



To whom it May Concern:

Recently my husband and I had come to the painful realization that we could no longer care for our two horses, Smokey and Eli. This was mostly due to financial reasons, and to a lesser degree, physical reasons. We have owned the horses for about twelve years, and they are part of the family in rural Chisago County.

The past few years have been very hard for us due to job loss, debt, unemployment and health problems. We hung onto the horses as long as we could, hoping and praying that things would get better, but they never did. Now we are in survival mode, trying to hang on to the house.

Because of their older age, size, (one, Eli is a large draft mix and Smokey is a small gelding) their unknown heritage and the fact that they have not been ridden in several years, made them unattractive to some potential buyers in our area. My biggest fear if we had brought them to an auction or gave them away to anyone who would take them would be that they would most likely end up on a slaughter truck or on a farm where animals are hoarded and mistreated.



I found the Sunclown Horse Shelter on the internet and called Cherie McKenzie. After talking with Cheri about my situation, she agreed to take in my horses. She explained to me that horses at her shelter are only adopted out if she finds them the right home. Potential adopters are thoroughly interviewed and their farms are checked out to make sure there are no barbed wire fences and the horses have a safe, comfortable living conditions. After adoption, there are periodic visits to the farm to make sure the horses are being cared for. All adopters must sign a "no-breeding" agreement and all stallions are neutered before they can be adopted. Potential adopters must also sign an agreement that if they no longer want the horses for any reason, they have to bring them back to Sunclown Horse Rescue. This ensures that no horse ends up on a slaughter truck or changing hands and ending up somewhere where there is cruelty and neglect. What a relief to know that these safety nets are in place.

Giving up my horses, my "boys" has been the most agonizing, difficult thing I have ever done. On Saturday March 10th, 2012, we trailered our horses to the Sunclown Horse Shelter, where we were warmly welcomed by Cherie and one of her wonderful volunteers.



She showed us around, explaining all the details of the farm. The farm was amazing and everything I could possibly want for my horses. There were divided sections so that the horses could be put into compatible groups. Only soft, electric fencing is used. There were plenty of run in shelters & corner protectors so that horses who wanted to rub did not hurt themselves. Fresh water was abundant, and grain and quality hay is given to all. There was a pole barn with horse stalls if needed and everything was neat, clean and safe. Rescued cats (all spayed & neutered) lounged around on hay bales and on barn beams. Every animal on that farm gets love and attention. The cats were all clean & healthy looking. I could not imagine a better place for my animals. All of the horses there were in good shape and so well groomed, I have never been on a better farm.

I thank God for Cherie McKenzie and her shelter and wonderful volunteers, donors and foster families. They have made a heartbreaking time in our life more tolerable. Just when I thought there were few caring people left, I meet Cherie at a time of crisis. I will be forever grateful for her hard work, dedication and compassion.

Truly,

Alex Olson