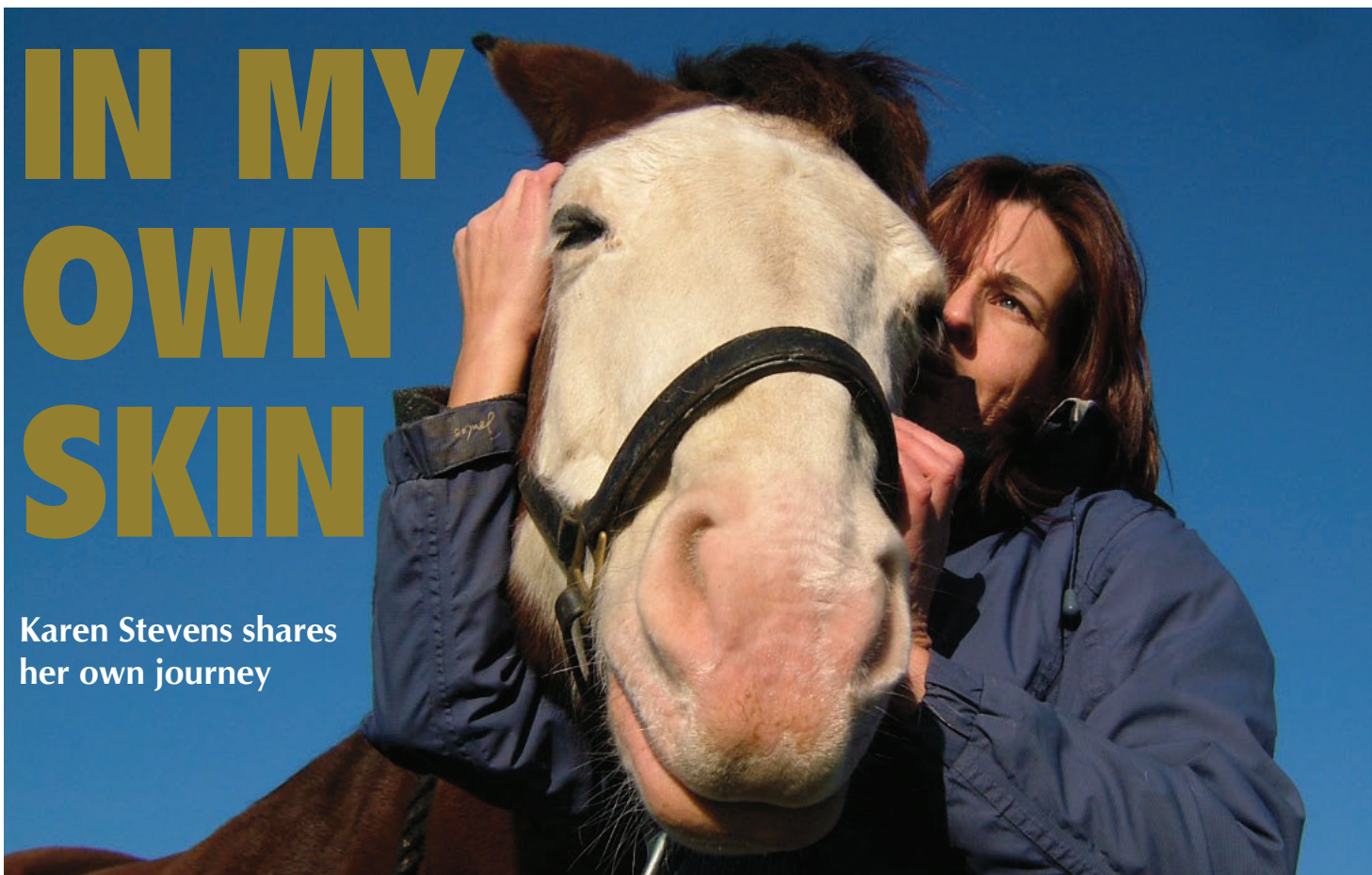


IN MY OWN SKIN

Karen Stevens shares her own journey



I have always believed there was something special about horses and that we can learn so much from them if only we take the time to listen. In 2003 I met my mare, Ocean. As soon as I saw her I knew we were destined for a life together and a different way of doing things, I just had no idea what that was.

I come from a large, mixed family that wasn't perfect. I grew up introverted and a loner with a history of abuse that led me to battle with depression to the point I attempted suicide. I had no confidence in myself and my abilities and preferred my own company, being really uncomfortable socialising. I went from job to job trying to find my purpose in life. Horses were always an escape for me. I could be myself with horses and they wouldn't judge me.

Over the past 12 years Ocean has become my soul mate and guide, teaching me so much about myself and giving me the urge to find a way to work with horses and people for a better balance within their lives. I came across the Institute for Equine Assisted

Learning (IFEAL) and started my journey with Sun Tui, IFEAL's founder, in 2015. My confidence was low, I had no self esteem and I was really uncomfortable being surrounded by new people, but I wanted to find my true self.

I was taught to feel so comfortable with my own self by the end of my first two day workshop that I didn't want to leave. On my three day IFEAL workshop, while still lacking in confidence and uncomfortable learning Qi Gong and other mindful movement exercises, I discovered I was so safely resourced from the two day workshop that I finally began to feel, accept and acknowledge my own body awareness and emotions. Because of Sun Tui's professional attention and the care for each client's emotional stabilisation, containment, regulation and safety, I had finally found what I was searching for.

I started the training to become an IFEAL facilitator in equine facilitated human development using the evidence based IFEAL Method. Boy did I have a journey in store over the next eight

months! Even though I was training to work with others, I went through a massive transformation with my own personal journey. The course has been a turning point for me, working with facilitators whose energy is awe inspiring and a herd that guided me through tears and laughter, giving me the tools to keep me grounded and balanced. I have truly learned to be comfortable in my own vulnerability.

With the guidance and love from some amazing people, I have gone from being a shy, introverted person, who was uncomfortable with eye contact, to a confident, grounded person, comfortable in my own skin, who is able to dance with a horse, in front of everyone. What an amazing experience that was! The next step of my journey is only just beginning, but now Ocean and I can go forward with confidence that we are where we need to be right now. Thank you IFEAL.



www.ifeal.me