

An Arizona Adopter's Passion for Wild Horses ... and Burros

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One of the adopters that come to mind when we are asked about success stories is **Randy Helm**. First adopting in 1994, Helm has since adopted seven wild horses and one burro. He teases that Bethany, his wife, is the "only reason" he adopts.

But he soon dispels that statement by adding he has always been around horses and before adopting **Hershey**, his first wild horse, he had an Arabian and a Quarter Horse. "Once I started working with mustangs that was it. That is all we have now."

Helm adds, "I do quite a bit of trail riding and hunting. These horses are very sure-footed. I couldn't ask for anything better."

His first adoption was so successful that Helm was asked to help out with the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) video "Welcome Home Wild One." In this video his first adopted horse Hershey is featured in a round pen acting up on cue for the camera.

Hershey was five when Helm adopted her. He said she gentled down right away and added, "She is such a good kid horse." Hershey made her home with the Helm family for five years until he was approached by a neighbor who wanted a good horse for her three year old. Hershey was the perfect choice. Helm says, "I drive by once in awhile to check on her and she is still doing good."

Helm's success was a surprise to his family and friends. His dad, **Bill Helm**, was a cowhand from the ages of 12 to 25 and had a lot of exposure to the wild horses roaming the lands. Bill did not consider it possible to gentle down one of those wild horses ... before. But that has changed. After he watched his son's success, Bill adopted three wild horses of his own. He and his son now ride their wild horses in the annual Camp Verde, Ariz. parade.

After taking one of his wild horses on a hunting trip, friends said to Helm, "Man, I want one of those!" And it didn't take long before they adopted as well.

On occasion, Helm helps other adopters to train their wild horses and has even taken home an animal they now call **Luke** that was brought back into the adoption program. Helm said "You'll never find a horse more willing to please." His daughter Abigail, who tells you to spell her name like "A Big Ail" rides Luke bareback all of the time – Helm adds, "Whatever you ask of him, he'll do." Not every wild horse that Helm has checked into has worked out. He once tried working with one animal that had been abused and recognized that the animal was not ready to trust again.

Helm spends a lot of time with his horses. He says that's the trick, that and a lot of patience. Then he adds with a smile that he has a little help. "Once I was inside with a cup of coffee and looked out the window to see that my three girls, Rebekah age 12, Abigail age 9, and Cayna also age 9, had haltered the horses and were brushing them. All three girls ride, but Cayna prefers their wild burro called **Madison** to the horses.

Helm plans to adopt one wild horse a year. He has adopted two from the Correctional facility in Colorado.



Some of the wild horses that Helm adopts will eventually be placed with other families. He says the only hard part about that is that he gets attached to each one.