

Saving Young Lives Through Horses: Teen Challenge Adventure Ranch, Saving Grace, and (soon) Genesis Ranch

Northwest Arkansas is blessed to have two -- and soon three -- Christian faith-based organizations that guide at-risk teenagers in becoming responsible adults, all with the help of horses. Since 1973, [Teen Challenge Adventure Ranch](#) (TCAR) in Morrow, AR has provided residential treatment for teenage boys struggling with substance abuse, mental health issues, and destructive behavior. Affiliated with [Teen Challenge USA](#), TCAR offers many outdoor adventure-type activities, and a regular part of the boys' routine involves caring for and learning to ride horses. TCAR's leadership now plans to open [Genesis Ranch](#), a similar residential program for teenage girls. To that end, the Ranch seeks to raise \$1 million in start-up costs, including the purchase of a nearby property in Cane Hill, AR.

TCAR therefore sought advice and support from [Saving Grace](#) in Centerton, AR, a transitional program with equine therapy for young women, ages 18-25, who have aged out of foster care or face homelessness. TCAR also sought advice and support from representatives of the [Northwest Arkansas Equestrian Coalition](#) (NWAEC), and we all met at TCAR for a lovely lunch, tour of TCAR, and presentation about plans for Genesis Ranch on March 11.

Saving Grace and NWAEC members offered advice on fundraising and best practices when helping girls, as well as our encouragement and help promoting Genesis Ranch on social media. Saving Grace representatives agreed with Shannon Blanchard's recommendation that girls be grouped in even numbers -- in dormitory rooms and other small-group settings -- so they may develop close friendships without the "odd one out" syndrome. Kerri Walker, sharing her experience from the Girl Scouts Diamonds equestrian programs, suggested that Genesis not only offer opportunities for its young clients to care for, handle, and love on horses but also some challenging and competitive skill-building activities that build confidence, a sense of achievement, and pride in accomplishing some of the same things the boys accomplish. Saving Grace offered tips for successful benefit dinners, galas, and online crowd funding, based on the organization's own experience.

Joy Thomas, current Academic Director of TCAR and future Executive Director of Genesis Ranch, noted that Genesis will use the same faith-driven, clinically based approach that has yielded a 78 percent long-term success rate among the young male graduates of Teen Challenge Adventure Ranch. Genesis Ranch and TCAR will share the same Board of Directors, and the young women will have access to the equines and stables at nearby TCAR when the boys are off doing other activities. But first, Genesis must acquire its new

home. An appropriate house on adequate acreage is available in nearby Cane Hill for \$850,000.00, of which Genesis has already raised \$150,000.00. Joy asked us all to share and invite our Facebook friends to "like" their [\(7\) Facebook](#) page. She also invited us to TCAR's Vision Dinner on Saturday, May 3 at 5:45 p.m. at the Embassy Suites and Convention Center in Rogers (visit <https://bit.ly/tcvisiondinner>). Joy would love for us to bring friends along as table hosts.

Our region is blessed to have these wonderful programs that harness the healing power of horses and empower our youth to become responsible citizens. We can all help by getting to know them, spreading the word about them, and doing what we can to support them.