

STACY BURTON

Stacy Burton had been living her childhood dream of being a jockey for only a year when she was injured in a horrific head-on collision of horses on Aug. 26, 2000.

The freak accident occurred in a race for \$2,000 claimers at Prescott Downs (now known as Yavapai Downs) in Arizona. A horse named Pacific Wind, who was trailing the field, fell over the sloppy track, then regained her feet and started running in the opposite direction over the half-mile track. Pacific Wind collided with Burton's mount, Lot o Love. The accident left Stacy with a severe brain injury, three fractured vertebrae and two fractured ribs. In a coma for 23 days, she was not expected to survive.

"She's a miracle. She should not be here," said Jan Hortyk, who has been caring for Stacy since the accident.

Today, at the age 44 and with more than 20 surgeries since her accident, Stacy is able to walk and talk, but still requires full-time care.

Jan describes Stacy as a unique individual, who before becoming a jockey earned her masters degree and taught high school students. "Horse racing kept tugging at Stacy's heart strings, and she methodically set her goal to become a jockey," Jan said.

The accident and the slow and difficult climb that followed to improve her health have resulted in a new goal – helping others who face similar permanent disabilities.

The financial hardship that is experienced by those dealing with disabilities is overwhelming, Jan said.

"It is a very expensive thing to have to face and there are days when you don't know whether you're going to make it," Jan said.