

Painting pony has a brush with fame

Artistic equine will produce art for an auction that will help Chincoteague ponies in the wild

By **LAUREN MCCORMACK**
Special to the Local News

NEWLIN — Kiley DiLuigi didn't know what to do with wild-born Chincoteague pony Minnow when she began training him six years ago.

She tried to ride him, but he was too rough with her.

She tried to get him used to people, but his abusive past made him terrified of almost everything.

DiLuigi was ready to give up on the horse after two years of training him, and then she found a book about teaching horses tricks using the clicker method.

And as soon as Minnow learned that first trick — giving DiLuigi a kiss — everything else fell into place.

"He learned it so fast and after that wanted to learn more and more," she said.

Minnow's accelerated learning curve soon left DiLuigi with no more tricks to teach him — until she spotted some painting supplies she was using at the time as an art major at the University of Delaware.

And so, on Jan. 5, 2007, Minnow picked up his first paint brush and began a career as a storied artist.

"It was rewarding because it was an accumulation of everything I had been working on with him," DiLuigi said. "He can create this wonderful thing as a release of his past almost. It's a therapy almost like, I was in this sad situation but now I'm happy and can create something out of this almost."

Minnow was born in 1993 into a band of wild horses on Assateague Island and was rounded up and auctioned off as a colt.

"I'm not sure where he



Staff photos
by Kali Wallace

Above, Kiley DiLuigi holds a canvas while her Chincoteague pony Minnow paints at Iron Horse Farm in Newlin.

Minnow began learning to paint in January 2007.

At right, Katie Parker, 8, and Tea Clark, 11, hold up their pony-painted T-shirts as they wait for the shirts to dry.



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Riders roar their support for troops



Staff photos by Kelli Wallace

Kyley DiLuigi performs a trick by standing on top of her pony, Minnow, at Iron Horse Farm in Newlin. The impressionistic pony has a date to debut his talents at Virginia's Chincoteague Pony Centre twice a night from July 27 to 31, painting and performing other tricks while his creations are auctioned off.



Above, Kyley DiLuigi hands her pony a paintbrush so Minnow can continue to paint a shirt for a Fox Meadow Farm Pony camp member. Below, DiLuigi gives Minnow a kiss after he performs a trick.

Minnow favors bright colors, which he picks himself out of a selection DiLuigi offers him.

He normally paints two to three times a month, and though Minnow takes between five and 20 minutes to complete a painting, "He'd stand at his easel for hours if I let him," DiLuigi said.

Minnow has completed upwards of 200 paintings since he first picked up the paintbrush, and he paints things that are "very abstract, but you can see something in them sometimes. I see flocks of birds or wild horses. Its really up to the imagination," DiLuigi said.

He will be traveling back to his birthplace for the annual Pony Penning Swim in Chincoteague, Va., at the end of the month for performances.

He's an example of a horse that didn't have a so-great past, but he's gone on to become something great and amazing and my best friend," DiLuigi said.

Paint

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went exactly, but he ended up for a little while at the Chincoteague Pony Centre," DiLuigi said. "He lived there and then went to a not-so-nice home until the owner right before me rescued him from that situation."

DiLuigi used Minnow for her sport until the previous owner gave the horse to her as a wedding gift.

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