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leap

# From Accountant to Animal Savior

Restless at 40, **Lynn Reardon** gave up a secure job to find safe havens for ex-racehorses.

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of little girls in the suburbs, Lynn Reardon was crazy about horses, but only from afar. “Riding lessons were too expensive, so I contented myself with occasional pony rides and watching cowboy movies,” says Reardon, who grew up in northern Virginia. As an adult in Washington, D.C.—where she worked in the accounts department of a university think tank—Reardon spent her Saturdays and Sundays at a horse-boarding barn; she also volunteered for the nonprofit CANTER, which places ex-racehorses with new owners. “I was sleepwalking through my days at the office,” she says. “I lived for the weekends.”

Reardon’s fiancé also felt unfulfilled at his own think tank position; a 2001 visit to the artsy college town of Austin planted the seed of a life-changing idea. “I love the Texas big-sky thing,” Reardon says, “and Austin was full of people doing mundane jobs by day and fascinating things by night: playing drums in a band, painting murals, running nonprofits.” Within a year, the couple had withdrawn some savings, rented an apartment there, and gotten married. “It was a big jump into the unknown,” says Reardon, who found herself—at age 40—teaching horseback riding at a summer camp for \$7 an hour while her husband reinvented himself as a Web site designer. “We barely scraped by. But we began to see ourselves differently, as people who do bold things and stick with them.”

Case in point: When Reardon discovered there was no CANTER-like organization



*Lynn Reardon, AGE 49*  
FOUNDER, LOPE RANCH  
CEDAR CREEK, TEXAS

nearby, she started one herself. In 2003 she leased a pasture for \$20 a month and launched LOPE (LoneStar Outreach to Place Ex-Racers), a nonprofit rehabilitation facility and online service that finds new digs for former racehorses—more than 800 to date—with the help of donations from individuals, foundations, and local companies. Situated on 26 grassy acres dotted with wildflowers, LOPE Ranch (which Reardon now owns) is

an oasis of rest and recovery for its equine guests, many of whom have suffered serious injuries—and might otherwise have been euthanized or sent to slaughterhouses.

“Racehorses are known for their heart, stoicism, and commitment to giving all they have down to the wire,” Reardon says. “I think that’s why I love them—because I want to be like them. It’s never too late to become what you might have been.” —WOLF SCHNEIDER