

Miniature horses aren't just cute at Faith-N-Friends Horse Rescue



Miniature horses at Faith-N-Friends are trained to provide therapy and can take children for a ride in their cart. SUBMITTED

Ali James

Shopper News

Miniature horses make great therapy animals, according to Faith Sadiku, founder of Faith-N-Friends Horse Rescue and Sanctuary in Corryton.

“They are generally, by nature, gentle, friendly and patient,” she said. “Their smaller stature makes them less intimidating for children and others who may be nervous or shy. They are an

ideal size for children or people in wheelchairs to feed treats to or groom and they are easier to transport. Minis are also a better fit in homes, hospitals, and senior centers.”

Four minis live in the Faith-N-Friends sanctuary: Sugar, Coco, Jolene and Snickers. “We recently took one to a party and the little boy had cerebral palsy and was in wheelchair, he got to sit and pet her as much as he wanted,” said Sadiku. “They are trained in therapy

and can pull a little cart with a rider up to 65 pounds.”

Sadiku said they used to put little boots on the minis and take them into assisted living centers and to Brickey Elementary School before the coronavirus pandemic shut that down.

Faith-N-Friends’ mission is to rescue and rehabilitate abused, neglected, or unwanted horses and to adopt them

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Faith-N-Friends

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out to forever, loving, responsible homes.

Kiss Me! photo shoot for Valentine's

To help with operating costs, the nonprofit is thinking outside the box and hosting a Kiss Me! Photo Shoot with their mini horses from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 6. The 15-minute session costs \$20 for five professional digital photos in time for Valentine's Day cards. Register at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10COC4DABAD2BA2FEC43-kiss>.

A waiting list for free special needs programs

On special days, the PATH-certified (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International) instructors work with special needs children who may be in a wheelchair, deaf, or have speech delays.

"We do special activities like painting with the ponies. They get a lot of enjoyment and hopefully we can start that again in the summer," said Sadiku.

Kids are invited to read to the horses, too. "They can read a book of their choice," she said. "We have a little library they can choose from or they can bring their own book."

Sadiku said she wants to support other females, particularly teenage girls, by being a strong role model. "It's a working farm. It's not easy to pick up hay bales," she said. "It teaches a connection to the earth, respect and that you have to put in the hard work before the horses will reward you."

A new home

After weather delays, Sadiku was able to relocate her Faith-N-Friends



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Horse Rescue and Sanctuary last spring.

"It is a lot easier to access and closer to the road," said Sadiku. "It is a new facility, so we had to start over. We had to bush hog, build the fences and the three-sided barn. We are a 100% volunteer-run operation and it is still a work in progress."

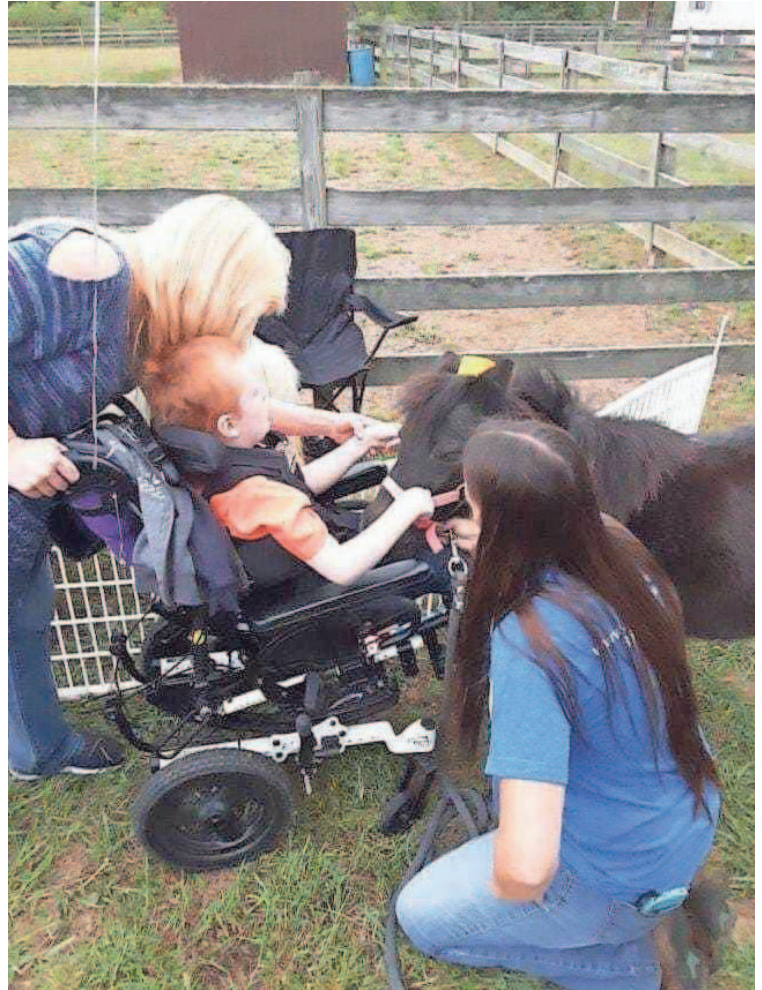
"We are the only rescue in East Tennessee that I am aware of that takes in owner surrenders," she said. "We do abuse cases where the horses have been abused and starved."

When COVID-19 hit, Sadiku said she saw a 200% increase in request for help and has a waiting list of horses to come in.

"It has been pretty heartbreaking; there is such an overwhelming need. We pay to have them rehabbed and they stay with us for life and we use them in our free special needs programs."

Often there is a stigma associated with surrenders. "A lot of the horses are well taken care of and people love them," said Sadiku.

"We are taking one back in a few weeks, the couple had adopted a few



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years ago. But their son was diagnosed with a rare cancer and he is fighting for his life."

Faith-N-Friends keeps in touch with adoptees. "We are always given updates

every two to three months on every single one that is adopted out," she said.

Visit faithnfriends.org to surrender a horse, report abuse, register for events and special needs programs.