



## Patches

Patches came to us after years of having cows as neighbors. The farmer had gotten rid of all his farm animals and was trying to find a good home for her when he heard about Chakota. He was afraid that she would be too lonely out in the barn by herself and he felt he was getting too old to ride her. We went out for the initial meeting, and Dave had fallen in love with her instantly. She was a gorgeous 14 year old sorrel and white American Paint with a beautiful head and one blue eye and one brown eye. She was

breathhtaking!

We had taken several people with us to see how she did around crowds and kids. She loved all of the attention that she was getting. We had taken a ball, wheelchair, and some other items to see if she would spook with any of them. Of course she was a bit nervous at first, but with positive praise, she did very well. We made arrangements with the farmer that day to come back later that week to pick her up for her 30 day trial.

On the day we went to pick her up, we found out that she wasn't very good at loading into the trailer. It looked like it would take forever, but when it comes to the horses; Dave has patience and years of experience. He got her to load without too much difficulty, and soon after she was on her way to her new home at Chakota. Once a new horse arrives at Chakota, Dave gives them plenty of time by themselves before he introduces them to the herd. The corral works as a perfect holding pen for the introductory period. The newest member and the existing herd are separated by the vinyl fence, but it still gives them the chance to get acquainted. When the day comes to put them altogether in the pasture, it's usually a sight to see! Lots of running, manes and tails flying in the wind, and usually welcoming whinnies are heard all around.

Once the newest member is acclimated to the herd, their Chakota training starts almost immediately. It averages about three months before we feel a new horse is ready to be used as a four-legged therapist. Patches did amazing and warmed up to Dave almost immediately. As other Handlers and Leaders worked with her, it was becoming quite obvious that she was going to be a Chakota Therapy horse!

This is her fourth year as a Chakota four-legged therapist and she is now 18 years old. She is used often in the Therapeutic Riding program and is a staple for several of our Riders.

Her blue eye on the brown side of her face and the brown eye on the white side of her face draws a lot of attention to any child that goes up to visit her. And because of her eyes being different colors, she's also used in other areas of Chakota to represent that different is good and always acceptable here at the "Big Red Barn"!