For the love of horses

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] H [/dropcap]elping animals in distress is one of the noblest things us flawed humans can do.

While most of us are familiar with the good work of the RSPCA, Animals Australia and Wildlife Victoria, there is also a large number of individuals doing their bit by rescuing injured or neglected animals, saving broken birds, fighting to protect native habitat, or rehoming a former family pet.

Bluestone Magazine has found two such people in **Emma McLean** and **Matt Hee**, both of Allansford, who save unwanted or neglected horses.

Emma, followed more recently by Matt, is the south-west Victorian representative for **Second Venture Horse Rescue**, a new and still relatively unknown not-for-profit group that covers most of Victoria and into NSW.

Second Venture, as it sounds, aims to give old, injured,

neglected or surrendered horses a second chance at life.

Happy horse in a new home: Floss tries out the territory at Emma's property.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] A [/dropcap]s Emma explains, the horses are usually surrendered by owners who are no longer willing or able to care for them, although others are referred to Second Venture because of concerns about neglect.

The rescued horses are picked up by the Second Venture rep, vet checked and, if required, have a visit by the dentist and farrier, all at the rep's expense. The rep also covers the floating costs to collect the horses and provides feed, blankets and all the other necessities, including retraining and resocialisation.

When they are happy and healthy again, each horse is rehomed with a new owner who doesn't pay for the horse, other than a

$35 a year “leasing” fee. Second Venture then checks on the horse after a month, six months and a year to see that it is in good hands.

“The only horses we don’t rehouse are stallions, for obvious reasons, and we won’t let a horse go until it is safe to be around,” Emma says.

Emma has been the south-west Victorian rep for about a month and had her first surrender last week, Floss, an 18-year-old thoroughbred chestnut that she intends to keep as one of five horses she cares for.

Now that’s roughage! Home-made horse treats are one way of raising funds.

[dropcap style=”font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;”] S [/dropcap]econd Venture relies entirely on donations and the goodwill of supporters who are prepared to loan a float, for example, or offer equine services at a discount rate and so it’s not surprising that much of Emma’s time is taken up with finding ways of raising funds.

When *Bluestone* visited, Emma was preparing horse treats made of molasses, oats and other horsey ingredients to sell to raise money for the horse sales, where Second Venture tries to buy horses that are otherwise destined for the knackery. The horse treats, thankfully, have been selling like hotcakes through orders on her Facebook page.

Shari Henderson, from Cherwood Park Equine Supplies in Warrnambool, has been one of Emma's biggest supporters and continues to admire her dedication.

"We need more like her," she says.

We happen to agree: Emma is our first quiet hero for 2014. You can contact Emma via her Facebook page or on 0432 625 880. Find out more about Second Venture Horse Rescue here.

[box] Emma will receive a coffee and cake voucher from The Pavilion Café in Warrnambool. Thankyou to owners Mary-Ellen and Jon Watson for supporting this week's Quiet Hero.[/box]

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