



Last Chance Ranch alumni Darby and Aiden found second careers as police horses in Philadelphia.

LAST CHANCE RANCH

QUAKERTOWN, PA.

Big Picture Work

In 2013, Last Chance Ranch founder Lori McCutcheon spoke at an HSUS press conference in Philadelphia supporting the Safeguard American Food Exports (SAFE) Act, a federal bill to stop the slaughter of American horses. Two Last Chance alumni serving in the city's mounted police unit were also there—"proof positive that horses dumped at kill auctions can succeed in second careers," says HSUS equine protection specialist Valerie Pringle.

Mutual Therapy

Some of the ranch's rescued horses live at the nearby Graterford State Correctional Institution, where McCutcheon helped establish an inmate equine program. "It's a great place to put horses that just need time to be a horse," McCutcheon says. "... And the prisoners get some therapy from it as well."

Peaceable Kingdom

Last Chance Ranch has always taken in the odd stray cat or dog, but 10 years ago, it began a more formal rescue program for non-equine species. Today, the ranch has cats, dogs, rabbits and other animals for adoption. Most come from shelters in Philadelphia.

+ LEARN MORE about the SAFE Act at humanesociety.org/horse-slaughter.

GIVEN A CHANCE

PENNSYLVANIA ORGANIZATION OFFERS GENTLE REHAB AND NEW ROLES FOR RESCUED EQUINES // BY ARNA COHEN

THE BEAUTIFUL BLACK HORSE at the stable where Lori McCutcheon took lessons had developed a painful hoof condition and couldn't be ridden. Rather than giving him time to heal, his owner planned to ship him to auction, where he most likely would have been sold for slaughter and suffered a brutal death. McCutcheon, who was 14 at the time, begged her parents to save the large gelding, and they purchased Sinner cheaply at the per-pound meat market price. Sinner and McCutcheon spent the next 20 years together, showing, jumping and teaching people with disabilities how to ride.

For McCutcheon, that first rescue defined her life's path.

Soon after graduating college, she bought property in Quakertown, Pa., where she offered riding lessons and horse boarding. Over the years, she began to devote more of her time to rescuing and rehabilitating horses. In 1999, she decided to focus exclusively on rescue, and Last Chance Ranch became an official nonprofit.

Nearly 3,000 horses, donkeys and ponies have since found haven at the ranch. Most came directly from auctions frequented by "kill buyers" for foreign horse slaughter plants. Several others were seized in cruelty cases.

By meeting each animal's physical, mental and training needs, Last Chance staff and volunteers help them find new homes—and new roles. Eight former draft horses now serve in mounted police units in Philadelphia and Baltimore. "They only work four hours a day, walking around in the city," says McCutcheon, adding that these "gentle giants" have the perfect temperament for the job.

Scout is another example of a horse with great potential who narrowly escaped slaughter. Last fall, McCutcheon bought the beautiful palomino—a former bucking bronco used in rodeos—at auction for the "meat price." Today, Scout is "doing absolutely wonderful—walk, trot, canter," McCutcheon says. "He doesn't throw anyone. He's changed his life; he's changed his job. ... He's turning out to be a wonderful horse."



Last Chance Ranch founder Lori McCutcheon and Ranger