

The Equiery Magazine Review of Believing In Horses, Too

Valerie Ormond's *Believing In Horses, Too*, continues the adventures of 13-year-old Sadie Navarro. Although Sadie is quite mature, and adults entrust her with tasks and duties beyond her young years, she also suffers from the crushing insecurities of the average teenage girl. Toss in the local mean girl, and a father stationed in Afghanistan, and Sadie has a lot to deal with.

In Ormond's previous novel, *Believing In Horses*, Sadie rescued ten horses bound for slaughter. Now, about a year later, Sadie is following up on the placements of the horses, and checks in on one who was adopted by a local therapeutic riding program. After seeing how equine-assisted therapies work, Sadie decides to learn more about the programs, and even though she is too young to volunteer, she finds ways to get involved. One of the first organizations she goes to work for uses horses to help wounded veterans, which Sadie finds intimidating. Knowing that her father was in the military and thinking she might find it interesting, Sadie's mentor arranged for her to spend time at the Caisson Platoon Equine Assisted Programs. Sadie doesn't want to let her mentor down, so she soldiers on, and hopes that her fears won't get in her way.

Sadie also finds time to show her horse Lucky, and earns enough points to be in the running for the season-end championship honors, but an accident takes her horse out of the running. Working with the wounded veterans proves easier for Sadie than coping with the local mean girl and horse show rival, but wise-beyond-her-years Sadie eventually clues into her rival's issues and learns how to deal with her. Sadie endures her own problems and insecurities and remembers the words her father told her, "Never give in," and her other mantra "I believe," and when tested, falls back on these pillars.

Parents of young readers will approve of Sadie, she is smart, and she is kind. In addition to the problems of a 13-year-old, Sadie also copes with having a military father stationed far away, a theme that will resonate with many Marylanders. There are many teachable moments in the novel, and valuable lessons in understanding others, the importance of hard work and persistence, and the value of forgiveness.

Ormond weaves real Maryland organizations and people throughout the novel, so local readers might have fun seeing who they know. Even the popular Caisson Platoon horse Klinger makes an appearance. Ormond believes passionately in the military (and the enormous debt we owe our troops) and in horses, and it shines through in her writing. The lessons her characters learn and teach never get old, and should always be reinforced – the importance of hard work, friendship, kindness, self-reliance, and family cannot be repeated often enough.

Reviewed by: *Tracy McKenna*