

## **Indiana Horse Rescue**

**My name is Anthony Caldwell, I am the President of Indiana Horse Rescue and I would first like to thank the court for taking the time to listen to what I have to say.**

Emotions are a very important part of what we do. Everyone involved in this case relied on their dedication to the immorality of animal abuse to carry them through this ordeal. Most people do not realize the impact that animal abuse has on our society as a whole. On a day to day basis, society attempts to repress our emotions unless there is a dollar to be made. Like most of the people involved in this case, everyone's first emotional response was that Mr. Stallings should be in prison for a very long time, however, if we take an opportunity to reflect on the entire case, we can examine the larger problem at hand. This case drew public awareness to a hideous situation. Like a wildfire it has sparked a new awareness in the State of Indiana and is reaching across the country. Owners and operators of facilities that do not care properly for their horses, create a very problematic set of circumstances that inhibit action. The sheer numbers along with financial and political ramifications keep these operators in the shadows, except for the people that see these horrid conditions when they are exposed through the normal course of business. The desensitizing effect it has on our society is our greatest enemy. It is not okay to beat, abuse or neglect your wife or husband. It is not okay to beat, abuse or neglect your children. It is not okay to beat, abuse or neglect your animals. This community has personalized that statement with the far reaching support that has been provided during this difficult time.

The links between the decay in our society and animal abuse and neglect are deeply rooted. Our organization has focused on one small part of this problem which requires emotional involvement. It is very hard to back away from our emotional response that Mr. Stallings should be in prison for a very long time, and examine the realities of what has occurred in this action. The chances that Mr. Stallings is going to be rehabilitated, are in my mind, very slim. Mr. Stallings cost this county a substantial amount of money, if we were to lock Mr. Stallings up, our human nature would require us to feed, clothe and provide him shelter from the elements. We know Mr. Stallings does not share that sentiment, we would nevertheless be required to do so. That seems fundamentally wrong.

Mr. Stallings is publicly admitting that he has tortured, abused and neglected horses for several years. Others involved in this type of activity are now greatly aware of what could happen to them. Prosecutors throughout the state now see what can be done; the public sees what can be done. The public has been enabled, and is now aware that they should hold their public officials to a higher degree of responsibility to act in these matters.

Indiana Horse Rescue was one part of a team that includes Gibson County Animal Services, the Gibson County Sheriff Dept, the Gibson County Prosecutors Office and all of the volunteers involved. This team came together to stop this terrible situation. I can not put into words the gratitude and respect I have for all of the people involved.

A substantial amount of people have verbalized disappointment with Mr. Stallings plea agreement; I fear that our achievements in this case have been greatly over shadowed by this frustration. The Prosecutors office is receiving the brunt of everyone's frustrations, when in fact the Prosecutor's office has put many hours of effort into today's events. I submit that this Prosecutor realizes that this is not a victimless crime. The victims start with the horses, spread to the children and adults who have seen the horses, and the far reaching implications of not taking action when crimes against the people and the state are committed. The frustration over the plea agreement Mr. Stallings received should be directed at the state statutes that govern animal welfare and county prosecutors. When the Prosecutor signed on for this huge undertaking, he set certain goals to achieve, and we achieved every goal. Mr. Stallings is one man, he did some terrible things, and my emotions tell me he should pay; but whether Mr. Stallings goes to prison or not, does not change the impact of what has been achieved in this case. Outrage and political pressure belongs on our legislature to make the penalties for these heinous crimes appropriate. We need to support and appreciate the job that our county Prosecutor has done, along with everyone involved in this case.

The horse's welfare has been the primary concern in this case from the beginning. All the horses are receiving the best of care, and those horses that did not survive have received care, compassion and respect. Nothing that is done to Mr. Stallings will ever make up for the torture and abuse that the horses experienced.