

**Stolen Horse International, Inc.**

**PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Stolen Pony located after 5 years through NetPosse.com**

November 9, 2006 – Vale, North Carolina – When Heidi Courneya casually went surfing on a cool November morning, she made a startling discovery. Imagine her shock when she found Cheyenne, the pony she had named Chief, pictured on a site for stolen and missing horses, [www.netposse.com](http://www.netposse.com). That Web site, the Internet home for Stolen Horse International, Inc., clearly stated that Cheyenne had been stolen on September 23, 2001. Heidi couldn't believe what she was seeing, but in the midst of her disbelief, Heidi did the only thing she could. The bewildered lady picked up the phone and called Stolen Horse International, Inc. (SHI).



SHI's headquarters happen to also be located in North Carolina, the same state in which Cheyenne's theft occurred. When Debi Metcalfe, founder of the nonprofit organization, received the call from Heidi, she was beyond thrilled. "There are so many horses that are still missing and stolen. Every day, I work with victims and law enforcement in an effort to help recover them, but it saddens me to know that so many haven't been found." Debi had even caught herself looking the previous weekend for Cheyenne while out driving. "To get a call like this, and first thing in the morning ... I cannot even describe how I felt. This is one of those moments that just reaffirms that what I do is worthwhile."

More than five years since the theft, Cheyenne had been found. Not in a pasture miles from home or at an auction in another state, but in the same city to which his owners had eventually moved. This beautiful black and white paint pony was almost right under their noses, and he wasn't being hidden away. "Chief" had been purchased only two months before by Heidi for her pony riding business. She was completely unaware there was a stolen horse in her possession.

When Debi finally reached Alesha Tilley, Cheyenne's owner, the news was met with more disbelief and then joy. Knowing that Cheyenne was safe and cared for allowed Alesha to gain closure from his theft; however, in the time since then, Alesha's son has outgrown him. With great sincerity, she allowed Heidi to retain ownership, asking nothing in return. In the same breath, though, Alesha is determined to trace Cheyenne's journey in an effort to find the thief so that he cannot do this to another child.

Time is said to heal all wounds, and five years is a long time, but try telling that to someone who has been a victim of horse theft. As time evolves, the victim often loses hope and falls prey to those who say to forget it – it was just a horse. But, again, words and time do not erase the pain of being violated by a stranger or the hurt of wondering if your horse is healthy and loved. So how does a victim hold out hope?

One way is to gather the support of other people who love their horses and understand the agony of "never knowing". When victims of horse theft turn to SHI, they find that hope and support. As Debi is fond of saying, "Never underestimate the power of one. It just takes one e-mail or one phone call to the right person that has seen that horse or has the final lead."

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Cheyenne's case is a prime example of this theory in action. Heidi was not a NetPosse member and she could have feigned ignorance about Chief's origins, but upon finding him on NetPosse, she did the right thing. Because of that one person, that one moment, a missing horse has been found.

SHI has grown over the last eight years because of Debi's hard work and dedication. Every year, Debi travels across the country in an effort to educate horse owners about theft. Through her Web site and speaking engagements, Debi explains how to be pro-active against equine-related theft by permanently identifying horses, using security signs on property, and varying daily barn routines. Because of her experience and knowledge, she has become the renowned expert on horse theft.

Debi's experience came from a devastating chapter in her life. She founded SHI after the theft and recovery of her husband's horse, Idaho. What many don't know is that her family agreed that they would search for Idaho for one year, and then they would resume life as normal.

However, it didn't take Debi long to realize that Idaho's theft was the end of normal. The thief stole more than just a horse. He robbed her family of its sense of security and her children of their innocence. Whether Idaho was found or not, life would never be the same again.

This revelation caused Debi to search that much harder for Idaho. It took 51 of the 52 allotted weeks, but Idaho was brought safely home, and Debi's world truly was never the same. When she discovered that complete strangers who'd joined her journey now needed help to find their own horses, Debi knew that she had to help them to heal herself and her family. Beginning SHI, which is now a nonprofit organization reaching thousands of people every day, was Debi's way of fighting back.

Whether a horse is stolen by a thief in the night like Idaho or spooked on a mountain trail, Debi and her supporters, dubbed by the media as "NetPosse", work together to bring these horses safely home. Approximately 50 percent of the horses listed as stolen on NetPosse have been recovered, but then there are those that are still missing. For those victims and dedicated NetPosse members, the search continues no matter how many weeks, months or years may pass.

Angela Kirby – Stolen Horse International Public Relations

For more information on Stolen Horse International and its programs, visit the website at [www.netposse.com](http://www.netposse.com). Stolen Horse International is a Section 501(c)(3) organization under the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions to it are tax-deductible as charitable contributions.