

As a young child, I didn't live the best life. I went through many obstacles that most children do not experience. These struggles include five foster homes, at least seven different school changes, and housing issues, all occurring at the ages of 4-11. On the morning of my 10th birthday, I woke up in a fold-up chair under a bridge in Tennessee and was given a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, purchased at the dollar store next door, for breakfast. My brother and I were homeless and lived under that bridge for five days. It wasn't until we had spent six months in New York, bouncing between houses and schools, that Child Protective Services showed up and took us into custody. We were placed in a foster home with new, temporary parents and siblings. We started in another new school and made more new friends, but at that point, it had just become a pattern. Another six months later, though, we were informed that a family was interested in meeting us. I was immediately stoked and we began visiting them, sometimes staying the night. We even went on vacation for a week before we moved in, but once we had, I settled right in. I was able to have my 11th birthday surrounded by people who I knew would love me as much as they could. I decided that I wanted to be adopted. It took a year of anxious waiting and preparing, but the day finally came that I was officially made part of the family. In that year I had learned that my dad worked near

horses and that there was an adoption barn for retired racehorses. I have always wanted to be a veterinarian and especially work with horses. Here was my opportunity to help animals through an adoption process like I went through.

I waited and waited, anticipating the day I could start volunteering at the Finger Lakes Thoroughbred Adoption Program known as The Purple Haze Center. At least four days a week, I go and help out at the barn. The ironic thing is that I stumbled upon the chance of a lifetime and was lucky enough to be able to take it. Somehow I feel that I can connect to and understand the horses' situations and because of this I work especially hard to make sure they get the proper home they deserve. I help clean their stalls, feed and water them, and even train and exercise them. I know the feeling of simply wanting to be wanted and, therefore, put in my effort to give all the horses in the barn love and devotion. It's not just hard work that helps to accomplish this, though. I know from experience that fate has its place in the world, too. I don't know what else could have positioned me with such a wonderful and beneficial family. I'm here to assure that the horses' destinies turn out as good as mine did.

Having lost my home and friends so many times, I learned that one must simply persevere through the obstacles in life. Volunteering at the

adoption barn has helped me realize my potential in helping Julie Smith and Demaris Cruz get these great horses a fresh start. The skills that I have established by working at The Purple Haze Center will help me in the future. By submitting this essay, I get a chance to possibly repay those who have given me such a rare experience. I know the adoption barn is just the start of the great outcomes to arrive in mine and the horsesqfuture.