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Published: July 14, 2010

[Home](#) / [news](#) / [local](#) /

## Still going strong

**By LATALA PAYNE Staff writer**

*Flurry's Hope at Second Change ranch in Madison is still in good shape, but in need of volunteers and donations*

After three years and counting, Flurry's Hope at Second Chance Ranch in Madison continues to thrive and complete its mission of increasing public awareness for the potential of blind horses.

Dr. Emilie Storch, clinical psychologist and founder of Flurry's Hope, said rescuing and training these animals is a spiritual mission for her.

"If God puts something in your path that's wrong and speaks to you to do something about it, if you say no, then you will look back and think, 'I missed out on something great that I was supposed to do,'" Storch said. "When you are shown something to do, I really believe you are empowered by God, because it's not your idea – it's his."

Storch started Flurry's Hope in 2007 after being given a blind horse that was then called "Freckles." The horse was neglected and infested with worms. After healing and becoming healthy, she was trained, re-named and given a purpose on the farm. When Flurry died suddenly on Memorial Day that same year, Storch started Flurry's Hope so other blind horses could have a second chance.

The organization operates a wide variety of programs to help people realize the potential of blind horses. Anyone interested in "owning" a horse can invest 10 to 15 hours a week as a volunteer and \$75 per month through the co-op program. Volunteers come out every

Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. for chores and a ride along the trails. Storch said she welcomes anyone who wants to come out and volunteer or check out the farm.

The farm currently takes care of 14 horses, and Storch said it is at its limits. Although the farm never has an abundance of anything, it always finds a way to make ends meet, she said.

"We have to turn down horses because we haven't placed the ones we have, but we will take any horse if we can find a way to place the ones here," Storch said. "We are constantly in need of hay, feed and money, but we always find a way, because God is providing for these creatures that people are throwing away."

Storch said she is contacted by people all over the country regarding blind horses. Because so many are killed in cruel ways, she said there are many groups that rescue blind horses just to euthanize them properly. Storch said she can't understand why people don't realize the great potential of these creatures.

"It's just an unjust thing that's happening here. These horses are wonderful, and they just have a disability," she said. "Our message here is that disability is rich in meaning and in purpose. It's so important not to look down on someone that has a disability, but to find the richness that lies in that. We try to tell everyone to never give up hope and never judge."

Robert Rogers has been a volunteer at Flurry's Hope for only a few weeks, but he said there's virtually no difference between riding a sighted horse and one that's blind.

"I was completely inexperienced with blind horses when I started to ride, but it's all about having a trusting relationship with the horse," he said. "The horse will listen when you tell it to walk, stop or turn. I think in some ways it's better than riding a sighted horse, because they depend on you more for direction."

Rogers works at the farm for 10-15 hours a week and helps with chores on Saturdays. He said he really enjoys the rides along the trail with Storch and the other volunteers.

There are currently around 20 volunteers who help on the farm. Storch said she is always looking for more. She has also written an illustrated book about the first horses at Flurry's Hope called "Horses who see with their Hearts."

"People will never know the potential of blind horses until they come out here and see for themselves," Storch said. "I encourage everyone to come out and see what really goes on here. These creatures are thriving and we are so blessed."

The group is currently gearing up for its major fall fund-raiser, which includes an antique show and farm fair. For additional information on the farm or volunteering, visit [www.flurryshope.com](http://www.flurryshope.com) or call Dr. Emilie Storch at (336) 420-1105.