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CONTACT: Laurie Waggoner
Founder/Director of Ranch Operations
786-218-4828 or laurie@helpthehorses.org

FROM DYING IN THE DIRT TO LIVING THE DREAM

One year after rescue, once destitute pony adopted by Canadian show stable

(HOMESTEAD, FL – 12/27/16) As rescue stories go, they don't get much better than this. An emaciated pony found dying in the dirt at a ramshackle boarding facility a year ago will be leaving her abusive past far behind her this week.

Fifteen hundred miles behind, that is. The pretty young filly was officially adopted from South Florida SPCA yesterday, and on Thursday begins the first leg of her journey to Sherwood Farm in Ontario, Canada, a stable known for its remarkable ability to transform formerly abused horses' lives into amazing success stories.



What a difference a year makes. Amazing Grace near death on 12/30/2015 (left), and fully recovered at SFSPCA in July, 2016 (right).

"Every so often I see a photo of an animal in need, and it calls my name," said adopter Marilyn Lee. "It's strange really. It's a sense. Both my girls and son have it, too."



The before-and-after photos of the pony, Amazing Grace, spoke to Lee. "I saw her current photo on South Florida SPCA's Facebook page and thought, 'now there is a lovely pony.' Then I saw her in the dirt, and that was it," she explained. "I know she will need special handling to give her the chance to succeed, which we are fully prepared to do." *Photo at left: The Sherwood Farm barn family with several of its rescues and Santa last Christmas. Photo credit: Rachel Sulman Photography.*

While transport details are being ironed out, Sherwood Farm is abuzz with the exciting news. "Grace already has quite a fan club up here. We can't wait to welcome her to her new home," said Lee.

That new home, idyllically located on the crest of the Niagara Escarpment, is heaven on earth compared to the hellhole she was found in last year.



Amazing Grace at the rescue scene on 12/30/15.

On December 30, 2015, South Florida SPCA rescuers rushed to the scene of reported animal cruelty in Miami Gardens, FL and found four emaciated horses being kept in absolute squalor. And then they spotted the young pony, down to skin and bone, sprawled in the dirt. She struggled to get up but had lost too much muscle, lacking the strength to stand. Her body was shutting down, and she was dying.



Amazing Grace desperately feeding on grass once at SFSPCA.

With no time to lose, SFSPCA raced against the clock to get her and the other horses to its ranch. She had to be carried on and off the trailer, but once on the soft ground she began devouring mouthfuls of grass, showing her strong will to live. It was then she was named **Amazing Grace**.

to stand unassisted, and symptoms indicated possible kidney failure. She thrashed in her stall causing further injuries, which was heartbreaking.

With a lot of effort, she was brought to her feet and led to a stall for care and comfort. She made it through the first night, but after two days Grace still didn't have the strength



Receiving emergency care at Palm Beach Equine Clinic on New Year's Day 2016.

Her needs exceeded what could be provided at the SFSPCA ranch, so on New Year's Day she was taken to Palm Beach Equine Clinic in Wellington, FL. The incredible veterinarians and staff rallied around her, and after a week of intensive care, she was healthy enough to return to SFSPCA.



A young SFSPCA volunteer with Amazing Grace.

Grace thrived slowly but surely with the dedication of SFPCA staff and volunteers. Her recovery took months with many uncertain moments, but finally she regained her weight, and became strong, confident, and beautiful.

“Ordinarily, SFSPCA doesn’t adopt outside the state of Florida, much less out of the country. But we made an exception for Marilyn and her daughter Robin, who have

done an incredible job with Prodigioso, an off-track Thoroughbred we rescued back in July, 2012,” said Laurie Waggoner, SFSPCA founder and director of ranch operations.

The former racehorse had been dumped in The Everglades, hobbled with a cement block tied to a back leg, and left to starve and die in the sweltering South Florida summer heat. He was emaciated and newly blinded in one eye, suffered painful rope burns, and could barely walk with all four hooves infected with thrush.

Prodigioso was transferred to the Thoroughbred nonprofit Florida TRAC, where it took a full eight months for him to recover physically and mentally. As with Amazing Grace, a picture on the organization’s Facebook page was all it took for Marilyn and Robin. They adopted him and brought him to their Sherwood Farm in May, 2013. Today, “The Everglades Horse” is a phenom in the top Canadian hunter show circuits, and has wowed crowds in Ocala, FL at HITS (Horse shows In The Sun) and in Baltimore, MD at Pimlico Race Track at the Thoroughbred Makeover and National Symposium.



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Photography*

Prodigioso, “The Everglades Horse” when rescued in July, 2012 (left), and showing with Robin Hannah-Carlton in August, 2013.

“There is no greater joy than seeing a physically and emotionally defeated horse stand tall beside others who have not endured their hardship,” said Marilyn Lee. “It’s the same for any living creature.”

Only time will tell if Amazing Grace’s future will hold the same showing success as Prodigioso’s. For now, everyone at Sherwood Farm is just happy to give her a loving home, and a life that hopefully erases her abusive past.



“I can hardly wait to snuggle her,” said one young rider to Marilyn. When told Grace might be a tad sassy, the girl said, “That's fine, she's allowed.”

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Related Video: <https://youtu.be/QTuH14VFzsA>

PHOTOS AND INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST.

South Florida Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization located in Miami, Florida. Founded in 1992, it is dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation and adoption of abused, neglected and abandoned horses and other livestock. The organization also educates the community about responsible equine care and ownership, and promotes the welfare of animals through local and national advocacy. South Florida SPCA works in partnership with local law enforcement and receives partial funding from Miami-Dade Animal Services (MDAS). For more information, visit www.helpthehorses.org.