past three years, IERAL has taken in horses that have offered their own unique set of challenges, including horses suffering from severe neglect, physical abuse resulting in trauma and trust issues, dangerous leg wounds, and horrific hoof damage. However, in this past year, IERAL has taken in more challenges than ever before. To date, "Colton" is definitely one of our greatest tests.

Colton, a stallion, came to IERAL

as the youngest (six years old) of five registered Arabians. Whenever physically possible, it is the IERAL policy to geld/alter any stallion that comes into our possession. So we took Colton to Dr. Charles Abraham to have him gelded the same day we received him.

We knew at the time Colton had not been away from his mother since birth, but we felt that by gelding him immediately he would be able to settle in to his new home more easily.

After gelding Colton, Dr. Abraham stunned us all by asking: "You understand this horse is blind, don't you?"

As we had just received the horse,

and had not spent any time with him, we had no idea he was blind. That might explain why he never bred his mother after being with her for 6 years!

IERAL had received another blind horse, Mae (nine year old Standardbred mare, pictured below),



earlier this year, and was familiar with how to train a blind horse to respond to vocal commands, and to capitalize on the senses that the horse still had -- smell, touch, etc.

In Mae's case, she came to IERAL extremely emaciated and two veterinarians suggested that we just put her down. On top of needing hundreds of pounds of weight, she also needed eye surgery to remove a chronically infected eye. The veterinarian explained that the eye surgery would cost \$1200.00. Euthanasia would cost \$500.00. However, IERAL negotiated with the veterinarian and he agreed to remove the chronic eye for the same price as it would have cost to put her down.

Today, Mae is a happy, thriving horse, and the IERAL "poster child."



Sonny, pictured above is a 38-year-old pony. He has become Colton's eye (... and we do honestly mean *eye*—only one—because Sonny only has one sighted eye.)

IERAL is asking to give Colton and other challenged horses a second chance in life, as well

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Colton



by Mona Majorowicz
Wild Faces Gallery / www.wildfacesgallery.com

A painting for IERAL

Early this year, the Iowa Equine Rescue & Awareness League (IERAL) asked me to create a portrait as part of a fund raiser for them. Of course I happily agreed, since animal welfare is a cause in which I believe strongly.

IERAL is located in the Cedar Rapids area and is an established non-profit organization which provides care for abused livestock for the state of Iowa. They also offer a rehabilitation program for the animals they take in.

Karla Sibert, the president of IERAL, took me around to several locations where various horses were fostered, so that I could take pictures and ask questions. I was unable to photograph some of the horses available for adoption because it had been raining and so some were barn bound. In fact, the weekend I was out taking pictures, was *the* weekend before the flooding happened. Fortunately, we were able to visit some horses that were out on pasture, in spite of the weather.

Winter, 2008-2009



Mona, "Colton," and Karla at the fundraiser

It was on our second stop that I met Colton, a lovely little 7 year old, gray Arabian gelding whose likable demeanor immediately entranced me. He was a gentle, touchy-feely kind of horse. His sweet nature and good manners reminded me much of my own horse. If I were a woman with more time available for a second horse, I may well have taken him home with me then and there. Or rather, I would have started the

process anyway.

Colton is blind, probably from a virus that went untreated. The good news is, it is reversible with surgery and the organization is working to raise some funds to help with the procedure. So that, coupled with his beauty in both looks and spirit, made him the ideal poster child (urm . . . horse) for an IERAL fund raiser.

Of Pigs and Panic

Our last stop was at a farm where several Thoroughbreds and one Arab were being fostered. I really liked the thoroughbreds. They had great faces and lines. However they were a little too ribby and lean, at that time, for me to be comfortable painting them. The Arabian, Beaux, is actually the father of the horse that I finally settled on painting, Colton. There was definitely a family resemblance.

On the way out to the pasture where the horses were living, we crossed a grassy pen where two pigs were kept. Karla warned me that one of them was quite friendly and

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as a chance to see the beauty of our Iowa land. Neglect and abuse is nothing to take lightly with any horse or animal; but when we receive horses that have been starved, abused or neglected, and on top of that are struggling with the additional burden of complete or partial blindness, IERAL feels strongly that we should provide that horse with the unique opportunity of seeing and experiencing life in a whole new light. On average, most horses can live to be 30 years old and Colton should have the chance to live the next 23 years with sight, if possible.

The Need for it

Small animals in Iowa are looked upon as companion animals, while horses/equines in Iowa are considered livestock. (Iowa Code 717) Traditionally, there have been more funds available for companion animals than for large animals and livestock. Because they are not companion animals, large animals are just put aside at times. IERAL believes that horses/equines should be considered as companion animals and not as livestock. The definition of a livestock animal in Iowa Code 717 is an animal that is raised for food or fur. Very few, if any, horses are raised or bred for these reasons. Small animal/companion animals in Iowa have many opportunities for a second chance in life, and IERAL is trying to offer that same opportunity to horses/equines.

Corrective surgery to restore their vision will dramatically boost the adoptability of our blind horses. Money is also needed, post-surgery, for rehabilitation to help a blind horse to understand the new world being presented to him. If a 100-pound dog that can suddenly see for the first time is a handful, you can understand the need for the careful rehabilitation of a 1000-pound horse. This rehabilitation would include keeping the horse in a stall

for at least 30-45 days at a veterinary clinic, and then bringing in a specialized trainer who deals with rehabilitation of blind-to-sighted horses to work with the horse to introduce him to his new world. Colton, for example, has never seen an umbrella being opened, a blanket being shaken, or the wind blowing the branches of a tree. He will need to be taught to accept the strange new things he sees, so that he doesn't become frightened and present a danger to himself or the people handling him.

IERAL has contacted Iowa State University, specifically Dr. Betts, and has requested an evaluation of Colton on November 10th, 2008. If Colton passes the evaluation, for either one eye or both, he would be eligible for the corrective eye surgery. Dr. Betts has stated that each eye surgery will need 30-60 days of recovery. If both of Colton's eyes qualify for corrective surgery, we will not do them both at the same time. We will also take Sonny, the 38 year-old one-eyed pony, to accompany Colton during this evaluation time. If it is possible, we will have ISU remove Sonny's bad eye. Sonny will always be a one-eyed horse, but Colton may have the opportunity to have sight in one, or possibly both, eyes, if all goes well.

Please remember Colton has been with IERAL for over one year. He is a beautiful gray, a registered Arabian, and a sweet horse. But there has been no one interested in adopting him. The difficulties of caring for a blind horse outweigh all Colton's other wonderful qualities. We've tried unsuccessfully to interest a number of people.

Currently IERAL believes that there are four options for Colton:

1. Let Colton live his life out as an IERAL horse, which will cost IERAL on average \$3000.00 a year.

2. Contact sanctuaries like Rolling Dog Ranch, who take in blind horses and other blind animals, to see if they will take Colton for us. IERAL has contacted a number of blind horse sanctuaries around the country, to no avail. Each time the answer was, "We are full."

3. Euthanize Colton, which will cost IERAL \$500.00+.

4. Offer the surgery to Colton at \$3200.00 plus \$500.00 of rehabilitation and recovery so that he can carry out a long and healthy life.

IERAL's next move...

Is to take Colton to ISU for his evaluation and hope that Dr. Betts can help Colton see again. We have requested money from foundations around the country to help and we are in hopes to have some of those come through for Colton. We NEED private donations as well. Grants generally do not fund 100% of ask, so we are in need to raise at least 25% from private donors, like you!

So, PLEASE, if you understand the "Why" better now than before you read this article, donate to:

IERAL

c/o- Let Colton See Again fund

PO Box 8726

Cedar Rapids, IA 52408

Or paypal account www.iaeral.org

Look for future articles here in AnO by IERAL, regarding Colton's evaluation and progress. Im sure ALL OF YOU know of a horse that is or has become blind, and understand this wonderful opportunity to help a horse see again!



"Colton and his foster mom" at ISU

“Colton;” Continued from page 39

would probably come out to greet us. Her warning did little to prepare me for the sight of a full grown pig loping across the pen full tilt, squealing and grunting excitedly.

She had assured me he was harmless. But something very primal happens in the brain at the sight of a largish critter charging wildly towards you. My logical side said "don't be silly" all the while I was having flash backs to a story from my childhood. I grew up in farming country, where stories about about children gone missing in pig pens ... "and all they ever was found was

one shoe!"

Of course there was no need for concern, he just wanted a quick snuffle to see if we had brought any treats, (alas, we had not) and a quick scratch on the nose.

The Fund Raiser

The IERAL "FUN'd raiser was held in October on a lovely farm (the one with the pigs,) where you could meet some of the horses available for adoption. Like its name implies, it was a "fun" event with wine and cider tastings, gourmet caramel and chocolate apples and all sorts of

miscellaneous noshes. They had a silent auction and live music in the loft.

And the best part ... it was held in a barn, (kinda logical when you think about it.)

The framed original painting of Colton is currently being auctioned on the IERAL website. They are also offering signed prints of Colton in various sizes for purchase. For more information on IERAL, or to view and bid on the Colton painting, or to purchase prints, please visit the IERAL website at www.iaeral.org. Alternatively, prints are also available off my website, www.wildfacesgallery.com

An Update on Colton - November, 2008

NOVEMBER 13, 2008 - We took Colton to ISU on Monday, November 9, for evaluation of his eyes. Dr. Betts (pictured below, in the white coat) thought both eyes were candidates for the corrective cataract surgery, so we agreed to start with one and see how that went. Interestingly enough, Dr. Betts felt that Colton had been blind, possibly since birth or shortly after.

The surgery was slated for November 10, but Colton's blood work came up "odd." So on the 11th they retested the blood, and then moved forward with removing one of the cataracts. Dr. Betts stated that the cataract was extremely yellow, old, and hard, meaning it had been there for a very long time. The eye was more swollen than expected, most likely because of the size of the cataract, but Dr. Betts felt that Colton would do well.

Once he comes home, Colton will be at Abraham's Equine Clinic in Cedar Rapids for at least 30 days for recovery. There, he will have a tube for draining, and drops will be administered on a regular basis.

Colton, at seven years of age, has probably (according to Betts) never been able to see. But Colton is a very

calm Arabian who I think will adjust fine to his new world. I have my fingers crossed!

MATCHING FUNDS ...

This week, we were approached by an anonymous donor, wanting to match "new" donations for Colton's procedures, up to \$1000.00. So if you know anyone who would be willing to donate to Colton and his ability to see for the first time in his life, please

have them send donations to:
IERAL C/O Colton,
PO Box 8726
Cedar Rapids, IA 52408.

Any questions feel free to call or email!

Karla Sibert
IERAL
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www.iaeral.org



Colton is examined by Dr. Betts, a veterinarian at the Iowa State University (ISU) Veterinary College in Ames, Iowa.

Dr. Betts later removed a cataract from one eye and felt that it had been there for a very long time, based on its appearance.

Colton has most likely been blind since birth!