

Ebenezer to Have Cozier Winter in New Home

by Joe Dimino • Contributing Writer

Ever since April 28, 2010, Grandview's famous donkey, Ebenezer, began settling into his new world. On this day, he was delivered from his animal hospital home of 83 days in rural Raymore, Missouri at Equine Health Solutions. The need to hospitalize Ebenezer stemmed from white line disease in all four hooves, badly diseased gums and a lung filled with fluid following a long, tough winter.

Upon his homecoming, a newly healed Ebenezer was welcomed like a hero with a crowd, new barn and a fancy new fencing system to keep him safe.

"Just having him back to share my day is pretty awesome. He isn't sick anymore," said Shirley Phillips, one of Ebenezer's main and regular caretakers. "It's the way he holds that big head up now instead of letting it hang down. He seems to walk with an air of purpose... like he is excited to see what the day will hold."

As Ebenezer settled back into his large

field west of Main Street, life continued with a mix of the old and many new routines. He is now an older animal that was likely on death's doorsteps prior to his treatment stint. Prior to his hospitalization, tough realizations and a big decision were to be made.

"Dr. Wagner (Ebenezer's doctor at Equine) told us that we would have to put Ebenezer down or get him some help. We needed to make the decision in a week to 10 days," Shirley said. "Randy (Shirley's husband) simply said 'Fix him up!' We are so thankful for every caring person that helped Ebenezer. We received some very heartfelt letters and notes that brought us to tears."

Speaking of his new home, it is a castle compared to what existed before. Ebenezer needed to have a waterproof barn so that it could remain dry. It's important for his hooves to stay dry so that they can completely heal. His field is also sectioned off with fencing so that he will stay out of the creek and any other wet conditions that could



An EBENEZER 2011 calendar is now available for \$15 cash at the Hard Bean Cafe. Proceeds go to the donkey's care.



jeopardize the healing process in his hooves.

"It seemed like it took him a while to get used to his new digs and the fact that he didn't have the run of the entire property," Shirley began. "He seemed a little overwhelmed by the size of his barn but now seems to be enjoying it. Since we have added additional fencing to expand the area he can roam in he seems a lot happier. He loves to go to the 'West 40' as we all affectionately call it. It's the side closest to Robinson Pike Road."

In addition to visits from his owners, Ben and Victoria Alvarado, Ebenezer has a team of considerate friends and health professionals

that are doing the good work to ensure that Ebenezer ripens fully back to health. Shirley and Randy are key to this process and spend many hours a week feeding, grooming, letting him free and being there for all of his needs.

Other visitors that take care of Ebenezer include Carol & Clyde Hestand, Anne & Sam Mollet, Maryann Peale, Nancy & P.T. Ward, along with Matt & Jackie Koch. Each and every one of his caretakers have donated their time, love and energy to make the property workable, along with giving Ebenezer the physical care he needs to make it from day to day. Each individual has a strong connection

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to Ebenezer and an unpaid commitment to simply see that he is around for the next several decades or more.

"Dr. Wagner comes out to the property to do the regular check ups, vaccinations, etc. that Ebenezer must have," Shirley noted. "The farrier comes to see Ebenezer about every 5 weeks to trim his hooves and check on how we are doing in the fight against White Line disease."

Along with his healthy turnaround due to a huge outpouring of money from the Kansas City metro, Ebenezer was very lucky to have gotten a brand new structure to live in. As Shirley noted, many things fell into place to make the barn possible and it was essentially a miracle that it happened at all.

"It so happened that the company I was working for in February merged with another company and it afforded me the opportunity to have just enough money to have a local contractor, Greg Melchoir, build it," Shirley explained. "We got some free metal side panels from Jr. Teague, who is a friend of our family, along with being a longtime Grandview businessowner and resident."

Over the months, materials have been donated and Randy has worked diligently to expand the barn and make it as comfortable as possible. There is even a fan board just outside of his roaming area that is filled with pictures of Ebenezer's friends and fans.

"It seems like every time we need to do something else to the barn or the property everything falls into place to be able to make it happen," Shirley noted with a sense of

pride. "I really do believe that God performed a miracle to save Ebenezer and make his remaining days as happy and healthy as possible."

After the influx of attention Ebenezer received via local media outlets and a robust Facebook page during his stay at Equine, he amassed more fans and visitors to the barn. Shirley still receives a large influx of e-mails asking how he is doing. Along the way, Shirley has accumulated a lot of great stories about how an Ebenezer visit has moved them.

"I specifically remember two daughters that came to see him and told how their mom was having chemotherapy treatments. They would drive her by Ebenezer's and she would tell them that she knew she was going to be alright as long as Ebenezer was still standing," Shirley explained. "Sometimes it is overwhelming to know what Ebenezer has meant to so many."

As the cold of winter descends upon Grandview, Ebenezer is ready with his new lease on health and a thriving donkey palace.

To ensure that Ebenezer continues to have healthy food and a warm, dry home to make it through this winter, a 2011 calendar is now for sale at the Hard Bean Cafe on Grandview Main Street.

The calendar features the work of local photographer and Art on Main contributor George A. Gross, and features up close and personal photographs of the beloved donkey. It is printed on thick cardstock paper for long-lasting durability. The calendar can be yours with a \$15 donation.

"The proceeds we receive over the cost of the calendar are going to be put on

Ebenezer's account at The May Milling Company in Grandview where we buy all of Ebenezer's barn shavings, food, straw, and hay," Shirley said.

Shirley feels such gratitude to a very caring Kansas City metro that came together to save a donkey that has done so much for so many.

"I wish I could meet all of them and personally say thank you because each one was instrumental in saving his life," Shirley said. "The outpouring of love for this one little donkey was and is still so overwhelming."

Things have assuredly changed for Ebenezer with the constant medical monitoring and increased visits to ensure his well-being, but he is alive and back where he belongs. There was one time in particular recently when he was stuck in his barn due to a long stretch of wet weather. When Shirley let him out to roam he shot past her in a full run.

"He ran in a straight line back and forth under his favorite pine tree. Then he ran up to Randy and started braying and going around in a circle while he was braying," Shirley beamed. "I think that was his best day and ours too. It was like he was just so happy and saying, 'Hello world. I'm back.'"

Ebenezer's caretakers are still asking that the public not feed him anything this winter, as he can choke on food that requires chewing. "But there is nothing wrong with people visits," Shirley added. "He loves to have people stop by. He will act like he is hungry because that's just the donkey thing, but he is being fed quite well as evidenced by his new healthy appearance."