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## The Road Back: 'Being Sober Is Everything' – Arnold Reflects On Time in Stable Recovery As Program's First Female Legacy Graduate

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By Sara Gordon

From the outside looking in, Rachel Arnold had everything going for her. Married in her early 20s, she received certification as a veterinary technician, secured her bachelor's degree from Auburn University, followed by her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) from Tuskegee University School of Veterinary Medicine, and had welcomed her son into the world.



Rachel Arnold | Sara Gordon photo

But inwardly, each step forward in Arnold's personal life and career was fueled by a need to prove that she had grown beyond a childhood of trauma which stemmed from a contentious relationship with her father. In spite of her professional and educational success, Arnold struggled with a secret drug addiction.

In her early teens, Arnold was first prescribed anti-anxiety medication. By the time she was 15, Arnold was hooked on pills and also began drinking. By the age of 17, she had escalated to using stimulants such as cocaine and methamphetamines.



"I've always had anxiety and struggled with it. But with all of the trauma from my father, I would give anything to feel normal. When I started taking the pills, I felt like I could breathe. You have zero control over things when you're a kid. You just want to be a kid," said Arnold. "I thought I was managing and functioning fairly well. I didn't see what I was really doing, not just to myself, but to others."

After being diagnosed with Addison's disease and Neurological Lyme disease, Arnold fell further into the toxic cycle of drug use in an attempt to cope. In the meantime, the façade began to fracture, as Arnold and her husband divorced, which resulted in less time spent with her son, and she made the move from Alabama back to her home state of Kentucky.



Rachel with Maracuja at Taylor Made Farm | courtesy of Rachel Arnold

By the age of 34, Arnold was falling in and out of abusive relationships, mixed with unsuccessful trips through rehabilitation programs, and had experienced quite a few run-ins with law enforcement. Though there were many instances of feeling like she'd hit her lowest point, it was the day that Arnold was faced with the reality of potentially losing her son for good that shook her from the substance-induced haze.

"His dad, who has always given me chance after chance, said, 'If this doesn't get better, you won't see him.' Knowing that I would lose [my son], that was it for me. I was facing a lot of time [in prison], and the fact that I had so many things amended down, that was huge. It was like someone was giving me this huge opportunity and all I had to do was take it," said Arnold. "Never have I ever felt peace like I did when I was arrested. I was at the point where I didn't have anywhere to live and I was constantly struggling to feed my addiction. I'll never forget that feeling, it was like an out-of-body experience, thinking, 'Wow, maybe I'll have a chance this time.'"

Arnold's official sobriety date is May 19, 2022 and February of the following year, she was referred to the Stable Recovery program. After working her way through many other rehabilitation programs, Arnold thought she'd seen it all, until she set foot on Taylor Made Farm. Though she was the only female in the program at the time, Arnold never felt out of place. Instead, she once again felt a profound sense of peace.

"This program helps you learn how to live sober, not just get sober. The level of care and compassion that these people show is second to none," said Arnold. "The first time I came in, I remember sitting in a morning meditation session where everything felt so calm. I watched the sun rise in this beautiful place, knowing this experience was being gifted to me, and I thought, 'I'm doing this.'"

Stable Recovery also brought Arnold back to her roots by reconnecting her with horses and reminding her why she had originally pursued a career as a veterinarian. From relearning the hands-on basics to working more closely with the broodmares, Arnold rediscovered what it was like to work and live with purpose. Along the way, she developed a special fondness for Maracuja (Honor Code), a graded stakes-winning broodmare residing at Taylor Made.

"I absolutely loved her. She could be kind of spicy and I really liked that about her, but she was such a sweet soul. I really enjoyed all of my time that I spent [at Taylor Made]. After that, I went to Spy Coast Farm and worked with Julie, the vet there," said Arnold. "Working with the horses is something I clung to. Just having them around helps. I realized I didn't need the drugs or alcohol, I could breathe without it, and that's something I had been searching for all of my life."

Arnold graduated from the Stable Recovery program in 2024 and holds the honor of being the program's first female legacy graduate, marking her completion of a full year at Stable Recovery.

"It's pretty incredible to sit back and see that we now have another female legacy graduate and one more coming up. I'm so proud of these women," said Arnold.

Women like Arnold served as inspiration for the Stable Recovery Women's Program at Spy Coast Farm, launched in September 2025, which provides women in recovery the chance to learn and grow within the sport horse industry while working to overcome addiction.



Rachel at Taylor Made Farm | courtesy of Rachel Arnold

Since her graduation from Stable Recovery, Arnold has had her veterinarian license reinstated, restarted her career, reconnected with her family, and relocated to Virginia to live closer to her son, who she now sees regularly.

However, her most progressive step forward in recovery was taken when she came face-to-face with her father, a figure who has been the major source of pain and trauma for Arnold.

"I found out he overdosed. He was on a ventilator for two weeks and they didn't think he was going to make it. During that time, I decided to go down there and see him. I felt that it was finally time to take that step. He was in a medically induced coma at the time, so my fear was manageable, and I was able to forgive him and find that closure that I never expected was possible," said Arnold. "I know that if it weren't for God and this program, I wouldn't have been able to do that. The peace I have about it now is such a gift. My father is [currently] recovering and I'm actually able to be happy about it. My boundaries will remain, but I'm happy he's okay."

After spending the majority of her life in fight or flight mode, constantly at war with herself to prove her worth while simultaneously avoiding reality through substance abuse, Arnold is now grounded. And she's perfectly content with that.

"I think that's the key, being vulnerable enough so you can figure out what it is you're missing, what you need, and how being sober can get you there. Being sober is everything. Without it, you have nothing."

*Stable Recovery is a recovery housing program in Lexington, Kentucky that offers men and women in the early stages of recovery access to 12-step meetings, life skills training and-through the Taylor Made School of Horsemanship-the opportunity to develop a trade in the equine field.*

To learn more about Stable Recovery, [click here](#).

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