

Whitehouse doesn't horse around

By **ANDREW CRITCHELOW**
The News-Enterprise

When she was 8 years old, Boston, Kentucky, resident Misty Whitehouse received two horses, Mustang and Ringo, for Christmas from her grandparents. But even before then, Whitehouse knew she wanted to spend all her time with horses.

"Before I got horses, I think I read every horse book I could get my hands on," she said.

Years later, Whitehouse, now 22, started her business Heaven's Hoofbeats, which provides natural hoof-care. As a natural farrier, Whitehouse's business is modeled on never using horseshoes. In fact, this distinction is what inspired the business's name.

"There's not going to be any horseshoes in heaven," she said.

Whitehouse said natural hoof-care is a much more humane and effective way of caring for horses.

"It's the 21st century. We have much better methods of protecting a horse's feet now than a band of steel that covers the perimeter," she said.

Though her business is focused on providing a positive service to her clients, she initially was inspired to take up hoof care by a negative experience. She said she was upset by a farrier her family once hired who lacked compassion in their approach to caring for her horses and treated them roughly.

"It really messed with me," she said. "I said 'I will never bring my horses back here; I'll learn how to do it myself.'"

Whitehouse soon studied up on becoming a farrier and eventually began providing her services to other horse owners. She said the business officially began around 2014.

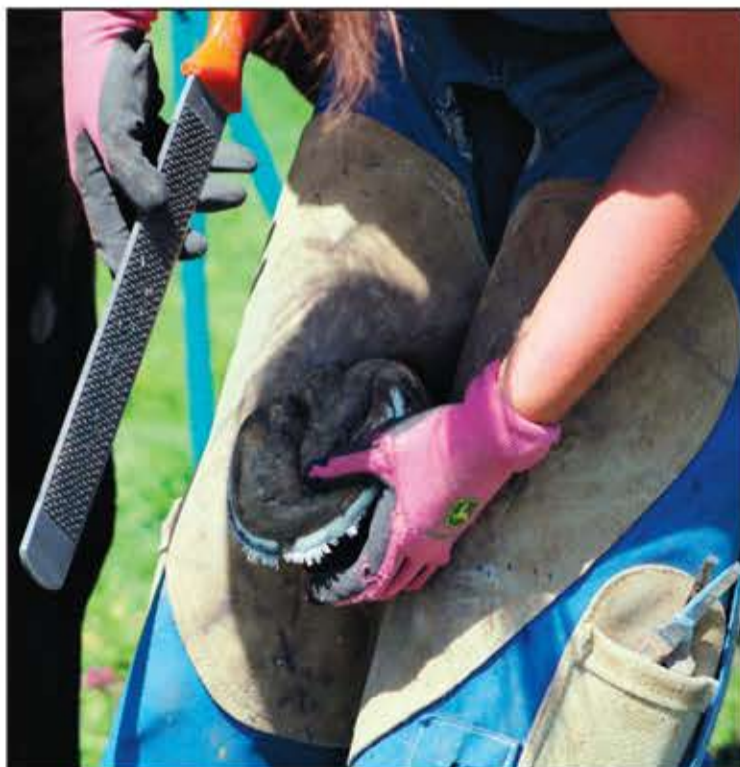
To learn more about the intricacies of equine care, Whitehouse said she spent countless hours reading up on all things horses and follows natural horse care experts such as Monty Roberts and Clinton Anderson. She attended the International Hoof-Care Summit in Cincinnati last year and attended a two-day clinic in Shelbyville this year with renowned hoof-care specialist Pete Ramey.

Whitehouse said a major part of the job is learning to deal with impatient horses. She also works with donkeys, which she said can be even more difficult to manage. She said the ability to calm animals down partially has been inspired by studying their behavior.



Local farrier Misty Whitehouse stands with her horse, April, and her boyfriend, Jim McLean, who helps with Whitehouse's business Heaven's Hoofbeats.

Photos by **ANDREW CRITCHELOW**/The News-Enterprise



Misty Whitehouse tends to April's hoof.

"I like to watch horses," she said. "I can spend hours just sitting out here and watching them interact with each other, and whenever you spend time with horses, you learn how they interact with each other. You kind of learn how to put your own spin on that."

Whitehouse's boyfriend, Jim McLean, has helped her with

the business for more than a year. He said it has been rewarding to work with someone with an expansive knowledge of horse care.

"She knows their language inside and out," he said. "Her passion is contagious."

Whitehouse said she models the trim of her hoof-care after wild horses and the way they



Misty Whitehouse, a Boston, Kentucky, resident, began Heaven's Hoofbeats in 2014.

Getting to know Misty Whitehouse

Hobbies: Hiking, cooking, horseback endurance racing
Pets: Four horses, four cats and a dog
Books: Works on horse care
Music: The Black Keys
Inspiration: Her grandparents

naturally bevel their hooves.

Whitehouse said she makes less money than she would if she provided horseshoe services, but she doesn't mind sacrificing that for the values of her business.

"There's a big price difference there, but I love what I do," she said.

Since starting the business, Whitehouse said she has worked with thousands of horses. She said she has clients living everywhere from Elizabethtown to Campbellsville to Corydon, Indiana.

Whitehouse said she hopes to emphasize more owner education with new clients, focusing on proper diet and ex-

ercise. She cited the fact not all horse owners are experienced in proper care.

"I really try hard to give them the foundation that they need," she said.

On top of her business, Whitehouse also enjoys horseback endurance races and owns four horses of her own, two of which are the original horses she received when she was eight. She said any job that involves horses is a dream job.

"I live and breathe nothing but horses all the time," she said.

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