

What do You Mean I have a Stolen Pony?

By Cindy Hale

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Just this month, Heidi Courneya was casually surfing the Internet when she made a startling discovery. She came upon www.netposse.com, the Internet website for Stolen Horse International (SHI), an organization for stolen and missing horses. Imagine her shock when she found Cheyenne, the pony she had recently purchased and named Chief, pictured there! Information posted on the website stated that Cheyenne had been stolen on Sept. 23, 2001. Despite her disbelief, Courneya picked up the phone and called Stolen Horse International Inc.

When Debi Metcalfe, founder of the nonprofit organization, received the call from Courneya, she was thrilled. "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. Ironically he was not in a pasture miles from home or at an auction in another state, but in the same city to which his real owners had moved. The black and white pony was almost right under their noses. "Chief" had been purchased only two months before by Courneya for her pony riding business. She had no idea she was in possession of a stolen horse.

When Metcalfe finally reached Alesha Tilley, Cheyenne's owner, the news was met with more disbelief and then joy. Both she and her husband went to see the pony.

"Even though I saw the picture and I felt like it was him I had to see the two lines on each side of his neck to be sure. There was no way I could have prepared myself for how that moment felt," Alesha said of her reunion with Cheyenne. "I still don't know what to say about the last couple of days ... I think I was in emotional overload."

Cheyenne, now 20-years old, will be returning to the Tilley's home. Alesha is thankful to Courneya for her honesty. To be certain, Cheyenne's journey will be traced in an effort to find the thief so that he or she cannot scurry away with someone else's beloved pony.