

Profiles

OF HEALING & HOPE FOR OUR KIDS



First Alex felt lost. Then his troubles mounted at school.

Nothing worked . . . until you welcomed him to Idaho Youth Ranch.

After he immigrated with his family to the US, Alex entered 5th grade. It was not what he was expecting. It was so different. Alex felt overwhelmed. Lost.

Alex took to missing days upon days of school . . . and not doing any of his homework . . . and getting into fights in the school hallways and classrooms.

His mother and father were increasingly nervous for their dear Alex. This was not like him. In spite of a language barrier, they did all they could to help him. And yet, nothing seemed to work.

After three years, desperation set in. Alex's mother blamed herself, unfairly. In truth, she was doing her best. So was Alex, in spite of it all. There was no one to blame. Just an urgent problem in need of an urgent solution.

The solution was YOU.

Together with you, we were there for Alex and his family—and it made all the difference.

Because of your compassion, Alex came to Idaho Youth Ranch in September of 2024. Right away, he began to work with his therapist. She said to him, "Okay, let's break it down. We'll figure out what's getting in the way of your success. Then we'll take it one step at a time."

The first breakthrough targeted his sleep. Alex hadn't built good nighttime habits. His sleep and everything downstream of it were paying the price, so his therapist helped Alex build a healthy sleep routine.

The second breakthrough targeted Alex's ability to ask for help. Alex Alex had learned to stay quiet when he felt confused in school. He thought asking for help was a sign of weakness. His therapist helped him see it's actually a sign of strength.

In Caleb's mind, the whole world was against him, Grumpy the horse included . . .

*But today, Caleb is making great progress.
Your love is his safe space.*



Caleb's story is complicated.

In his home, there was love. But there was also abuse.

When Caleb first came to Idaho Youth Ranch, he kept quiet and he kept to himself. His expressions, his voice, his every move screamed, "I don't want to be here, and you can't make me do anything."

This kind of attitude makes sense when it feels like the world is not safe.

Our job with Caleb was to help him see that the world is his home too, and it's safer than he thinks. Equine therapy is perfect for this. There's something about the size and majesty of a horse that works like an "emotional mirror." You look at the horse, and you see yourself.

During our first equine therapy session, Caleb was asked to think about "healthy connections" and interact with the horses. He made his way among the animals slowly and did not stop until he'd found the most stubborn, cantankerous horse in the herd. Fittingly, this horse's name is Grumpy.

Caleb reached out to pet Grumpy, but the horse turned away—he was having none of it. Instantly, Caleb stiffened. He grumbled. He cursed. He puffed up his chest. He wanted the whole world to know he was not afraid. He'd even fight this massive animal ten times his weight.

In Caleb's mind, the whole world was against him, Grumpy the horse included. He had to stand his ground or he'd have no ground left to stand on.

Caleb's therapist was not surprised. She was ready for this. She took it slow. She talked Caleb through how the horse might be feeling meeting someone new.

"Meeting someone new can be scary, right?"

A very slight nod was Caleb's only reply. But it was something.

Over time, Caleb made real progress. He learned about boundaries. He grew more emotionally perceptive and receptive. As he softened, Grumpy and the other horses did too. Aggression gave way to tender hugs, always with a big smile on Caleb's face. Eventually, horse and boy were smitten. They went for long walks with extended private conversations. Caleb had found his safe space.

That was the first breakthrough that led to all the other breakthroughs.

Today, Caleb is eager to return to equine therapy and his horse. He had to hit pause for a while due to school issues, but we hope to have him back with us very soon. He loves it here. That love, his safe space, is where Caleb knows he's always seen and valued—thanks to you! 🌈



You gave Nora's rocky road to healing a very sweet ending!

Nora, 14, grew up with a single mom. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, her mom met someone, got remarried, and was expecting a baby.

But Nora was the baby of the family. Who would she be if that changed? And how would she deal with having a dad? Until now, dads had only been characters on TV, in movies, and in bad jokes.

It was a lot. And maybe not so surprising when Nora began struggling with depression and self-harm. Plus, she was afraid of horses. So when Nora first came to Idaho Youth Ranch, it was clear her road to healing would be rocky.

One time, during a family equine therapy session, a horse named Benny was intrigued by Nora's mom. Benny approached and sniffed at her very large belly. Then he met her gaze and blew softly through his velvety nose as if to say, **"Very good, I approve."**

Maybe this was the turning point. Gradually, Nora opened up to the horses at the ranch . . . and she opened up in therapy. You could tell Nora was feeling better when she gave all the horses her own pet names—names like Skittles and Rocky Road.

At Nora's graduation, she said to Benny,

"I'd like you to meet someone. My new baby sister. Isn't she beautiful?"

Yes, she is! And that's clear to Nora now, because of your generous support of Idaho Youth Ranch. Thank you!! 🌈



Your 2024 Giving Statement Is Ready

Your compassion has healed hundreds of Idaho youth in 2024. Because of you, kids from every corner of Idaho are discovering new possibilities and building brighter futures. If you'd like to receive your giving statement for 2024, please email Jenna Nathan at jnathan@youthranch.org.

Thank you for sharing your love with Idaho's kids!

The third breakthrough targeted Alex's coping skills, Alex had a short fuse because he didn't know how to stop his feelings once they were ignited by a situation that made him feel volatile. His therapist helped Alex learn relaxation techniques to manage his anger.

Today, Alex attends school regularly, does all his homework, studies for tests, gets along with his classmates, and stays out of trouble.

“*I'm doing good now, I no longer get angry. I don't have the same problems. My grades are all As and Bs. I feel ready to start working and go into the military,*”

Alex says with a hint of pride.

Alex and his family will never know your name, but they'll never forget how you helped **shine a light on a dark path**—and that changed everything.💡



Light the Way for More Kids Like Alex ... Month After Month

When it's hard to see your future, you need someone else to help you see. Will you be that someone else for more Idaho teens like Alex?

Please join Team Appaloosa, our very special monthly giving community. Your consistent support helps Idaho's next generation find their path forward with renewed strength, freedom, and possibility.

Like Alex, many young Idahoans just need someone to light the way. Your steady monthly gift ensures that together we can guide each child in need, step by step, toward healing.

Will you be there for Idaho's kids, today and tomorrow, month after month?

Join Team Appaloosa today!



Scan to begin your secure monthly donation today!

