

Riding High Ministries presents 'living parable' to inmates

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

The horse was older and more stubborn than Todd Pierce was used to, but he told the circle of inmates around the pen he didn't plan to give up on her.

"I know miracles can happen," he said.

Pierce, founder of Riding High Ministries, had arranged for the 6-year-old mare to be brought to Two Rivers Correctional Institution for a demonstration on breaking a horse to a saddle, conducted as a metaphor for accepting God's help to change.

The horse, however, was having none of it.

She ran around and around the makeshift pen in the hot sun, ignoring Pierce's attempts to calm her and eliciting the occasional groan from the inmates as she skillfully dodged the lasso yet again.

"I would imagine this ain't her first rodeo," Pierce said, drawing chuckles from the audience.

"We've all got our own personalities, our own fears, our own issues," he continued. "Hers aren't 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.



Todd Pierce, founder of Riding High Ministries, of Shelley, Idaho, works on saddle breaking a horse as a group of inmates watch Wednesday at TRCI in Umatilla.

"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 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



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS
Todd Pierce comforts inmate Jamaul Jenkins while the two pray together Wednesday at TRCI in Umatilla.

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.

LOG:

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11:35 p.m. - A caller told law enforcement she asked a drunk man to leave the residence on Walker Road, Hermiston, because he "made the children uncomfortable," and now he is driving a pickup on Bridge Road.

1:36 p.m. - The Morrow County Sheriff's Office responded to a report of a woman screaming near Northwest Jones Street, Heppner, but did not find anything suspicious.

TUESDAY

12:15 a.m. - A caller reported he saw a female walking on Ott Road, Hermiston, and gave her a ride. She claimed her boyfriend threatened her, held a gun to her head, stole \$800 dollars and kicked her out of a vehicle at Ott and Airport roads. The female, though, who said her name was "Avalon," did not want to go to police because she has a warrant out of Clackamas County. The caller said he took her to Umatilla Inn, Umatilla. Law enforcement did not find her.

10:48 a.m. - A German Shepherd on Daytona Lane, Hermiston, attacked a neighbor's chickens, killing one and nearly killing or injuring others. The owner of the fowl reported this has happened before and would shoot the dog.

11:38 a.m. - An lone business owner reported he received a flyer from a company in Portland using his business phone number.

3 p.m. - A Morrow County deputy sheriff assisted a school bus with children that broke down on Interstate 84 east of Boardman.

4:35 p.m. - An Irrigon caller on Southwest Wyoming Avenue reported someone tried to hit her with a cellphone and threatened to hit her little sister. A Morrow County sheriff's deputy arrived and told everyone they need to be civil and separate if they cannot.

5:43 p.m. - A child in Echo swallowed iodine, which promoted an adult to contact "poison control," where someone advised her the substance was not toxic but could cause a stomach ache and vomiting, so no need for an ambulance.

ARRESTS, CITATIONS

Saturday

•Oregon State Police arrested Lonnie Ray Martin, 67, no address provided, for DUII and refusing to take an intoxication level test. Police later cited and released Martin.

Friday

•Hermiston police arrested Kristi Deann Higheagle, 35, of Pendleton, for driving while suspended/revoked, possession of methamphetamine, possession of Hydrocodone, and resisting arrest.

•Hermiston police arrested Juan Marin Flores, 41, no address provided, for strangulation and harassment, both misdemeanors.

Thursday

•Pendleton police arrested Derrick Donovan Dix, 23, of Hermiston, on charges of domestic violence after receiving a report at 2:36 a.m. that Dix pushed his girlfriend out of a moving vehicle then took her car at

Deans Market & Deli, Pendleton. Dix pleaded not guilty Thursday in circuit court in Pendleton to charges of fourth-degree assault, strangulation and menacing, all misdemeanors. Dix remains in the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, in lieu of \$10,000 bail.

Wednesday

•Morrow County Sheriff's Office

cited Heidi Jo Hanna Abercrombie, 45, of Irrigon, for having a potentially dangerous dog.

•Hermiston police arrested Cuauhtemoc Valenzuela, 23, of 230 E. Dogwood Ave., Hermiston, for second-degree assault and unlawful use of a weapon against another.

Tuesday

•Umatilla police arrested Charles Edward Waite Jr., 53, of Cato, New York, for second-degree forgery, identity theft, negotiating a bad check, and second-degree theft.

•Boardman police arrested Tyler Joe Stone, 28, of Hermiston, for felony attempt to flee police.



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Worship Community



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Wed. Prayer & Bible Study...6:00pm

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Rev. Ed Baker - Rev. Nina Baker

Sunday:
Sunday School.....10:00 am
Worship.....11:00 am
Evening Service.....7:00 pm
Wednesday Service...7:00 pm
"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."
1 Pet. 5:7

First United Methodist Church Of Hermiston

Rev. Dr. James T. Pierce, Pastor
Open Hearts, Open minds, Open doors

191 E. Gladys Ave.
Sunday Worship at 11am
(541) 567-3002

Grace Baptist Church

555 SW 11th, Hermiston
567-9497

Nursery provided for all services
Sunday School - 9:30 AM
Worship - 10:45 AM
6:00 pm
Wed Prayer & Worship - 7:00 PM
"Proclaiming God's word, growing in God's grace"

Hermiston Seventh-day Adventist Church

Saturdays
Adult Bible Study and Children's classes 9:30 a.m.

Worship Service 10:45 a.m.
Pastor Dean Lifshay
855 W. Highland Ave.
PO Box 272 • Hermiston, Oregon
541-567-8241

Echo Community Church

21 N. Bonanza Street, Echo OR
Phone: (541) 376-8108

Sunday School • 9:30am
Worship • 10:45am
Children's Church • 11:15am
Potluck & Communion ~
First Sunday of the Month

Our Lady of Angels Catholic Church

565 W. HERMISTON AVE.
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.....English 7:00 am
THURSDAYSpanish 6:00 pm
SATURDAY:.....English 5:00 pm
.....Spanish 7:00 pm
SUNDAY:.....English 9:00 am
.....Bilingual 11:00 am
.....Spanish 1:00 pm
OFFICE.....567-5812

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Spanish- Pastor Genaro Loreda
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