



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Equine vet Cori Phinn knew from a young age what she wanted to do: 'There's nothing else I would want to do.'

CORI PHINN

Equine vet has a big heart to match her big patients

Your stories

By ANN PARKER

SENTINEL CORRESPONDENT

Every Monday, we feature profiles of Santa Cruz County residents. We welcome your suggestions of the local folks to write about.

Contact Ann Parker at atparker@pacbell.net.

Cori Phinn looks more like a grad student than a doctor whose days — and many nights — are spent working with 1,000-pound patients.

But this quiet-spoken, 26-year-old woman with intense blue eyes has more than earned her title as an equine vet, or horse doctor. After earning an animal science degree with honors at Chico State, she completed a three-year doctoral program at Ross University on St. Kitts island, underwent intensive training at Texas A&M, then served an internship at a top equine clinic in North Carolina.

It's a tough, male-dominated profession, physically demanding as well as mentally and emotionally challenging.

"I love it," Dr. Phinn declares. "There's nothing else I would want to do."

She opened her local mobile vet service, Coast Equine Veterinary Services, last month and already has about 50 clients.

Phinn's dedication to her calling started tragically. "When I was 15, my horse Rosie died of colic," she says. "I held her head in my lap as we waited for the vet to arrive, but it was too late."

She got her first horse at age 7.

"I belonged to the Pony Club and attended meetings and group lessons," she recalls, smiling. "Now I speak at those meetings."

When children ask, "How can I become a

vet?" she answers, "Make good grades, especially in science."

Many of the interested children are girls, she notes: "I think the nurturing part of the job appeals to them."

Of the students who graduate from vet school, Phinn says, fewer than 10 percent will become large-animal vets.

"It's rougher work. Equine vets generally go to the horse," she says. "Often it's cold, wet and in the middle of the night."

She shares after-hour emergencies with a cooperative group of local vets.

Phinn's rugged Chevy Silverado truck is her mobile office. "It's set up like a miniature hospital, including an X-ray machine," she says. "I actually like emergency calls. People say, 'Thank God you're here to help.' Horse people have such a bond with their animals. ... Horses aren't just pets, they're partners. My practice has a huge range, from top-dollar performance animals to 4-H ponies. I like them all."

She's most often called to do dental work and vaccinations. "Horses' teeth never stop growing, so they have to be ground down. And colic's also common," she says, knowing from personal experience how serious the condition can be.

Phinn looks with pleasure at the big truck that helps her save lives. "My job is the best. I get to be outside with horses all day and meet really nice people. And to practice compassionate medicine."

Cori Phinn

BORN: March 15, 1981, in Santa Cruz.

HOME: Grew up in Bonny Doon, now lives in Corralitos.

ANIMAL COMPANIONS: Her horse (Maggie), goat (Grace) and dog (Cody).

WORK MENTOR: Dr. Sally Vivrette, Triangle Equine Clinic, Raleigh, N.C.

MOTHER/MENTOR: Cynthia Phinn; 'Mom has helped so much with my business; she's the best.'

WEB SITE: www.coastequinevet.com.

'Horses are so beautiful, so honest and innocent.'