

The Link *to a Place Apart*



A PERFECT MATCH



“Ranger is my big lovable goofball,” shared Sarah Carroll, a Lutheranch barn staff, volunteer, and Ranger’s “mom.” Ranger is a horse. He lives at Lutheranch now, but his journey was not a straight and

narrow path to get there. Ranger originally came from Texas in 2013 to live with Sarah's neighbors. That's how Sarah got to know him. In 2016, his owner died suddenly, and Sarah stepped in to help his wife care for Ranger and their other horses. After a time of trying to keep up all the horses, she donated Ranger to a local equine therapy barn where Sarah was working. "She liked the idea that he would be helping people therapeutically," Sarah shared. Sarah volunteered at this barn and remained united with Ranger. They shared three barns together over time, and eventually Sarah bought Ranger and became his "mom".

After Sarah met Gretchen Ahrens, Program Director at Lutheranch, she volunteered and brought Ranger to help with the equestrian programs at Lutheranch. By this point, Sarah and Ranger had spent several years in outdoor leadership and education. Sarah believes that Ranger was created for this work – this ministry.

"He has a lively personality, but he is lazy. He likes to be last and follow the others. He loves to lick, and the best part is, he will smile for a treat." Sarah's love for Ranger is evident, but she would say that Ranger's care of his riders is just as evident. While he likes being last, he also has a patient personality.

"Ranger takes care of his riders." Recently, Ranger was paired with an elderly gentleman at Lutheranch. "Ranger instinctively walked slower than normal to take care of his new rider. Another time, a rider was steering Ranger toward an unsafe obstacle. Ranger gently nudged her back onto the path safely." While Ranger can be a big goofball of a horse as Sarah shares, he nurtures and protects.

Ranger and Sarah are the perfect match – for each other – and for Lutheranch's Equine program. Ranger now spends his days patiently taking riders on trails and working with Sarah and Gretchen as they provide therapeutic and recreational riding lessons for children and adults. While this ministry at Lutheranch still feels "new" to the overall ministry of NovusWay, it is the fastest growing program.

The ministry provides community for riders, volunteers, and boarders. "Our equine programs provide a natural space for everyone to be who they are as a child of God," said Gretchen. "All are welcome and accepted and all feel a sense of belonging. Horses are special because they provide unconditional love for humans and that helps us build this special community. I love watching people grow in confidence. They make new friends and discover it really is OK to be who God made you. I'm so grateful for teams like Sarah and Ranger who make this ministry happen."

Lutheranch is currently looking for a few more special horses like Ranger to add to the herd. If you know of a horse that would be a good fit for this ministry, please contact Gretchen Ahrens at 404-583-4591 or gahrens@novusway.org.

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