



COURTESY DEFHR



Erin Clemm Ochoa



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Days End Farm Horse Rescue (DEFHR) is a national leader in equine rehabilitation practices and equine-cruelty education. It has evolved from a small nonprofit to a full-scale rescue and rehabilitation facility that shelters an average of 130 equines annually, all funneled through animal protection authorities across Maryland and surrounding states.

CEO Erin Clemm Ochoa says, "My role as the CEO at DEFHR allows me to help move the organization towards the future and make an impact in equine welfare. I have been with DEFHR for 18 years, and, in that time, I have seen a lot of horses that have had life-saving interventions. Sharing those stories brings awareness to the community of the issues facing horses and owners. My work means I can make a change for horses' lives that are suffering now and in the future."

DEFHR values making horses accessible to people of any skill level. Because of that, the bulk of their volunteer resources come from beginners. "We get to help people learn about horses in a supportive way," she says. "We get to bring them along a journey of a horse's transformation and teach them about neglect and proper horse care. I love being able to help people become more compassionate about animals. Another thing that is satisfying is being able to show our donors how we are making progress with their impact investment to our cause."

Erin fell in love with horses when she was around 10 and started taking lessons and attending local horse shows. She joined Pony Club and really found a love of dressage and eventing. "Pony Club was a great place to spread my wings and learn independent skills in horsemanship," she says. "Over the years, I deepened my love for dressage and competed in that discipline through my college years."

At DEFHR, she directs all organizational day-to-day operations, implements the strategic plan, and oversees a \$2.2 million annual operating budget. Additionally, she is

certified as an equine investigator and animal control officer. Erin has been a court witness for criminal cases in equine neglect and abuse.

"Adoption is a great option for people who are looking for riding or companion horses," she says. "When you adopt a horse through a rescue group like DEFHR, you are gaining a team of support through the horse's entire life. Sometimes, things in people's lives change, and having a place to turn to get support can be very helpful. DEFHR will always take a horse back into our care if the adopter needs us to. Also, adoption can be a financially smart decision. Often adoption fees are well below the market value of the horse. People should keep in mind that good horses find themselves in bad circumstances and have a lot still to give. The biggest reason to consider adoption is you are helping not only the horse you are adopting, but opening up a space for the next horse in need. The more horses that can find adoptive homes, the more horses can be helped within your community."

CONTACT INFO | PAGE 96



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