



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Todd Pierce calms a horse after halter breaking the animal in front of inmates at TRCI on Wednesday in Umatilla.

PARABLE: Pierce said people can choose to accept God's love

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unique. But I think the thing that is so damaging to her is that she's been doing it for so long."

Some of the men in the prison might be able to relate, he said. But it wasn't too late for the horse and it wasn't too late for them.

Pierce said an unbroken horse is an example of wasted potential. The animal running in circles around him had been handed food and water without anything required in return, he said, stuck behind the same fence every day like just another piece of livestock.

"Their only purpose is to be consumed," he said. "But she's not one of those. She's something special."

Asking her to accept a saddle and rider probably seemed like a punishment to her. But Pierce said if she took that "leap of faith" it would allow her to live a better life — a life that allowed her to leave her pasture, to see more of the world and accomplish valuable things.

In the same way, Pierce told the men lined up around the pen, people can choose to accept God's love and accept the responsibilities he gives them. The choice can open up their opportunities and allow them to change the world around them for the better, and it's a choice every one of them could make that very day.

"It's not tomorrow, not yesterday, it's this shot right now," he said.

Whether or not the inmates decided to take that shot, the horse did. With the help of a prison administrator who was handy with a lasso, the mare eventually calmed down, allowing Pierce to rub her nose and look into her eyes, talking softly to her until she was ready to let him drape himself over her back.

"I don't want to violate her trust, to make her think she has no other choice," he said. "She does, it's just her other choices suck."

By the end of the hour-long session, Pierce was sitting on a saddle on her back, trotting around the ring



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Todd Pierce puts a halter on a horse while breaking the animal Wednesday at TRCI in Umatilla.



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as he testified of the love God had for each one of the inmates.

A "son of this world," he said, took care of themselves first no matter how it hurt others, but a "son of the light" showed love and humility toward everyone.

"I've realized God isn't just fixing me, he wants to recreate me," he said. "There's got to be nothing left I'm not willing to lay down... The miracle of being one of God's sons is we can start over."

It was a message that resonated with many of the inmates, who knelt in prayer with Pierce when he got off the newly-broken mare.

Jamaul Jenkins was moved to tears as Pierce approached him after the ceremony for a one-on-one conversation. Jenkins said Pierce told him he had felt prompted that he needed to speak with him, and he was right — Jenkins had been struggling with the recent death of his mother and other heavy trials.

God works in mysterious

ways, Jenkins said, and he believed God had worked through Riding High Ministries that day.

"Things I'm going through, I really needed to hear that," he said.

Jenkins had never seen anything like a horse being broken before, but his face lit up as he called the whole afternoon a wonderful experience.

"I feel a weight lifted off my shoulders," he said. "It feels good to be forgiven."

Shane Hall said watching the demonstration was a "great example of the relationship between God and man," and Christopher Mack said he was moved by Pierce's metaphors as well.

"I thought the analogy was really fitting," he said. "I didn't think they could break a horse in such a short amount of time, but it was really genuine, it wasn't phony or contrived."

Pierce, a former professional rodeo cowboy and current chaplain for the Professional Bull Riders circuit, said he had created the "living parable" not to convert people to any specific religion but to help them live a better life, both inside the prison and after their release.

"I want these men to change the way they perceive

themselves, and that will change the way they conduct themselves," he said.

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EOTEC: Board officially approved \$9.1M budget

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much on time and pretty much on budget."

For the two major components left — the livestock barns and rodeo arena — Frew Development Group has a more limited role.

The EOTEC board had expected to award a bid for construction of the barns on Friday, but held off after the two submitted bids came in more than \$1 million over the \$2.6 million budget the board had set, signaling a need to scale down plans or make other adjustments to the bid package before re-issuing it.

Designs for the rodeo arena, which board member Dan Dorran said at a June 10 meeting "have been looked at more than any drawings on earth," were supposed to be finished in February but were not put out to bid until this month.

"Those aren't our projects," Frew said. "If they were, I guarantee they would have been built by now."

Board member Ed Brookshier said he agreed it was time for the board to trust the construction and design details to Frew, with the assistance of a local partner, similar to when Brookshier was Hermiston's city manager and trusted the engineers and contractors hired by the city to do their job instead of asking them to bring every detail back to the city council.

"Our problem here, people, is process, and we have no more time for process," Brookshier said. "I still believe we can get the product done on time and on budget, but if we keep going as we're going, we're never going to get there, or at least not next year."

Don Miller, who represents the Umatilla County Fair, said if the fair board was not consulted as

often moving forward, there were going to be decisions made that they disagreed with. But he also said after months of meetings that Frew Development Group and the EOTEC board have a good understanding of what the fair wants.

"The reality is, no matter what, these barns ... are going to be superior to what we have currently," he said.

Board member Kim Puzey said after seeing Frew Development Group deliver on the site preparation and event center, he was ready to make a motion to have Frew Development Group take "a leading role" in completion of the barns and rodeo arena with the help of a local partner to manage day-to-day questions when Frew was busy with other projects.

The board unanimously voted in favor of Puzey's motion, and Frew said his firm was happy to take on that role and had a local partner in mind.

On Friday the EOTEC board also officially approved the \$9.1 million budget for 2016-2017 as recommended by its budget committee. The budget includes a \$606,075 general fund and an \$8,525,000 construction fund.

Operating revenues include \$45,190 each from Umatilla County and the city of Hermiston, an estimated \$117,730 from the Tourism Promotion Assessment, event center rental revenue of \$40,000 and a beginning cash balance of \$55,300 undesignated and \$297,665 in TPA revenue reserved for marketing purposes.

Operational funds will pay for the salary of business manager Heather Cannell, an administrative assistant, two janitorial staff and .25 FTE of a finance position through the city of Hermiston.

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DOGS: Boomer, of Kennewick, won the races

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brought plenty of bravado to the competition, occasionally giving a thumbs up to the crowd as he ate.

The hot dog buns ended up sticking to the inside of his throat, slowing him down enough to give Costley the win.

While the hot dog eating contest brought the dawn of a new era, the 10th Dogtona 400 marked the end of another.

A Kennewick dachshund named Boomer edged out more than a dozen other contestants, ending the reign of four-time champion Miss Fatty Patty, who was elimi-

nated in a previous heat.

A runner up twice before, Boomer's owner used a stuffed squirrel to propel him across the finish line and into the pantheon of wiener dog greats.

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