

The Magazine of the Mizzou Alumni Association

# MIZZOU

## A Peg Leg Pony Named Bunny

**MU vet hospital saves a horse named Bunny.**



*Story by Kelsey Allen*

*Photos courtesy of Shannon Reed*

*Published March 22, 2013*

**W**hen Shannon Reed first met Bunny, she wasn't sure there was anything she could do. The 22-inch-tall, 70-pound miniature horse was born with severely deformed legs.

Before Bunny came to MU, she had severely deformed legs; her front legs angled and rotated outward instead of aligning straight.

Casey Smith, founder of a nonprofit shelter for neglected equines, brought Bunny to MU

after rescuing the mini from a large-production breeding farm, more accurately called a mill, Smith says.

“Bunny was not like any other horse I’d ever met,” Smith remembers. Smith’s 7-year-old daughter

suggested calling the bouncing beauty Bunny. “She had so much life for being this crippled tiny mini.”

Smith carted Bunny to Columbia in the back of her SUV in October 2012 to see what — if anything — Reed could do for her.

“Normally, horses are born with their legs straight and their joints aligned to bear weight equally so every time they take a step there is a cushion,” says Reed, assistant teaching professor at the Equine Clinic in the MU College of Veterinary Medicine. “Instead of [Bunny’s front legs] just being angled, they also rotated so the entire bottom of her legs turned outward.”

Smith left the clinic for lunch thinking there wasn’t any help for Bunny, but when she returned a few hours later, Reed, DVM ’03, had consulted with a team of surgeons, including hospital director David Wilson and small animal orthopedic vet Derek Fox, PhD ’04. More similar to a dog in size, the team worked together to find the best solution, settling on a hybrid of procedures typically reserved for canines and of those done in horses.

“When I saw Bunny’s X-rays, I thought, ‘Wow, we have



Due to Bunny’s size, Reed performed a surgery typically done on canines. She fused her right leg together with 12 screws.

a lot of work to do,' ” Reed recalls.

Working side by side with two other doctors and multiple students, Reed performed three surgeries to correct the bones in her legs.



Reed sits with Bunny in her pen after surgery.

“The repair we did is done on horses, but working on the ulna is something that’s done on dogs and cats,” Reed says.

During the three-hour procedure, her right leg, the more severely deformed of the two, was fused together to create a peg leg held together by 12 screws.

Bunny spent 11 days recovering in Columbia in a pen built just for her.

Students got to calling it Bunny’s Clubhouse.

“It’s hard to describe,” Reed says, “but it was impossible not to go in there and bother her. Even the grouchiest couldn’t resist going into her stall.”

Bunny returned home with Smith to Blue Ridge Rescue in Blue Grass, Iowa, where she continues to recover. She was back on campus in January to get fitted for special shoes to adjust her hind legs.

“She couldn’t hold herself upright, and she was sinking in the back end,” Reed says. “We put her in special

shoes that look like high heels.  
They're like orthotics for people."

Smith's daughter calls them  
Bunny's princess slippers.

"We've taken them off, and now  
she's walking almost 100 percent  
normal," Smith says. "When we took Bunny to MU,  
she could barely walk. Now she's running at full  
speed."

Reed adds: "She is going to live a pretty happy life in  
the pasture now."



Bunny heads back to Blue Ridge  
Rescue in Blue Ridge, Iowa, after  
surgery, now pain free.

*Watch the story of Bunny, a miniature horse born with severely  
deformed legs, and an MU College of Veterinary Medicine  
surgeon who helped save her life.*

**Topics:** [Community](#), [Medicine](#), [Nursing](#), [Health Professions and Veterinary Medicine](#), [Web Exclusives](#)

**Tags:** [Faculty](#)

---

Published by MIZZOU magazine, 109 Reynolds Alumni Center, Columbia, MO 65211 | Phone: 573-882-5916 | Email: [mizzou@missouri.edu](mailto:mizzou@missouri.edu)

*Opinions expressed in this site do not necessarily reflect the official position of MU or the Mizzou Alumni Association.*

© 2019 — Curators of the [University of Missouri](#). All rights reserved. [DMCA](#) and [other copyright information](#).

An [equal opportunity/access/affirmative action/pro-disabled and veteran employer](#).