

Weatherford, Texas • Est. with Purpose, July 2019

Golden Reward Sanctuary

G R S

The Horse Book



*"Do not cast me away when I am old;
do not forsake me when my strength is gone."*

Psalm 71:9

1201 Friendship Rd. • Weatherford, TX 76085 • goldenrewardsanctuary.com

goldenrewardsanctuary@outlook.com

All of our animals are treasured. Today we have 31 horses, 4 donkeys, 4 dogs, and 2 barn cats.

We focus on senior horses because they are most at-risk and need specialized care, but we do have a few younger horses as well. We'd like to introduce you to our herd with the hope that you'll be inspired to come meet them in person.

To Schedule Your Visit

Please reach out directly to **Melissa Hadley, Founder**

✉ goldenrewardsanctuary@outlook.com

512.658.9004

🌐 goldenrewardsanctuary.com

We would be honored to welcome you.



Angel is the sweetest donkey you'll ever meet. She's very easy-going and always happy to have her people pay attention to her. And she's super cute! She came to GRS with Abby and Waylon in the summer of 2023.



Angel and Waylon had been together for more than 20 years. Waylon was a barrel horse, and she was his companion.

Horses and donkeys are herd animals, but sometimes you see a unique bond between two. Angel and Waylon had that bond. Stuck together like an old married couple.

We lost Waylon in the fall of 2024. It was horrific – in only a matter of hours he went from colic symptoms to excruciating pain and we lost him at the vet. For Angel, he just never came home. She laid down in her pasture more and more. Her ears were never

up. I thought we were going to lose her. It was devastating to see her so heart-broken, and she wasn't improving. I tried bringing in other companions from our herd, but Angel wasn't interested. It had been months since Waylon passed.

I started thinking, "I need a red roan pony". Waylon was a red roan. Which is kind of silly – it doesn't really work that way. You can't just find a companion who sort of looks like the one they lost, and they just magically get better. But still I was desperate and guilty and that's what I thought. A few days later I got a message – someone with a retired English competition horse they needed to rehome. I gave my usual spiel – we're full, I'm happy to help you find a home, email me pictures, medical history, etc. Picture came through of a red roan. Seriously. I called and made arrangements to go meet Dallas, the red roan, then made arrangements to bring her to GRS.



Although it shouldn't have worked, it was MAGIC. From the minute Dallas and Angel saw each other, they were inseparable. God saw the heartache and answered my prayers - you can't ask for more than that.

Dallas has been here for more than a year and almost every time I look out, they are standing together, grazing together, or one is resting and the other is standing over them. Angel seldom lies down – only to rest – and her ears are up. Dallas saved Angel's

life. And it's a good life. And they are both loved. I am so very grateful.





Dallas really IS the whole package – cute, smart, done it all, Cushings, and navicular.

What I've learned is that our horses, from over-breeding, genetics, or just simple old age, come with special needs. Same as us humans. Getting old is hard. And it sucks sometimes. Whether it's hoof issues, arthritis, allergies, neurological disorders, or just that they don't have many teeth left and need their feed soaked – this is what we do – giving them the exact care they need.

Dallas is an eye-catching red roan with the cutest face and an up-front personality. You know exactly what's what and where you stand and there's no meanness or sneakiness. It is what it is with Dallas. And she can be a lovebug. Unfortunately for Dallas, she's an easy-keeper (meaning she gains weight by breathing) and she's a foodie. Those always seem to go hand-in-hand.

Dallas had been an English eventing horse. As far as we know she's not papered, and she looks like an appendix - with the quarter horse body but the longer legs of a thoroughbred. She got navicular – a degenerative disease in her hoof bones – and retired from competition. For a while she was the lesson horse at the barn, but then had to retire even from that. She was adopted as a companion horse, and then her family couldn't keep her.

Dallas has captured hearts here at GRS. And she is living her best life. Without the stress of competition, we are able to keep her completely sound and comfortable. She has special shoes and she gets regular checkups with x-rays. She has a light regimen of pain meds.

Not too long after she arrived, we realized she also has Cushings. She's on meds and we are careful with her diet. She gets Timothy hay and low starch grain (again, poor foodie!). She's healthy and looks great. One of the symptoms of Cushings is that older horses won't shed their winter coat, so we clip her and she looks fabulous.

Dallas is a great example of why we do what we do. She gave her life to humans – competing for them, giving lessons to them, providing a companion for them, so when she needed humans to step up, we did.



Flicka's mama left me a voicemail. Her voice cracked and she cried. I called her and talked for a long time. Diana is elderly and had been in and out of the hospital for the past 5 years. Her neighbors had been helping take care of her horses. She lives south of Corpus – a lot farther than we usually cover – but she had called every rescue from San Antonio to Dallas, and most hadn't even called her back. The rest said they were full. The same thing I was prepared to tell her but couldn't. We would find a way.



Diana couldn't take care of Flicka and Cherokee anymore – physically or financially – and it was breaking her heart. She'd had them for 28 years. She CRIED because she loves her babies and now people were telling her she had to euthanize them because she couldn't care for them anymore. Both horses were healthy. She's not. She invested 28 years in their care. Would you have thought, 30 years ago, "I wonder if I'll be able to take care of them in 28 years"? No, you wouldn't. She'd done everything she can. And if we can't help in that situation, then WHAT ARE WE DOING?

So we started fundraising for their transport and care. We built a new paddock for them, and we brought them home. We lost Cherokee a few months later to laminitis – he couldn't get up – we tried everything. He was 29. He was the sweetest giant. He'd been a sheriff's posse horse. He was so loved.

Flicka is 40 (!!!) and still going strong. She had some trouble adjusting – the first new place in 28 years. She got ulcers and we treated that and she's doing great now with her new best friend Dooley – a 25-year-old retired western pleasure horse with DSLD and a little arthritis.

Flicka is very friendly and loves cookies. She loves having her herd close, and she's a speed walker when we go out for grass. She's gaited and fast. She's found her forever home and we love her beyond measure. We send pics and updates to her mama. Flicka needs a sponsor.



Rexi's story is grounded in people who stepped up. The bad people are in it too, but the good people won.

Rexi is a 15-year-old draft cross who's been at GRS since March of 2023. She's big and she has a big



personality, but she can be cautious around new people. (German Muffins fix that pretty quickly!) She and Jessie Jayne are big buddies and are frequently at the gate together mugging for handouts.

Rexi was rescued from the sale barn by our friend Barbie, who was looking for a horse for her husband. He named her Rexi-saurus --- big as a dinosaur. Life got busy and he didn't have time to ride, so they found a home for Rexi. Unfortunately, the new home was looking for a recip mare and decided that Rexi wasn't going to work out medically. They contacted Barbie and said "buy her back or she's going back to the sale barn."

Barbie stepped up for Rexi. She paid to get her back, called us, and brought her to GRS. Barbie saved her twice.

We have no idea where Rexi was before the sale barn, what training she had, or how she ended up there. I started spending time with Rexi and found that she's my favorite kind of riding horse – one who really only wants to walk and, even if you convince her to pick up a trot, she only trots for a few steps. Perfect! Until I learned the hard way, on the trails, that she doesn't like anything to touch her booty! One leaf and we were barreling down the trails. So we starting working on de-sensitizing her.



We hosted a clinic for sponsors with all kinds of obstacles and games. Our friend Susan is partially sponsoring Rexi, and they were rock stars! Rexi did it all. Great strides forward for this sweet, gorgeous girl as well as for Susan, who had never done the games before either. Susan and her husband Mark stepped up for Rexi by investing in her today and for her future.

We are so grateful to have Rexi here and safe. She's a big, friendly goof-ball who makes me smile and makes my day a little brighter. She's changed quite a few human lives, while we're making sure hers doesn't change and she gets to live out her best life here at GRS.



We received a call from Parker County Animal Control in May of 2020 – they had seized a herd of neglected horses, and the oldest horse was in such bad shape that they were afraid they wouldn't be able to rehab her. I went to see her, and when I parked by the pasture she ran to the fence whinnying. It was a done deal. We paid her vet bills and brought her home.



Raie and George the Pony were the worst cases we've ever taken in. Raie was emaciated and her coat was coming off in clumps. She was in such bad shape that they aged her at well over 20 when she was actually closer to 16-17.

She was sweet with perfect ground manners. We had the vet check her out and found no medical issues other than nutritional, so we started her on 4 meals a day and slowly began adding in supplements. We groomed her and walked her, hand grazing several times a day in addition to the hay and grass in her paddock. Her transformation was amazing! Within 3 months she



was glowing and healthy – almost fat.

She has learned to stand for the farrier (that took some work – she liked to rear up – so much for the ground manners!). Her teeth don't line up correctly – it's just the way she was born – and she chokes if her grain isn't thoroughly soaked. We have 3 horses who tend to choke, so it's part of our routine.



Raie had obviously been ridden before and is fine in an arena but proved to be a total nut on the trails. She's fantastic at liberty work, and a fun horse to play with. She's a pretty girl with a bright personality, and very social with her herd and people. Raie will never go hungry again, but she remembers and whinnies enthusiastically at feeding time. We changed her life forever with the support of a lot of really great people.

Raie is one of our "whys".



I stood in a disgusting place. Surrounded by the pitiful. Waiting for someone to come show me a horse. Someone who didn't show up and left me standing there for an hour. Their dogs were filthy, and the hound had huge tumors hanging from his neck. He came up to lean on me to get some love. The horses were gaunt, standing in mud and manure and old hay. Sale barn numbers stilled glued to them. There were a couple of cow-quality round bales in the pastures, but they still had the strings on, and the horses tried to nibble on the ends.

It was the kind of place that I literally cannot end up in because it breaks my heart and I want to save them all. I had no idea where I was going when I arranged the meeting. I don't go to the sale barn. I don't look at their pages on Facebook. We have plenty that come directly to me; GRS is always full. But those of you who know me, know that there's always more room somewhere for that desperate situation.



The pasture I stood next to had a few drafts in it. I watched them while I waited. An extremely emaciated Belgian was trying so hard to eat hay from the end of the bale, and a huge black Percheron shadowed his every step. The Belgian had the biggest face I've ever seen, and the sweetest. He never got more than 5 steps away from the Percheron – who wasn't skinny at all – a big beautiful girl with a milky white eye who stuck to him like glue.

I went home. Fed the horses. Sat on the porch with my glass of wine to throw the ball for my dogs. And couldn't stop thinking about that face. And the girl who wouldn't leave him. I made a call. Made a directed donation to GRS. And we went and got them. Samson and Delilah.

Samson is the one who initially caught my eye and my heart, but Delilah's heart is what brought her home. There was no way I could bring Samson home without Delilah – she so clearly loved him. Saved by love.

From what I could tell from their Coggins and the few pieces of paper they came with, Samson and Delilah had only known each other for a couple of months. But those were hard months – sale barns and the disgusting place. They forged a lifetime bond and will stay together for life.

DELILAH

As always, the vet came out as soon as we got them home. Delilah is blind in the white eye, and it was caused by trauma. So they said they didn't need to remove it like they sometimes do with glaucoma. But the crummy news came after they checked her vitals. Her heart rate was 68 – much too high for a standing heart rate. Normal would be closer to 40. Higher heart rates usually indicate pain, but that wasn't the case for her. Delilah has a heart murmur, and her standing rate will always be high as her heart works hard to pump blood. It's not imminently life-threatening, and we have a checklist of things to monitor - choking/coughing, loss of appetite, swelling in the abdomen, and we check her heart rate regularly. They aged her at 16.



We don't really know where she came from, but she has great ground manners and she really likes people. I think she had someone who loved her once-upon-a-time, and now she does again. She's a sweet girl and happy here. She and Samson are in the big front pasture with lots of trees.

SAMSON

Samson's situation was dire. Even as we were bringing them home to GRS, I wasn't sure he would make it. I was desperate for him to pull through. He was, rightly, very shy of people. His hips and ribs stuck out at hard angles. His coat was thick and dull, and his posture was tired.

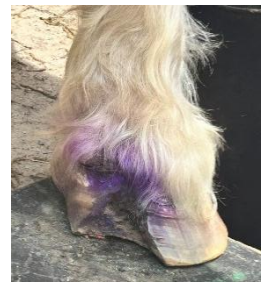
The vet aged Samson at "over 20". He looked so fragile and needed to gain more than 600 pounds.

With help from our vet and Patch's Place, the draft rescue and sanctuary in Justin, Texas, we started Samson on 3 meals a day (so of course Delilah had to have a bit every meal too). We slowly worked Samson up to 12 quarts of senior grain 3 times a day (that's about 30 lbs of grain per day!), soaked, along with alfalfa and supplements.



Samson was rubbing his hair off in patches causing bloody sores. We found out that drafts tend to have allergies and started him on Platinum Skin and Allergy, which worked wonders. We gave him medicated shampoo baths on warm days - bringing the hose into the pasture so that Delilah could stay with him. And he has the biggest fly mask they make!

He had abscesses in both front hooves. Between the vet and two expert farriers, one who focuses on drafts, we started working on his hooves – with some aggressive resection on one and with high biotin supplements. Soaking his bad hoof, cleaning and spraying with thrush spray, packing with Cop-Pure-Cure, bandaging and wrapping it in garbage bags and duct tape when it rained (and jeez it was spring in Texas)... After 2 and a half months, he'd turned the corner and his hooves were improving. It will take about a year for the resected hoof to grow all the way out, but his weight is well-supported.



For Samson, the fountain of youth was simple – the magic of quality hay, grain, and supplements, and plenty of it, plus love. The love of his faithful companion, Delilah, and the love of the community of people who care for him and cheer him on. He truly looks 10 years younger after just a few months. His coat shed out to a beautiful, shiny, dappled blonde. The angles have filled in. He needs a little more weight, but he no longer looks tired and he holds his head up.



He's still shy with people and doesn't like a crowd.

And he's tired of everyone messing with his feet. But he's learning to trust (and learning about cookies!), and he's learning that no one will EVER be mean to him again. Amazingly, he's not food aggressive at all, but he will give a high, musical whinny when he sees us coming with the next meal.

Samson is a sweet soul who deserved so much better, and we're so glad he's home, safe and loved.



Kinsley is a sweet, shy bay mare our vet estimates is about 26. She isn't pushy for attention. She doesn't demand anything. She quietly buddies up with a pasture mate and mostly just watches... watches us, watches the other horses, watches the world beyond the fence. And when you catch her eye, it feels like she's asking a single, careful question: *Am I safe here?*

Kinsley came home to GRS in August 2025, and she arrived heartbreakingly thin and tired. Her body was all angles, and she had a large mass on her jaw. She had to gain weight before we could address the mass. So we started with four small meals a day, gradual increases in grain, along with supplements to support her skin, coat, and hooves.



We see the aftermath of neglect more often than we wish, but Kinsley's story is especially hard. Her people moved out of state and simply left her behind—alone in a pasture, with no food and no water. An elderly neighbor noticed what was happening and stepped in. She did everything she

could, but she couldn't keep up. When she called us, we made arrangements to bring Kinsley to GRS.

Then we learned another piece of her past. Kinsley had been a sale barn horse before a local rescue pulled her and rehomed her. It breaks my heart to imagine her being abandoned again and again.

That's why we're a sanctuary. The cycle stops here.

Today, Kinz has her happily-ever-after. Once she reached a healthier weight, she spent about a week at the vet, where the mass was removed—not cancer. Less than six months later, you can't even see a scar.

The invisible scars take longer. But Kinsley has what she should have had all along: security, a herd, and people who won't leave her behind. She's loved and spoiled. Amazingly, she's very healthy and seems much younger than 26. With time, her trust will continue to grow.



Some of our horses come to us through abuse, mistreatment, and neglect. Some come from owners who have had their own tragedy, love their horses, and are desperately looking for a loving home where they know their beloved pets are safe. Many of the horses come to GRS as a “story” – no evidence or paperwork, not even a sure estimate on how old they really are – just stories about how they came to be in the situation that brought them to GRS. Smoothie was a mix of the two with the second half of his story from a loving person who saved him twice.



Smoothie is a handsome sorrel quarter horse gelding born in 2001. He’s got a sweet personality and he loves treats. He’s the first one to “tell” you that it’s mealtime, and he’s always watching and waiting for you at the gate.

Smoothie was a professional roping horse who developed stringhalt. It meant that Smoothie couldn’t compete anymore. He’s not in any pain, and he can move pretty quickly when he wants to --- he flies across his pasture on three legs. Since Smoothie couldn’t compete anymore, his owner was sending him to the sale barn – a death sentence for a horse with such an obvious medical condition. One of the ranch hands took him home instead. Smoothie got a reprieve, and the rancher’s wife loved him.

Then a local rescue offered to take Smoothie. Within a few days, when checking up on him, the rancher’s wife was told they sent him to be euthanized. She got to the vet in time and brought him back home. (I imagine words like “over my dead body” were thrown out).

But life happens and they had to sell the ranch. They reached out and asked if Smoothie could retire at GRS. When we heard his story – already rescued twice and once again in a need of a home – we knew we had to take him. We were “full”, but then again, it’s a standing joke at GRS that “full” is a relative term...

Smoothie took the long road home, but he’s now in his forever home and enjoying his retirement at GRS. He is



very much loved and the benevolent alpha of our herd of “old men”. He gets full medical care and regular massages, along with plenty of attention (and treats). And we keep looking for new treatments for stringhalt.



- Dooley, 25, with DSLD and arthritis, is Flicka's best friend.
- Confetti, 12, a sassy Appy with a permanently split back hoof, is Kinsley's partner-in-crime.
- Flame, 16, flaxen sorrel QH who broke his front leg in 3 places and recovered.
- Rosie, 19, sorrel registered QH with great breeding who was never started – she's Flame's buddy.
- Hank, 23, QH with a heart murmur and navicular, is part of Smoothie's herd.
- Dinks, 31, palomino QH was a trick horse and is part of Smoothie's herd.
- Romeo, the original Golden Reward, 24, OTTB and is part of Smoothie's herd.
- Cowboy, 23, registered QH with arthritic hocks and a loud personality, lost his mom to brain cancer.
- Cash, 29, Halterbred, gorgeous registered QH with level 3 Parelli training.
- Twister, 32, registered QH mare who worked at a kids' camp for 13 years before retiring at GRS.
- Koni, 34, registered Holsteiner, giant mare with a bossy personality and an affinity for German Muffins.
- Peso, well over 30, dark bay QH gelding who's the gentle alpha of his herd of mares, including Raie.
- Abby, 29, Arabian mare who was a competition barrel horse – she came to us with Waylon and Angel.
- Hammy, 23, 16.2 bay roan gelding with long legs, steady as they come. Leader of his herd of mares.
- Jessie Jayne, 16, 14.1 blood bay mare from the Pegasus Project. Rexi's best friend, in Hammy's herd.
- Roux, 23, cute blood bay mare, neglect case, Hammy's best friend.
- Bravo and Onyx, 5 and 6, miniature horses who are our Ambassadors at events, not rescues.
- Noah, 4, mini-donkey who came to us with Dinks. Loves people and attention and food!
- RJ, 19, medium size mini-donkey who came to us with Buster. The only resident who won't wear a halter.
- YoYo, age unknown, leggy sorrel mare who looks like a hackney, is gaited, and very shy.
- Princess, 32, sorrel registered QH mare, rode parks all over the US, her owner passed away, YoYo's buddy.
- Tex, 31, chunky gray registered QH roper. Retired here with Toby and Shakira when his owner died.
- Toby, 25, handsome black registered QH roper with a puppy personality, 16.2, loves cookies.
- Shakira, ancient, a standard white donkey who's been with Tex and Toby for more than 25 years.
- Buck, 24, handsome registered QH Buckskin, our most recent rescue, June 2026.
- The dogs: Kaylie, Liberty, Indie, Sierra
- The cats: Tinsel, Daisy, and our sometimes-drop-in Tux



73

horses saved since Golden Reward Sanctuary was founded

36

horses came to us after an owner passed away or could no longer provide care. These were not neglect cases. These were good people whose time ran out.

18

horses rescued from active neglect or starvation — animals in genuine danger who needed intervention immediately.

6

horses came to us after a catastrophic injury or ailment - broken leg, skull fracture, stringhalt, bone-on-bone hock or stifle. Some of these are our younger horses who will need lifetime protection because of a physical issue.

13

additional horses helped to find safe homes — horses who never came to GRS, but whose owners reached out to us when they had nowhere else to turn. When we are full, we don't turn people away. We become a resource and work our network.



Average age of our horses:

25



Nine of our horses are:

30+



Flicka is living her best, active, senior life at:

40



Horses and donkeys who live here today:

35



Heartbreak is part of what we do. When you rescue seniors, you know what's coming. When we lose a horse or dog, there's always the half-serious discussion about how maybe we should be adopting younger animals. And what my heart always says to that? "Then we're not helping the ones who need us." I'm soft-hearted and it breaks my heart and I cry a lot when we lose one, but I think that's also what makes me so great at what I do --- love them with all my heart and make sure they get the best care and the best chance in the world to live out their retirement. My poor vets have to deal with the emotional blow of putting down an animal, compounded by my obvious heartache. They also understand and support the "whatever it takes" planning that comes into play with many of the animals, along with my determination and optimism. Bless them to the moon and back.

Sadly, I've heard more than once "isn't that what you signed up for"? Well no, it's part of the package, but what I "signed up for" is giving these sweet, deserving animals the best life they can have.

Melissa



Will you help us write the next chapter?

"A Forever Home. A Golden Promise. A Life Well Loved."

Golden Reward Sanctuary

1201 Friendship Rd. • Weatherford, TX 76085

goldenrewardsanctuary.com

goldenrewardsanctuary@outlook.com

Prepared with love in Weatherford, Texas • 2026

