

Featured **Alumni**

Kelly Mehallow

'05, BA, History



Giving horses a new lease on life

Alumna Kelly Mehallow is truly a friend to animals

Like St. Francis of Assisi, alumna **Kelly Mehallow** ('05, BA, History) has helped give animals new leases on life. Just as Francis befriended the wolf in order to show the people of Gubbio that the animal's life had value and purpose, Kelly too has dedicated her time to such endeavors. In fact, she's dedicated nearly her entire life to training and caring for horses.



"Angel is my first horse – I got her as sort of a high school graduation gift. My parents met me half way on the cost," notes Kelly. "Even though Angel is 21 years old, I still see a lot of life in her. Her eyes are beautiful and bright and she's still very interested in her surroundings."

"I was only 2 years old the first time I 'rode' a horse."

"I was only 2 years old the first time I 'rode' a horse," shares Kelly. "My Uncle had a pony named Spirit and the story is that I was literally bitten by the horse bug after he nibbled on me and I giggled." By the age of 6, Kelly was taking professional riding lessons at Fox Meadow Farm and by 9, was riding her very first (leased) horse – a Thoroughbred named Ears.

Kelly credits her relationship with Ears for her lifelong love of thoroughbreds. "I loved him, absolutely loved him and every memory I have of him is precious," she reflects. It is this passion that eventually led her to care for and train three horses of her own:

Angel, 21 year-old Thoroughbred mare

Intimador de NFC (known as Señor Sancho), 24-year old Paso Fino gelding

Noproblemfor Dino (known as Dino), 9 year-old Thoroughbred gelding and grandson of US Triple Crown champion Secretariat

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Sounding just like a proud parent, Kelly adds, "Angel is a very smart girl - she's my baby! She can get away with anything. All she has to do is give me a look and she knows she'll get her way." And if Angel doesn't get what she wants? Kelly

says that she's extremely intelligent. "Angel can learn anything. Once she watched me cross underneath a rope I had hung to section off an area of the barn and within minutes of me walking away, she was already doing the same thing herself. It just goes to show how intelligent animals are – they can learn and remember things just like we can."

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After Angel, Kelly welcomed Señor Sancho to the family, who had a rather rough start to life. Before coming to Ohio, he was shifted around to at least half a dozen owners and was then badly injured during his trip up north. Seeing his injuries and how they had decreased his chances of going to a new owner, Kelly decided to purchase him herself. “Of course, at the time, being that I was only 20 – my parents didn’t know I was planning to get a second horse. One day, I just showed up with Sancho in tow and I just nursed him back to health.”

Kelly says that many people thought Sancho would never heal enough to be more than a pasture ornament and boasts that he has “completely proven them wrong. He is a terrific and active horse. He still runs and plays like he’s only 12 and up until two years ago was still showing!”

Her newest addition, Noproblemfor Dino’s life was truly saved the day that Kelly found him. “I’d been searching for about 2 years for a new horse and was getting frustrated that I wasn’t finding the right fit. Just when I’d nearly given up, I found Dino during a trip to Kentucky. My family and I visited the Maker’s Mark Secretariat Center and before we left I checked their list of available horses. My eyes immediately went to Dino and the adoption coordinator took me out to see him. As we stood at the fence talking, he walked right up to me and shoved his nose in my chest. I knew right then and there, that he was the one and before we left, I started the adoption process.”

Like his forefathers Secretariat and Pancho Villa, Dino started his life as a race horse, but eventually fell down the ladder until he was racing in the bottom claimers at the Pinnacle. “Race horses who are non-winning or no longer wanted are often sent to auction houses where they’re sold to meat buyers,” explains Kelly. “Sadly, this is Dino’s story too. He was sent to

the Sugarcreek Auction House where a meat buyer purchased him. While awaiting his trip to the slaughterhouse, a rescue group decided to save him.”

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Unfortunately, being rescued from the slaughterhouse didn't keep Dino from suffering a cruel future. Before finding Kelly, he was adopted into two abusive homes. “When I read about the abuse and neglect that he suffered, I literally had chills,” shares Kelly. “I actually knew his story because I'd read it a year before when it was making rounds on online blogs. To this day, I still don't know what to make of my finding him. Was it merely a coincidence or fate that we found each other?”

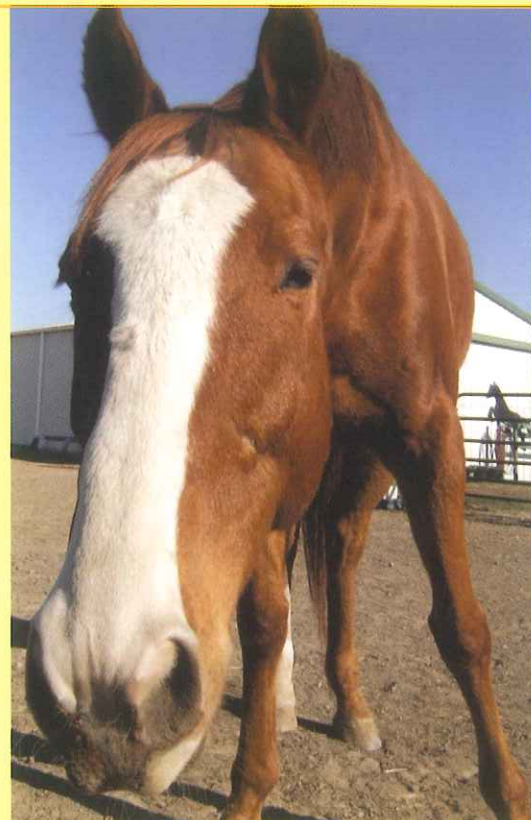


Asked about her passion for retraining horses, particularly thoroughbreds like Angel and Dino, Kelly shares that, “some horses are seen as damaged goods, especially thoroughbreds. The breed gets a bad rap. People think of them as being wild and

difficult to train. I want to show people that this is not the truth.” Today, as a result of Kelly's love and care, Dino along with Angel and Señor Sancho are happy and healthy.

Tragically, not all horses are as lucky. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, statistics show that more than 92 percent of horses slaughtered are in good condition and able to live productive lives. Of the more than 400,000 horses slaughtered in 2009, 368,000 could have gone on to live healthy and happy lives. “This is one of the reasons why I started my blog - The Ups & Downs of Retraining a Thoroughbred Racehorse,” shares Kelly. “I want to show people that these horses are beautiful, intelligent animals and they deserve a second chance.”

Of her experience at Lourdes, Kelly shares that as a student, **Mary Stockwell**, PhD, History, Political Science & Geography Chair, left a lasting impression on her. “She was just so passionate about history,” recalls Kelly. “To see how much



she loved teaching really inspired me and I always thought if I had half of her dedication and spirit, I would like to be a professor myself someday.”

Maybe Kelly is more like Dr. Stockwell than she thinks – one need only read her blog and hear her inspiring story to see this same passion. As an alumna, Kelly is a shining example of the Lourdes mission being put to work beyond the campus border.

To learn more about her life and care of Angel, Señor Sancho and Dino, visit her blog at <http://retraininganottb.blogspot.com>. ♦