



## *Ranch loses Gus, teacher and friend to the kids*

Ranch residents and staff experienced a loss on Nov. 6, when Gus, equine angel horse, passed on.

"Gus was a favorite for many DBGR and community clients since he came to the Ranch Aug. 20, 2005," Kristi Schaefer, riding director, said. "His size drew people to him and his easy-going nature bonded people to him."

Gus, who was just over 16 hands high and 26 years old, came to the Ranch very head-shy, however this provided a wonderful opportunity for our clients to work on their patience. The kids soon realized that they had to form a trusting relationship with Gus before he would allow them to touch his head or try to put on his headstall. Once Gus felt that relationship had been formed, he would simply drop his head to his knees, so they could just slip the headstall over his ears. He was used for Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy groups, and sometimes the clients were only as tall as Gus' legs!

"It was always up to Gus," Schaefer said. "If he felt there wasn't a true connection with the client, he would just keep his nose in the air. Our clients found out that if they weren't going to put any effort into forming a relationship with Gus, they weren't going to get very far with him."

Gus was dubbed "the camel" for his long, slow, rocking-chair motion strides as he, volunteers and the kids walked through the arena's sand. He developed a growth on his neck making it difficult for him to eat. His quality of life had steadily deteriorated, as surgery was not an option, therefore the difficult decision was made to send him on.

Gus received lots of love his last weekend by several of DBGR's female residents. He was groomed a couple of times and was given a nice warm blanket to wear. Many of the girls cried, knowing it would be the last time they would get to see Gus. But even in the end, Gus was still working his magic of teaching lessons in life.

"I and all who he has touched in his life at DBGR will forever miss his easy-going attitude and his 'don't rush me' point of view," said Schaefer. "His last chapter in life was spent with people who loved, cared for and appreciated him. Schaefer bought

Gus from a livestock auction and probably saved his life, as he was most likely going to the slaughter house.

"God blessed us with Gus' presence," Schaefer said. "And I know he is one of our equine angels watching over us."

Gus had his very own Equine Angel-Carla Isom, marketing and public relations director at the Ranch.

*'If Gus felt there wasn't  
a true connection with the client,  
he would just keep  
his nose in the air.  
Our clients found out that if they  
weren't going to put any effort  
into forming a relationship  
with Gus, they weren't going  
to get very far with him.'*

*--Kristi Schaefer,  
Therapeutic Riding Director*



"Gus was so big and gentle," Isom said. "I loved visiting him, standing in the arena while he and the other horses crowded round for a head rub or pat. I'll miss him." Isom said one can truly feel that these horses are so perceptive--and it's no small wonder, since many of them are, like Gus, rescued from harm and in need of care.

"I encourage everyone who has a love for children and animals to become an Equine Angel," Isom said. "In this way, you can help the horses, as they in turn help the kids, teaching them life lessons--some very difficult, like losing Gus, but some so wonderful, like regaining trust. And you can't measure what that's worth in the life of a child."