

# A Voice for Residential Education

## Reighna

This is a portion of an essay written by Reighna who has lived with Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children since January 2008.

### Residential Education Day is May 4

*Residential education programs like Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children help economically and socially disadvantaged youth reach their full potential. Residential education is an umbrella term for community-like settings where at-risk children live and learn together, outside their homes within stable, supportive environments. OBHC is a member of CORE: the Coalition for Residential Education, the national nonprofit organization promoting and strengthening residential education programs.*



“A calf is just a calf until you put a rope on it.” It’s the beginning of a long journey that will change your whole life, perspective, and mind set. The first time you get the halter on the steer you have thoughts rushing through your head like a freight train going ninety to nothing. You think what am I supposed to do... show it, earn some money, and that’s it? You thought completely wrong. You pick up the end of the rope, and you look into the eyes of the big hairy creature staring back at you.

You realize this is the start of a bond you never could have imagined. You need to get him to walk with you, so you start pulling and tugging and straining like there was no tomorrow. You have never met anything as stubborn as you. You realize this will be a lot harder than you thought.

You never knew people showed steers. You know nothing about it. After you have stood there and listened to everything you have to do, you feel overwhelmed, but excited at the same time. Are you ready for what lies ahead? “A calf is just a calf until you put a rope on it.”

You learn the responsibility of having something you take time out of your day to take care of, work with, and feed. The feeling of an accomplished day is very rewarding. You learn in addition to feeding it, that you need to walk it every day for thirty minutes, then bring him in to be washed and dried and practice setting it up. It takes a lot of work, but it is worth it.

All this work gets it ready for the upcoming shows that you will show him in. He needs to be trained to do everything just right, or he won’t show as well as someone else’s. You learn that no matter what went on at school, that steer is waiting on you when you come home, waiting on you to walk it, take care of it, and give it attention.

You become really fond of this animal and develop a relationship with it that nobody understands. You learn to love it as much as an actual human being, like it was your own child. You learn to care for it, and you learned even though they are stubborn sometimes you never give up because you love it and know that together you can succeed. That’s kind of what our parents, teachers, and God does. Even though we are stubborn and don’t want to do something, they love us no matter what and will stay on us and help push us forward. “A calf is just a calf until you put a rope on it.”

You spend months of sweat, hard work, patience, responsibility, love, and care – all building up for this one day to show him. The day is finally here. You are so excited you could not sleep the night before. You spend the day getting him ready and looking good. You get the shiny leather halter on him, and he is ready for the show. You walk him in, and there are people all around you. Kids are screaming, people are talking, and you have to focus and get serious. You want to win so badly.

You have learned so much, and this is the one day that it will count. You set him up and the judge comes by and looks at your animal. You feel your heart pounding like a hammer louder and louder. The judge then points at your steer for the Reserve Grand Champion. You are so happy. A huge wave of accomplishment overcomes you. “A calf is just a calf until you put a rope on it.”