

# Horse Helpers' children's book, "Chester's Barn"

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For 12 years, Horse Helpers of the High Country has been providing basic needs for homeless horses.

This year, the nonprofit dedicated resources to horse rescue education with the book, "Chester's Barn: A Story of a Horse Rescue."

Written by Tom Pace and Megan Miller, "Chester's Barn" tells the story of horse rescue through the perspective of the barn's resident cat. The characters and plotline are centered on real animals and situations.

Miller, along with Horse Helpers' resident dog, Alice, will be reading "Chester's Barn" at the Watauga County Public Library this Saturday, Dec. 13, at 10 a.m. Special guest Chester himself will be there to meet the children and sign copies of the book.

"The story centers around (miniature horse) Chester, and it's told from the perspective of Wendell, the barn cat," Pace said. "Through the story, you get to meet a lot of the horses that are there in the barn. The gist of the story is that Chester arrives, and people are just wondering, 'What is this thing? It's so small. Is it a horse? Is it a dog?'"

The story follows Chester's adventures and how he adjusts to his new horse rescue. Because he is still a baby, Chester must find a good friend to show him how to behave like a horse.

"Chester begins to meet new people, but there's a problem: We don't have a stall for him," Pace said.

"Should we put him in a stall with a big horse? For a big horse might hurt him. That was a real issue that happened at the farm."

According to Horse Helpers owner Amy Hudnall, Chester had lost his mother before being committed to the rescue. As a result, he had to find an elder horse to help him through his transition.

"We had to take Fiona from her baby," Hudnall said. "She was really depressed when she first came in. She had cancer, and she was recovering. Like it says in the story, they stayed on either side of the pasture from each other. But it seemed like they would be the perfect match. He needed a mom, and she needed a baby."

At first, Fiona and Chester did not like each other, but after time, they were able to help each other



Chester's Barn

Resident horses Chester and Fiona warm up to each other after a rocky start.

through their seven months, Hudnall said. "Then, Fiona didn't need him anymore, (and) he progressed socially to the point that he didn't need her. They really did support each other through that rough time."

"Chester's Barn" is a unique find, because it explains how a horse rescue works in a child-friendly way. Oftentimes, it's hard to convey such concepts to children.

"The other cool thing to me is that it covers topics like adoption, rescue and cancer," Hudnall said. "It teaches big words, so they're learning something new. In the next edition, we used the word, foal, instead of just calling (Chester) a baby."

This is the second time the book will be read for an audience, but it really feels like the first debut, according to Hudnall. This time around, the book will be released as the second edition, and the price has gone down from \$25 to \$10. "It would make a great Christmas present," Hudnall said.

Another Christmas present Horse Helpers offers is for patrons to sponsor a horse.

The second edition features a new cover and shape, more pages and additional photographs. Children may also get their books signed by the authors, as well as Chester and Alice.

Miller has read the book once already for the kindergarten and second-grade children of Two Rivers Community School in Boone. According to Pace, the children had many great questions to ask the authors.

"One cute little girl said, 'How did Wendell become in charge?'" Pace said.

Another girl asked if Fiona had recovered from her cancer. , "I thought that was pretty neat for a girl of that age to be so sensitive about it," Pace said.

"Chester's Barn" is available online, as well as at the Horse Helpers farm. The authors will also be selling the book at the reading on Saturday. All of the proceeds go to benefit the Horse Helpers rescue.

Hudnall and Pace said that with the success of the first book, they look forward to writing and publishing a second book about Horse Helpers.

For more information, or to purchase a book or sponsor a horse, visit [www.horsehelpersnc.com](http://www.horsehelpersnc.com).