

One Door Closes, Another One Opens

Written by Gayle Nobel

Monday, 01 October 2012 09:33 - Last Updated Monday, 01 October 2012 17:05

It's October 1st and I'm considering some sort of challenge for myself this month. Maybe a blog-a-thon? If I get enough requests, just maybe.

October also means horse back riding has just begun again for Kyle. He has been riding for nearly sixteen years. The start of this ride year has brought some big changes.

About two years ago, there was a big change for Kyle at Horses Help, the therapeutic riding center where he has always ridden. An instructor who had worked with him for a long time and one of her long time side walkers, left rather suddenly.

It was very disappointing at the time. Leslie had been doing a wonderful job with Kyle and really understood him after so many years together. Clint, his side walker, had a very special connection with Kyle and really knew how to work with him and challenge him. Leslie and Clint were a very strong team. Their departure was a big loss.

I was sad to see them go. I accepted the situation as best I could. Such is life. For different reasons, we have lost good people in Kyle's life many times.

The next two years were tumultuous for Kyle. He had two different riding instructors at Horses Help on the two nights he rode. Many of the side walkers were young and inexperienced. Teens often volunteer at Horses Help and sometimes he would have a young teenage girl as a side walker. In many ways, it was as if he was starting over.

In addition, he was having cycles and often had to miss 1/3-1/2 of the scheduled rides for the month. And then there was "the fall". One night, Kyle fell off the horse. This was due to the horse tripping and staff tripping but also due to the inattentiveness of staff. Fortunately, he was not hurt. In his fifteen years of riding, he had never come close to falling off the horse. Tammy was taking pictures at the time and was snapping just before the fall so to some degree, we were able to analyze what happened with the director.

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Kyle was not hurt but he was definitely shaken. This was another setback and he had a lot of trepidation about mounting the horse after the fall. In fact, there were a few nights where he couldn't mount at all and we had to go home. After the fall, he was switched to a different, less responsive horse who was shorter and even more difficult for Kyle to mount from the platform. On the positive side, everyone was much more alert and they found a male side walker for both ride nights. By the end of the season in May, Kyle had gradually become more comfortable and things had improved.

I stayed in touch with Leslie, the instructor, who had left. She assured me she was looking to start up her own place someday. Sometimes people have good intentions but things just don't work out. I was pleasantly surprised when I was contacted a few months ago and she told me she had a place and was ready to start. Were we interested?

Absolutely! This was a dream come true. And Clint was coming back as Kyle's side walker. Whoo hoo! AND, they had the perfect horse for Kyle's size. A seventeen hand beautiful white horse named Monte.

The plan was for Kyle to ride once a week at the new place, Dusty's Boots, and ride once a week at Horses Help, the old place. This way, he could get his two rides in each week. We scheduled a few weeks of visits to the new property so Kyle could get used to things and feel comfortable there by the day of the first ride.

Shortly before we were to go to Dusty's Boots for our first get acquainted visit, I received an email from Horses Help informing me that they did not have a horse to accommodate Kyle. After nearly sixteen years at Horses Help, I was informed in a business like email, he would not be able to ride. There may be a horse for him a few months down the road, but they weren't sure when or even if.

Talk about one door opening when another one closes! It was exactly two hours prior to our first visit at Dusty's Boots, that I sat, stunned, reading the email. I would like to think there are no politics involved since they knew Kyle would be riding at Dusty's Boots, but who knows?

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The most important thing is that Kyle can still do one of his great loves: horseback riding. AND, now he gets to have Clint as his side walker again and Leslie as his instructor. It doesn't get much better.

Last Tuesday was his first ride. I wasn't sure how things would go with the mount, or the ride. Mounting had been very difficult at Horses Help and he had not ridden since May (too hot in the summer). Clint walked him over to the mounting platform and I stayed in the waiting area....holding my breath, just a little.

The mount was smooth and flawless. Kyle did not hesitate. Under Leslie's attentive and expert guidance, he and Clint began right where they left off two years ago. The connection was still there, Clint knew just how to support Kyle while mounting, and Monte seemed to be the perfect height for Kyle. Everything fell right into place. Just like things used to be.

Kyle rode off into the night on his white horse. He was accompanied by an all male team. No teenage girls for this big horse and big man. He was comfortable and relaxed and happy. I had not seen him this relaxed since before the fall or maybe even longer than that. He even got to trot a few paces. If a heart could smile, I'd say mine definitely was.

I confess to feeling hurt when I received the email from Horses Help. A phone call from the owner would have been appreciated. On the flip side, Leslie has gone out of her way for Kyle. Monte, his horse, lives down the street from Dusty's Boots. Leslie has arranged for his owner to bring him down JUST for Kyle each Tuesday evening. My heart is definitely smiling.

A door has closed. Another one is wide open. Such is life.