

A pair, not two of a kind

Nimble and Nola were chasing one another around their pen in the dusky evening, bucking and twisting, charging at each other. When they got a little out of breath they faced off, nose to nose, snorting, tails wagging, before they began the chase again. They stopped dead when they noticed me standing at the fence watching them, then ambled over to check out the possibility of something good to eat. It wasn't time for their bottle and I had no bread, so they licked my hands a couple of times and began a game of "touch the water with my nose and jump back in surprise." It's one of their favorites, but they're very young and easily amused. They are, of course, the Holstein heifers Papa is raising on a bottle.

When he brought them home and opened the trailer gate, their personalities were already plain and very different. Nimble was noticeably smaller as well as being mostly black with white patches, finer boned, with a small, dainty head and bright eyes that missed nothing. She stuck her head out of the trailer, scoped out the place, gauged the drop and hopped out at once. Nimbly. Right then she became Nimble. Nola was bigger, slower, mostly white with some black splotches, and much more cautious. She, too, poked her head out, surveyed the place and retreated into the depths of the trailer. While Nimble was poking around outside, taking note of the peacocks and geese with dropped head and splayed forelegs before moving on, Nola was moving around anxiously in the trailer, maaing once in a while for her trailer mate. She wouldn't be coaxed or cajoled into taking the short hop down onto the ground to join Nimble. Finally Papa took hold of her and gently forced her out into the open.

Nimble came to her at once, touched noses, then continued her investigation of their new digs. Nola stood rooted to the ground where she landed, looking around as if bewildered, which she probably was. They were 5-days-old. That's not long in a world that doesn't treat the helpless with any particular interest or care. They had come from a dairy near Waco. The dairy business by its very nature doesn't treat the small and helpless with any special consideration when it comes to a natural life. Lucky calves are allowed to nurse their dams for a day or two because the first milk — called colostrum — while loaded with the mother's antibodies and essential to the future health and well-being of any newborn, is not commonly consumed by humans. There are a few people who believe it's beneficial to their health and for sure it won't do them any harm, but it's completely seasonal and not often available.

Good dairymen, concerned with the future of the calves that are taken from their dams at only a few days old, see to it that they have that first milk, and these babies did. They were healthy, but orphaned and now dependent upon humans for their lives. Nola took it harder than Nimble. She followed the smaller heifer's lead and seemed to have little initiative of her own.

Nimble had enough for both of them. Together they swigged down the bottles they got four times a day, rich goat's milk cut by one-third at first with water. Gradually the feedings decreased to three as they increased to all milk.

Nola scoured but we expected that. We've never had a bottle calf that didn't. Even careful bottle feeding isn't like on demand from the mother; added to the stress of separation and travel.

Nimble came down with scours a few days later, but it wasn't that hard to get them back on track. Papa's done it plenty of times. Once they felt better, Nimble led Nola around the pen and then out into the big world for day trips. They never went far from the barn and were always ready to follow the bottle into their stall at evening feeding.

When the cold rainy weather moved in they were kept up. Wet and cold together are the enemies of baby things, and like the dairy goats are different from the bigger meat goats, so the dairy calves are different from the harder beef calves. The heifers curled down into their bedding together and waited for the sun to show its warm face again. Day by day they have grown well; though Nimble is still daintier than Nola she has pretty much caught up in height. Nola is more lively and curious on her own now, but they are still always together. They make a great argument for raising two of any kind of babies together, and a fascinating study of babies born in the same place and raised the same way yet being so different.

Once again, there's a lesson in there somewhere.



EGGS IN MY POCKET

Mary Fenoglio

Family offers hope to horses

By SHANNON LOWRY

When Hurricane Harvey slammed into south Texas in August 2017, Georgetown equestrian Amber Kurkowski and her husband, Chuck Witt, felt compelled to help rescue horses and livestock left behind in the massive flooding.

They were four days into their trip in the Beaumont area, assisting horse and cattle rescues, when Ms. Kurkowski got a call from the head of the Bluebonnet Equine Humane Society, asking if they could pick up an emergency seizure. The couple had planned to return to their ranch that evening because they were low on supplies, but stayed another night so they could pick up the horse.

They met the county sheriff at a ranch north of Beaumont, who told them he didn't think the palomino had the strength to make it all the way to Georgetown.

"When I first saw her, my heart sank," Ms. Kurkowski said. "I felt absolutely devastated for this poor, sweet horse.

"Zinnia was experiencing severe starvation, was in poor shape, could barely walk and she had been standing in a mud pit for almost a week. She had open wounds on her legs where her skin was sloughing off and she had severe rain rot on her back. She also had a hard time walking because her muscles were so depleted."

Mr. Witt and Ms. Kurkowski gently loaded Zinnia into the trailer and immediately took her to a veterinarian. The vet gave her a 50 percent chance of survival. Because of how emaciated she was — neglect that clearly began long before the hurricane arrived — he didn't think she could survive the trip to Georgetown. He gave Zinnia some antibiotics and said he could not offer to hold her because of how severe her starvation was.

The couple trailered Zinnia to a friend in College Station, who took in the horse and got her the immediate care she needed. The mare, estimated to be about 20 to 25 years old, went through two weeks of intensive care.

"After we had dropped Zinnia off, all we could think about was how much she needed a loving home and how heartbreaking her situation was," Ms. Kurkowski said. "On our drive back to Georgetown, we decided we wanted to adopt her and see her through her recovery and give



Shannon Lowry

Zinnia has regained her health after suffering in Hurricane Harvey's torrential rains last year. The sweet-tempered mare has recovered and found a home with Georgetown equestrian Amber Kurkowski.

her a forever retirement home."

Two weeks later, Ms. Kurkowski picked up the horse. "It took us a few months for all the rain rot to go away, and a few more weeks of wound care to get her wounds on her legs to heal," Ms. Kurkowski said. "It took seven months for her to recover from the starva-

tion and get back to good health. During that recovery, she won our hearts through her sweet, gentle disposition and she will have a forever home with us for the remainder of her life."

In the last year and a few months, Zinnia has come a long way. Her coat gleams. Her ribs

no longer show. She doesn't walk with a limp. Remarkably, this gentle soul has somehow trotted away from her terrible past.

Ms. Kurkowski and Mr. Witt are Iraq war veterans with two tours of duty under their belts. They met at Fort Hood after Ms.

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Horse rescue needs donors, volunteers

By SHANNON LOWRY

Bluebonnet Equine Humane Society took in its 1,000th horse November 7.

BEHS primarily works with law enforcement agencies to take in abused, neglected, stray and abandoned horses from throughout Texas. Rescued horses are placed in foster homes, where they are rehabilitated by experienced horsemen and professional trainers until they are healthy and ready for adoption.

Their 1,000th rescued horse, a gelding, was removed from negligent owners by law enforcement. When he arrived at Bluebonnet in College Station, he was emaciated, his skeletal structure was visible beneath his skin and his coat

was coarse and unhealthy. He is gaining weight and looking better each day. But recovery takes time.

"I really hate that we're needed," says Dr. Jennifer Williams, Bluebonnet's executive director. "I wish every horse, donkey, mule, pony and miniature horse in our state had loving homes. But since so many equines are starving, abused and abandoned each year, I'm glad we can help them."

Amber Kurkowski and Chuck Witt of Georgetown took in the 1,001 Bluebonnet horse, Patton, who is being fostered by Ms. Kurkowski.

Bluebonnet has launched a campaign, 1000 Donors for 1000 Horses, to raise funds to provide veterinarian and farrier care and feed to the next needy

horses. Routine veterinary care alone for a single horse can cost around \$400 per year, which doesn't include farrier care — hoof care — or other expenses. The rescue group also needs more foster homes for horses.

"We know we've set an ambitious goal," Dr. Williams said. "But we want to be able to help as many horses as possible, and that's going to take a lot of help from the community. We hope that our campaign will not only raise donations to help more horses, but that we can also raise awareness and recruit more foster homes and volunteers. Working together, we can make a huge difference for needy horses."

To learn more about BEHS or getting involved, visit www.bluebonnetequine.org

Ziti and Italian meatball soup warm a cold day

This week I have an assortment of great recipes that I've gathered up over the last several weeks. This first one comes from Gillian, who made it for dinner when I was up in Sherman a month or more ago. It is creamy and delicious, perfect with just a salad and bread, maybe a glass of red wine. She said it is good with sautéed mushrooms added, too, for something extra if you like.



COOK'S CORNER

Laurie Locke

Gillian's Baked Ziti

1 T. olive oil
1 lb. Italian sausage, casings removed
4 cloves garlic, minced
1/4 t. red pepper flakes, or more to taste
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1 (28 oz.) can crushed tomatoes
12 oz. ziti pasta
3/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1/2 cup heavy cream
1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
1/4 cup basil leaves, chiffonade (optional)

Heat olive oil in large skillet over medium high heat. Add sausage and cook until browned, making sure to crumble sausage as it cooks.

Stir in garlic and red pepper flakes, and cook, stirring fre-

quently, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Stir in tomatoes and bring to a simmer until slightly thickened, about 8-10 minutes. Stir in pasta and 3 cups water. Bring to a boil; cover, reduce heat and simmer until pasta is cooked through, about 13-16 minutes.

Remove from heat. Stir in Parmesan and heavy cream. Top with mozzarella and put in 350 degree oven until cheese is melted and all is heated through. Top with basil if you like, to serve. Serves 6-8. — Gillian Locke

I went on a fun vacation to Kauai a few weeks ago with some friends. While I was there, I got an email from Karen Pfister with two new recipes. She and her sister had been in Chicago and had come home with these two recipes from her cousin, Donna. It's nice to have friends helping me out even when I'm away playing.

Donna's Italian Meatball Soup

1-2 T. olive oil, or vegetable oil
1 cup chopped onion
1 1/2 cloves garlic
2 t. oregano
Italian meatballs ... purchased, and as many as you want
10 oz. chopped spinach

1 can diced tomatoes
2 cans beef broth

Cook onion and garlic in oil until softened. Add broth, tomatoes, spinach and oregano. Bring to a boil. Add meatballs and reduce heat to low. Cover and simmer until meatballs are heated through. — Karen Pfister

Tuscany Rice and Bean Soup

8 oz. Italian sausage, hot or mild, casings removed
3 (16 oz.) cans chicken broth
1 (28 oz.) can diced tomatoes
1/2 t. salt
1/4 t. black pepper
1/2 t. oregano
1 cup uncooked long-grain rice
1 (15 1/2 oz.) can Great Northern beans, undrained
Brown sausage in Dutch oven or large saucepan over medium-high heat. Stir in all remaining ingredients, bring to a boil, reduce to simmer, cover, and cook until rice is cooked, about 30 minutes. — Karen Pfister

These little muffin-biscuits would be wonderful served with one of the above soups. Janet Woods served them at book club a few months ago, and I've always loved them when she's made them. Easy and so tasty.

Janet's Delicious Muffin-Biscuits

2 cups self-rising flour
2 sticks salted butter, softened
1 cup sour cream
Mix flour, butter and sour cream together. Spoon into

greased mini-muffin tins and bake at 400 degrees for 8-10 minutes. If using regular-size muffin tins, baking time will be a little longer. — Janet Woods

I wrote a column recently on a Woman's Club meeting in my home, and mentioned Claudia Buster bringing these green chili squares, but didn't have the recipe yet. Well, here it is. These are slightly spicy little cheesy bites that are great for any party.

Claudia's Green Chili Squares

3 (4 oz.) cans diced green chiles, with juice
2 cups grated Monterey Jack cheese
2 cups grated sharp Cheddar cheese
1/2 t. black pepper
Splash of hot sauce
1/2 t. salt
6 large eggs, beaten
Heat oven to 300 degrees. Spray a 12x8-inch baking dish with oil or Pam. Spread out the green chiles evenly in the bottom of the pan. Mix the cheeses together and spread evenly over the chiles. Add the salt, pepper and hot sauce to the beaten eggs. Pour egg mixture over the cheese and pat the mixture down with the back of a spoon.

Bake for 45 minutes until the center is firm. Allow to sit for about 10 minutes and then cut into small (1-inch) squares. Serve warm. — Claudia Buster

It's a great time of year to be cooking. Enjoy.

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Family offers hope for horses

Continued from 1B

Kurkowski's first deployment. They also own K&W Engineering in Georgetown, specializing in structural, mechanical and electrical engineering.

The couple have adopted four horses rescued from terrible situations through Bluebonnet Equine Humane Society (BEHS), a Bell County rescue group that takes in horses, donkeys, mules, ponies and miniature horses from across Texas.

They currently are fostering three Bluebonnet horses. Ms. Kurkowski said they rescued their other six horses, mostly from kill pens and neglectful situations.

"I participated in the BEHS training challenge the last two years and both my horses were adopted," she said. "Also, I have assisted the Williamson County Sheriff with seizures and transfers to the rescue. I also help trailer horses from the point of [law enforcement] seizure to their new foster homes."

Ms. Kurkowski and Mr. Witt are enlarging their barn so they can foster more horses. Mr. Witt rides Cady, their adopted quarter horse, who was found wandering around San Antonio and transferred to Bluebonnet.



Shannon Lowry

Zinnia had been starved and neglected long before the Texas coastal area where she lived was hit by Hurricane Harvey in August 2017. Abandoned in the storm, she spent a week afterward standing in muddy flood waters.

Ms. Kurkowski, who was raised in northern Nevada, has been riding and taking care of horses since she was 8. As a kid, she showed horses in 4-H and competed in rodeos, riding western. After high school, she learned how to ride English and made the Army Equestrian team at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, serving as team captain during her senior

year. She met her husband at Fort Hood after her first tour of Iraq. Mr. Witt grew up in northern New Jersey and had never been around horses or livestock, but he's quickly adapted to ranching life. He supports Ms. Kurkowski's work to help horses and said he is grateful they are able to do so.

In 2011, Ms. Kurkowski res-

cued her first horse, Lulu, an off-the-track thoroughbred that was starved and abused. Through Lulu's rehabilitation and retraining, Ms. Kurkowski found her passion. She got involved with Bluebonnet in 2016.

Her first foster horse, Percy, a paint with one blue eye, ended up a foster-failure so the horse joined Ms. Kurkowski's family. Daughter Norma, age 7, has started to ride him. Both Norma and younger sister Beverly, age 6, have been riding since they were 2. Next year, the kids may participate in the training challenge, Ms. Kurkowski said.

"It's great for the girls," Ms. Kurkowski said. "They learn responsibility from caring for the horses and learning to ride. And it's a confidence builder."

The couple's ranch also is home to about 20 Boer goats, four unwanted rescued sheep, five dogs, one cat and two rescued micro-pigs.

"I'm trying to stay under 20 horses," Ms. Kurkowski said with a sheepish grin. "My main goal is to foster as many as I can. Through training, I can give fosters a fresh start. If they are broke to ride, they don't traditionally end up in the slaughter pipeline."

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Extension outlines upcoming ag events

By SHANNON LOWRY

Several public events are happening now through the first few weeks in December at the Williamson County Extension office, 3151 SE Inner Loop, Suite A, Georgetown.

■ **November 30 and December 1:** Battleground to Breaking Ground — a free workshop in Georgetown and farm demonstrations in Thrall are in store for military veterans and those interested in production agriculture.

■ **November 30:** The Pe-

can Show and Food Show is open to any Williamson or Bell county resident with a pecan tree or a love for pecans. Drop off entries November 29 at the Williamson County Extension office.

■ **December 7:** Lettuce Lunch N Learn is from noon to 1 p.m. at the Wilco Extension office. Join the Williamson County Texas Master Gardeners Association for the results and tastings from their lettuce variety trial, learn lettuce growing how-to's and enjoy a salad lunch. \$5 at the door.

■ **December 10:** Private Applicator Training is from 8 a.m. to noon, \$60. This four-hour training is required to take the private applicator license test.

Any agricultural producer or land owner who applies restricted use pesticides to their own property needs a private pesticide applicator's license.

■ **December 13:** D8 Farm and Ranch Seminar, a multi-county seminar for farmers and ranchers conducted by the counties in District 8 through the Texas

A&M Agrilife Extension Service, will be held in Cleburne, Texas. The seminar will provide participants with the opportunity to receive up to 8 CEUs (continuing education units).

Registration fee is \$50. This includes breakfast, lunch and handout materials.

For more information on any of the events listed above, visit the Extension's website: www.williamson.agrilife.org or call 512-943-3300. To register, visit www.williamson.agrilife.org/program-registration

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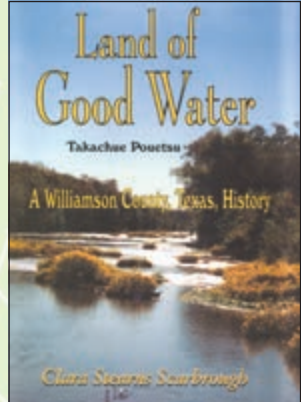
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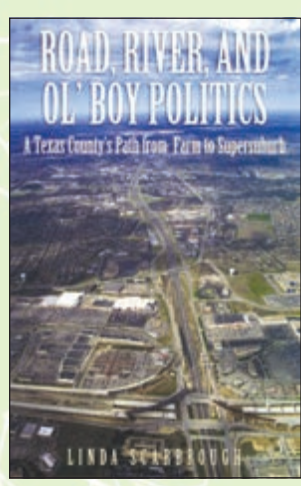


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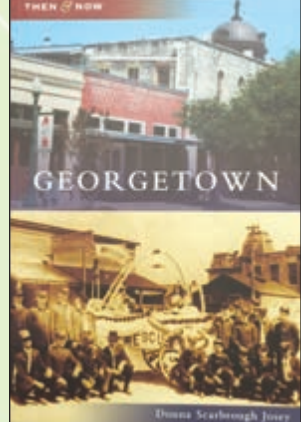


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