

## Ben's Story

2007 has been a year of great joy in witnessing the progress our riders have made. Such as Ben, who brings a smile to my face and warms my heart as I think back to his first year at Freedomfarm.



Ben began riding 2 years ago when he was 8 years old. He would not make eye contact with anyone, there were no smiles and when he spoke, it was with a very soft voice. He walked with short, unbalanced steps. But there was always a twinkle in his eye.

### **Would a horse be able to embrace his spirit?**

Ben's first year he had a leader and 2 sidewalkers with one of our goals for him being to sit up tall the entire time he was on the horse. Physically this was *hard* work. He found riding to be fun and though he wouldn't show it, you could see his eyes full of joy. Another goal for him was to use the reins to stop and turn his horse. For Ben to sit up tall and strong in the saddle while pulling his hands away from his body to steer was incredibly difficult. He was empowered by the fact that when he pulled gently on the reins, this 1200 pound animal would listen, and turn!

Ben has finished this year riding independently! His balance and strength progressed to the point where sidewalkers are no longer needed and only a volunteer nearby when he is trotting. Ben marches eagerly to his horse with a big smile and hello for me and the other riders. When he talks, his voice is loud and confident. His smile fills his entire face. His mother has shared that it has been one year since Ben has needed Botox injections in his legs. For the first time, Ben confidently stood in front of his school class for Show and Tell. **The gentleness of our hoofed angels have embraced his spirit and given Ben wings.**

2006



2007



Susie Bjorklund