

Meet Sonyador!

This beautiful Percheron mare just arrived at Happy Trails on Thursday evening, December 29, 2011.

An email came across my desk earlier that day listing three Amish-owned horses that were already at a broker in Pennsylvania. They would be on their way to the Sugarcreek auction the next day on Friday where the meat-buyers would pick them up and ship them to a slaughter house in either Mexico or Canada. *Could we accept these three mares into our Amish Horse Retirement Program?*

It just so happened that we had one stall that had just become available by another horse getting adopted last week, but what could we do with the other two Amish mares on their way to slaughter? From the photos that were sent to us, all three horses appeared to be underweight. Normally horses who are weak from malnutrition would not do well riding in an over-crowded trailer for several days to a slaughterhouse in another country. Often



*Sonyador and Melissa Berger,
Happy Trails animal-care staff member.*



the weak ones go down and get trampled by the other horses in the cramped trailer.

Marjorie, the rescue worker that had sent out the plea for help for these three horses arranged transportation for the black Percheron mare to be delivered to Happy Trails. She also made arrangements for the other two horses to be held and not sent to auction until they could be transported to Happy Trails next week. This will buy us a little time to send out a plea for foster or adoptive homes.

“She’ll be arriving between 7pm and 8pm tonight yet,” we were told late Thursday afternoon. Our one empty stall was cleaned out and filled with armfuls of fresh, fluffy straw. A clean bucket of water appeared on the hook and a flake of hay lay alone in the corner of the stall. We turned on all the outside lights we had (which weren’t very many) and opened the gates in anticipation of the arrival of our new rescue. Melissa, our evening animal care-giver, and our Thursday night stall cleaning volunteer

crew consisting of Jason, Gabrielle and Mary, were all eager to see the new arrival.

A call came in from Rob, the broker and hauler, concerning directions. I offered to meet him at the end of the exit ramp on Rt. 14 so he could follow me back to the sanctuary, and in a short time I saw an impressive equine rig slowly creeping down the exit ramp from 76 West. Once back at Happy Trails, the length of the trailer was even too long to fit in our driveway, so we had to unload our precious new resident on busy New Milford Road. As I walked around the back of the trailer to see if I



could help, I nearly walked smack into Rob and the mare in the dark as they rounded the rear corner of the trailer. The big girl was quiet though alert, and in the darkness you could see her limping terribly on her back right leg. She walked as though she had a great deal of pain in all her feet, and her front hooves were in horrific shape. Melissa took the lead rope and walked the tired mare slowly back to the horse barn and showed her the stall that was prepared for her. She was thrilled to see the hay and began to eat immediately.

In the shadowy night light of the horse barn, we could see that her right eye was weeping and she would blink as though it were irritating her. You could easily feel her ribs through a thin coat of fur.

And when we positioned her in the aisleway to examine her feet, we discovered that her left shoe had been left on her foot as her hoof grew out in a horrific fashion. The back of the horse shoe that was supposed to be at the back of her heel was now directly centered underneath her hoof. The right hoof held no horse shoe, so judging by the length and condition of the hooves, she had been standing and walking uneven for quite some time. Her back right ankle was thicker than the left, indicating trauma or injury. With the condition of



her hooves and the pain she appears to be in, I could not imagine her having to stand for the several-day trip to the slaughter house. She surely would have been one of the horses that go down in the trailer and don't survive the trip.

Though we were told she was supposedly about 12 to 14 years old, her teeth tell a different story. Her vet examination determined that she is between 15 and 18 years of age, still not very old by horse standards. This precious, beautiful mare appeared to be a train wreck. *Is she salvageable?* I think so. Over the past ten years of rescuing and rehabilitating

horses, I have seen some pretty horrific things. You would be amazed at how many of these health issues are correctable and the animals can actually enjoy a good quality of life and be comfortable after treatment and recovery.

We settled her into her stall and gave her a small amount of grain, and Melissa and I stood staring at the mare. She had to once have been a beautiful horse that held her head high and had strong, healthy hooves and legs. I thought of the road ahead of us and how long her recovery might be. *Could we dare to dream of a complete recovery for her?*

“We need a good name for her,” I told Melissa. “A name that has a meaning.”



Without missing a beat, Melissa said, “Sonyador! That was the name of a horse in a movie that I saw, and it means ‘dreamer’.”

It was perfect! Sonyador (pronounced sone - yuh - door) fit the new mare perfectly!

As we watched her contentedly munching on her hay, I thought of just how close she had come to a horrific end to her life. If it weren't for Marjorie, a fellow horse rescue worker, this mare would have already been on her

way to the slaughter house auction. Instead, standing here in front of me was a once-gorgeous horse, now discarded because she was no longer useful, thrown away like a piece of garbage in a can. Out of sight, out of mind. Not worth fixing. Well, not to her previous owner anyway, but to us, she is a gem in the rough, a diamond about to shine, a ray of light ready to break through the clouds, a little-girl's dream, a friend to another lonely horse, a therapist for a troubled soul, a mane for her a new owner to bury her face in when she needs a good cry. Sonyador could be all that and more.

We are also preparing to welcome next week the other two mares that were in the same kill-pen with Sonyador. And no, we don't really have the proper room for them, but we will make do as we network and try to find caring and loving adoptive or foster homes for these wonderful creatures who deserve a second chance. Actually when you think about it, it's us humans that need the second chance with these horses - a second chance to show them that many of us are responsible to the animals in our lives and that we will



truly care for them and give them the respect and dignity that they deserve, simply because they are...well, simply because they are. Period. Do we really need any more reason than that? We need to provide them with love and care because it's the right thing to do. It truly is that simple.

So as we move forward with a vet examination for Sonyador, a blacksmith appointment to begin to correct her crippled hooves, and eventually a trip to OSU Veterinary Medical Center in Columbus for a lameness evaluation, her care expenses will be adding up quickly. She will need her teeth floated, will need vaccinations, will need to be de-wormed regularly, and we will be providing her with good quality hay (about a bale a day at \$3.50 per bale), fresh

bedding (4 bales of straw per week @ \$4 per bale), and nutritious grain (about a bag a week at \$13 per bag).

HOW YOU CAN HELP

SPONSOR/MAKE A DONATION

If you would like to sponsor Sonyador to help with her recovery and daily care expenses, **we welcome your tax-deductible donation** which can either be mailed to Happy Trails, 5623 New Milford Rd., Ravenna, Ohio 44266, **or you can make a donation on-line through our website at www.happytrailsfarm.org** and simply make a note "for Sonyador". Every dollar counts and helps us provide the very best care possible.

ADOPT/NETWORK

Please help us network and spread the word to find Sonyador a caring and loving home. We truly need to open up additional stall space so that we can comfortably bring in the other two Amish mares next week that would also have ended up with the kill-buyers.

And remember that there are about 15 other horses available for adoption through Happy Trails, and that each and every one of them have a special rescue story of how they arrived at the sanctuary. Every time an animal gets adopted, the person adopting it is actually rescuing two animals by giving one a permanent home, and in turn, opening space for us to help another animal in need.

THANK YOU

We appreciate your support of our rescue work, and are humbled to be able to assist with the rescue of such magnificent animals. It's hard to imagine not welcoming Sonyador to Happy Trails, to not hear her soft whinny when you walk down the aisle toward her stall, to not feel her soft velvety muzzle on your neck while you are scratching her withers, and to not look forward to crying tears of joy when she finally finds a home that will love her for simply being the wonderful and sensitive creature that she is. On behalf of Sonyador and all the rescue horses and farm animals, please know just how very much we appreciate your support and encouragement!

