

News from around the Ojai Valley

Hero horse left big shoes to fill



Details

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Photo submitted

Author Robin Hutton at the Camp Pendleton grave of U.S. Marine Corps War Horse Sgt. Reckless. Hutton will be at the California Coastal Horse Rescue's Help a Horse Day celebration Sunday.

Bill Warner, Ojai Valley News reporter

Sunday will be Help a Horse Day in Ojai, and the California Coastal Horse Rescue (CCHR) has planned a full afternoon of celebration.

“This year we’ve decided to make it a community day,” said CCHR executive director Adri Howe. “We really want the community to join us here in celebration at the ranch.”

Tours of the CCHR facilities and equine training demonstrations feature prominently among the scheduled activities, Howe said, along with games, pony rides, face painting, a shoeing demonstration, refreshments and a raffle. A food truck will be there, she said, along with live music provided by the Swing Cheese gypsy jazz-fusion band. “They played for us a couple of years ago,” Howe said, “and they have very nicely donated their talents for the afternoon this Sunday.”

Author Robin Hutton will be on hand, too, signing copies of her latest book, “Sgt. Reckless: America’s War Horse.” A cross between a Mongolian horse and a thoroughbred, Sgt. Reckless was a U.S. Marine Corps mare during the Korean War. At the Battle of Panmunjom-Vegas, Hutton said, Reckless made 51 round trips in a single day, covering a distance of about 35 miles and transporting more than 300 rounds of recoilless ammunition.

And in at least three verified instances, she carried wounded soldiers to safety. Hutton recounted the story of a veteran with a scar on his neck who showed up at Camp Pendleton, where Sgt. Reckless was stationed after the war. “During the battle, he had been bayoneted in the neck,” Hutton said. “He was bleeding heavily, and it was Reckless who had carried him down the hill. ‘This horse saved my life,’ he said.”

Reckless gained a battlefield promotion to the rank of sergeant in 1954, and earned two purple hearts, a Marine Good Conduct Medal and meritorious citations from the presidents of the United States and South Korea. In 2013, Hutton raised money for a statue honoring her at the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Triangle, Va.

Begun by the Equine Fund of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), Help a Horse Day is a nationwide event to raise awareness about the plight of horses.

“The ASPCA began Help a Horse Day several years ago,” Howe said, “and probably about 100 rescues participate throughout the country.” This year, the ASPCA will be giving out \$100,000 in grants to horse rescues. The top prize will be a \$25,000 grant, she said, and CCHR is in the running for it.

The celebration will be from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the CCHR ranch, 600 W. Lomita Ave. in Ojai. For more information, e-mail connect@calcoastalhorseserescue.com, or call 649-1090.

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