

# **Young Brookville Couple's Four Adopted Daughters Find 'Freedom' With Horses**

**By Frank J. Buchman**

"Horses give children freedom, so they don't have to worry about other things stressful in their lives."

Certainly, Jacob and Stalee Stanley of Brookville know that better than anybody else ever could.

The young couple adopted four foster daughters and birth of their son makes a busy farm home with horses.

"The girls' eyes light up with pure joy when they are riding their horses," Jake insisted. "The horses are good for their souls. The girls love their horses and the freedom which the horses give them."

Jake grew up on the Bennington farm that his parents Darren and Lora Stanley still operate. Stalee's parents are Staton and Mandy Diehl who farm near Brookville where she was raised. The young couple now has their family at that farm.

"Stalee and I started dating when she came to high school at Bennington," Jake said. "We then both attended Ottawa University on athletic scholarships."

Jake played football, and Stalee was on the basketball team.

After returning to Bennington, Stalee helped coach the high school girls' basketball team. She became acquainted with four sisters in the community and offered them personal guidance.

Jake and Stalee married in 2018, became foster parents and adopted their daughters soon after. Included are Nevaeh, 12; Alani, 11; Mara, 10, and Amayah, eight.

"I was just 20-years-old when we were married and the girls were all in our wedding," Jake said.

The family first lived in a crowded older home and then bought a double-wide mobile home.

"We now live in a farmhouse Stalee's dad built," Jake explained. "Her parents traded homes with us and moved into the double-wide. It is a sacrifice I don't know if we can ever repay."

Birth of their own son Randall, now 18-months-old, brought the young Stanley family closer together. "The girls are all miniature mothers and so proud of their little brother," Jake said.

Such a large family for such a young couple is demanding physically and financially. Jake is a professional welder and Stalee is a stay-at-home mother who home-schools their daughters.

“We have lots of help from both sets of our parents,” Jake appreciated. “We really couldn’t do it without their help in so many ways.”

Horses are credited with bringing every member of the family even tighter in their loving relationship.

“We have enjoyed trail riding and then really got deep into horses this year,” Jake said. “We have strong girls, tough girls due to their background. They are not afraid of the horses and do quite well with different horses.”

Of course, it requires several horses to keep all the family mounted. “We have nine horses and ponies, so everybody has their own horse, and they also share horses,” Jake said.

Family and friends helped acquire the horses suitable for the different aged daughters. “We have been very fortunate to have horses that work well with different levels of riders,” Jake admitted.

Interestingly, all the horses are quite young. “They are none older than six, one is just three and is working out well,” Jake said.

Helping the children to improve their horsemanship skills is a constant effort for both Jake and Stalee.

“The girls have received considerable help from Stetson Schmutz, formerly of Salina now living in Oklahoma,” Jake credited. “Stetson has provided us with horses and also gives lessons to the girls.

“It’s interesting how I can explain something to the girls about riding and they don’t pay attention,” Jake continued. “But when Stetson tells them the same thing they listen and follow his directions.”

The Stanley family participated in every event at a recent Kansas Western Horseman’s Association (KWH) show in Beloit. “KWH is such nice organization for young people to improve their riding abilities,” Jake noted. “The children can be competitive while having fun and great comradery.

“They are looking forward to participating in more KWH shows,” Dad continued. “All of us are because it is such a family-oriented group with everybody anxious to help each other.”

Jake has a Mustang to ride in the shows, too. “She’s a really good horse, but doesn’t fit the girls so well yet,” Dad commented.

As if they aren’t busy enough, the Stanley family also has a small cow herd. “That gives the children more diversity as they help with the cattle, too,” Jake said. “We also assist with cattle operations owned by other family members.”

While such a major endeavor, a young couple with five children, horses get ample credit for making it work out. “Ours is an unusual story, but it is all in ‘God’s Plan’ for us. We feel so very blessed,” Jake and Stalee agree.

“Our families, friends and others in the community have been so cooperative and helpful. Then all of us becoming involved with and enjoying horses so much made the perfect fit.

“Horses will certainly continue to be part of our family,” the Stanley Seven contend.

Horses are an important part of the Jacob Stanley family at Brookville. Shown are Jacob Stanley, Amayah Stanley, Mara Stanley, Nevaeh Stanley, Alani Stanley, Randall Stanley and Stalee Stanley.

