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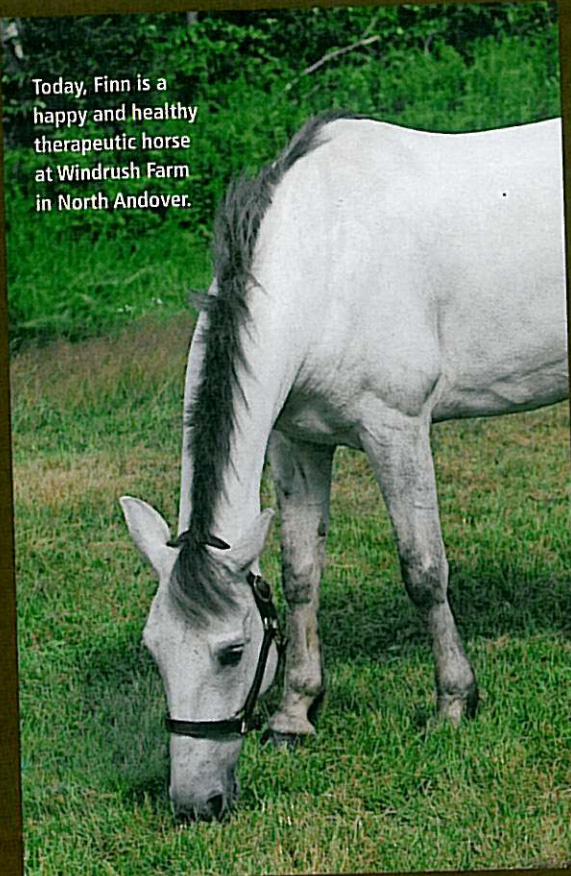
FALL

in the

AIR



INSIDE ■ A HELPING HAND FOR HORSES IN NEED ■ LEARNING FROM THE GREAT MARSH
■ WOODSOM SIBLINGS LOOK BACK ■ HISTORIC CHAPEL PAINSTAKINGLY RESTORED

A photograph of a white horse with a dark mane and tail, grazing in a grassy field. The horse is wearing a black halter. The background is a lush green field with some trees in the distance.

Today, Finn is a happy and healthy therapeutic horse at Windrush Farm in North Andover.

Finn: A life of hope and service

Today, Finn is a handsome horse, but the gelding could have died before the age of 2 were it not for NEER North.

Now a star at a therapeutic riding center in North Andover, before adoption, Finn was known first as Rose Grey, then as Stoney. But staff at Windrush Farm thought Finnegan was a better name, befitting his playful spirit.

"We call him Finn for short. He has a neat personality that draws people to him," says Jenna Turcotte, program director at Windrush Farm, which since 1964 has used equitation to help children and adults with special needs. "He's a social little guy and likes getting attention. He is very popular; kids love his jaunty gait and trot."

Yet, at 18 months old, Finn was

underweight and sick, his lungs infected with pneumonia as he stood on the auction block for sale to the highest bidder.

"People were at the auction looking for an inexpensive horse to buy and saw him," Mary Martin says. "Again, they couldn't leave him, so they bought him. But, again, they couldn't rehabilitate him. They took him first to NEER in Rhode Island, but he ended up here."

A vet treated the pneumonia, plentiful food stopped the effects of starvation, and care got him back on his feet. When Finn was finally healthy, however, Martin had a very young, very green, completely untrained horse on her hands. She spent time training him before he was adopted out for the first time.

"He went to a wonderful family,

and they just loved him,” Martin says. “But their daughter went off to college, so they brought him back to us.”

Returned to Martin, Finn was noticed by someone who thought he had the makings of a good therapy horse. Contact was made with Windrush, where he went on a two-month trial, Turcotte says.

“We knew his temperament was good,” Turcotte says. “He was 7 when we got him, which is on the young side for us.”

Extensive training began to desensitize him to the distractions that come when horses work with individuals with disabilities, she says, like getting used to thrown balls and hoops or becoming comfortable with people in wheelchairs.

“We’re not giving pony rides here,” Turcotte says. “Our goal at Windrush is to get the people who come here as independent as possible. Horses have to allow those with disabilities to go as far as they can. It’s hard work to carry an unbalanced rider. Horses have to listen to their riders and have to be trusting of people.”

Finn walks over to his stall door when people go up to it, she says, a sign that a horse enjoys being around people, and he’s great at getting people with



Finn was underweight and suffering from pneumonia when he was put on the auction block at just 18 months old. He came to NEER North from NEER Rhode Island, where his buyers brought him.

problems to forget their troubles for a while. Recently, a group of veterans from the Wounded Warrior Project visited Windrush, Turcotte says, and Finn was selected to work with one of the men.

“Veterans in the Wounded Warriors

program can sometimes be withdrawn,” she says. “The man who worked with Finn says Finn reminded him of a playful kid and that Finn brought out the inner child within him.”

— Angeljean Chiaramida