

A girl's wish for a horse comes true

by Bob Pepalis

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FORSYTH COUNTY – Margaret Hurt's passion is horses, making the long months when chemotherapy made her too sick to ride even more difficult.

But an early Christmas present came to her from the Make-A-Wish Foundation in the form of "Hoochie," a registered American Quarter Horse.

"It's my first horse. It's definitely a big thing to me since I love horses so much," she said.

Margaret was diagnosed with leukemia in 2007, said her mother, Mary Hurt. She has lived with the disease and its treatment for 2½ years, and chemotherapy made her extremely ill for eight months. "During that time her sister would have to come and lead her on a horse, and it just about killed her," said Mary.



Margaret Hurt had her wish come true with the gift of Hoochie, a registered American Quarter Horse, which she rides at The Equestrian Reserve. Bob Pepalis.

Margaret has been riding for about six years, including time on The Equestrian Reserve's show team. When she first came to the barn, she was a vibrant, vivacious girl, said Donna Romeu of The Equestrian Reserve. When she was diagnosed with leukemia, "it was heartbreaking to see it happen," Romeu said. Even when she was sick, Margaret spent hours at the barn at The Equestrian Reserve. Being at the barn was huge for Margaret. "You know, the horse doesn't care if you are bald or you feel bad," she said.

Things are much different now that Margaret isn't so ill from chemotherapy, and it showed with all the hugs and smiles she gave her friends at the Make-A-Wish donation party. She even rode Hoochie bareback around the show ring in front of her friends and family on a blustery December afternoon. "It's a lot of fun to get over here and have this party with all of my friends," Margaret said. Asked what horses mean to her, Margaret said, "They are pretty much my passion right now, as much as it can be for a kid. Basically I spend half of my life here, so it means a lot to me."