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KAMAS AUTHOR NIKKI GLANDON IS ON A MISSION TO TEACH CHILDREN ABOUT LOVE

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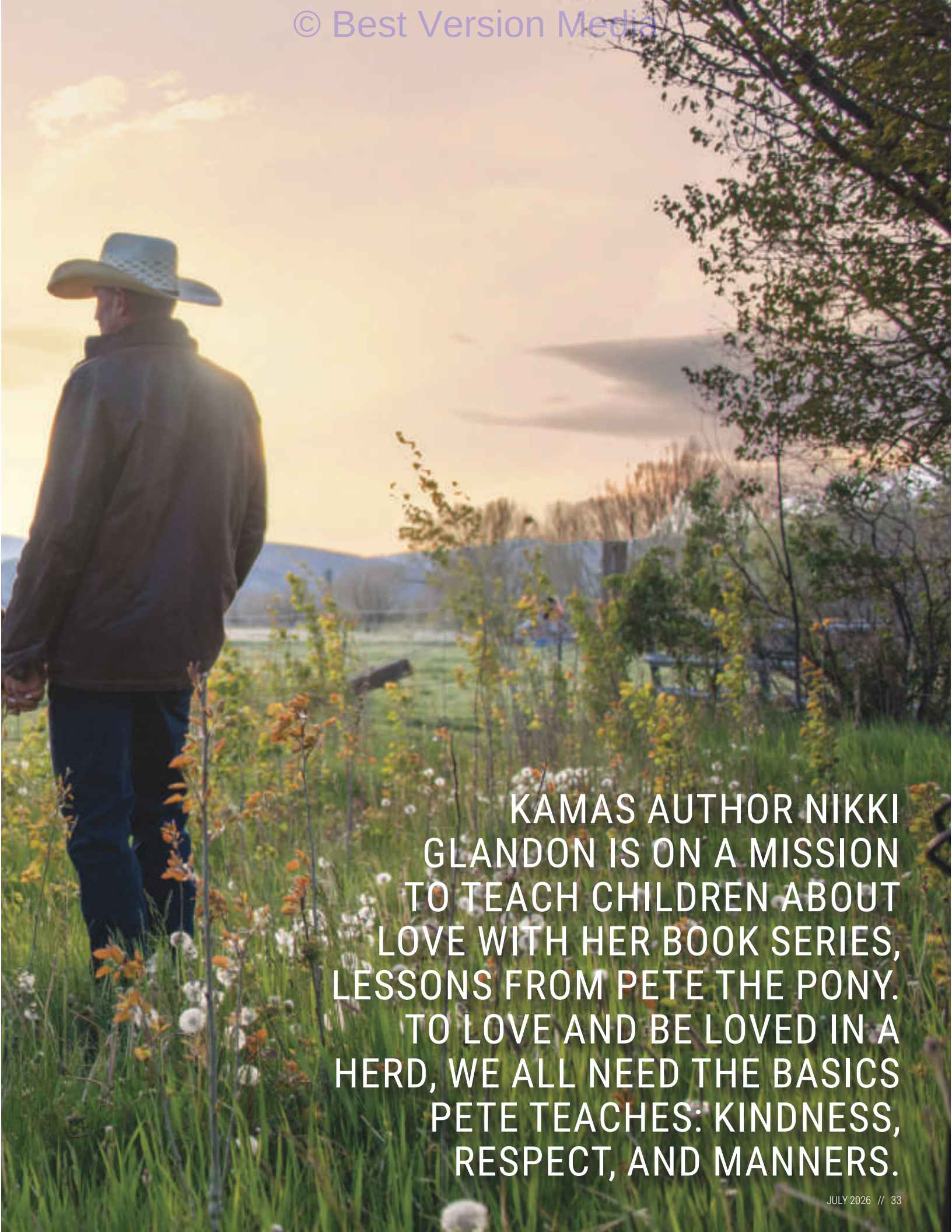
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KAMAS AUTHOR NIKKI GLANDON IS ON A MISSION TO TEACH CHILDREN ABOUT LOVE WITH HER BOOK SERIES, LESSONS FROM PETE THE PONY. TO LOVE AND BE LOVED IN A HERD, WE ALL NEED THE BASICS PETE TEACHES: KINDNESS, RESPECT, AND MANNERS.

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IN AUGUST 2021, KAMAS-BASED AUTHOR NIKKI GLANDON PLACED AN ORDER FOR 40,000 BOOKS AND 3,000 STUFFED PONIES. The books belonged to her new series, Lessons From Pete the Pony, written for ages 0 to 100, or 2 to 8 if you push Nikki. She had signed up for a booth at the National Finals Rodeo (NFR) in Las Vegas, the Super Bowl of the sport. She'd be located at the most coveted spot in the Cowboy Christmas market, next to Santa Claus. There was just one problem: Nikki didn't have (many) physical copies of her books, which Amazon printed on-demand for customers. So, Nikki placed a big bet on Pete. When Seagull Printing in Salt Lake City finished the 40,000 copies in November, just in time for NFR, Nikki showed up with a horse trailer to haul the pallets of books home.



Would Pete the Pony sell at NFR? And what if it didn't?

Nikki had faith in her mission to teach children the nature of love and the responsibilities it entails. Each of us, like her protagonist Pete, is born into a herd that offers unconditional love but calls upon us to reciprocate with kindness, respect, and manners. As Pete says in Meet the Herd, the OG of the series, "When we are thoughtful of each other, we enjoy life more and have really good friends."

Born and raised in Knoxville, Tennessee, Nikki grew up reading with her parents every night, and from a young age, she hoped to become a writer. Twenty years ago, she moved to Park City, drawn to the mountains ever since she went on a teen backpacking trip in Colorado. She worked for a decade at the No Name Saloon and, afterwards, at The Corner Store. Meanwhile, she built a diverse skillset: photography in college, esthetics, multiple yoga certifications, equine-assisted learning, equine massage, and more.

In 2019, Nikki opened a yoga studio, Oak & Willow, in Park East. She began to struggle with depression and anxiety and, in response, started writing weekly emails to her yoga community with stories and lessons. "It was my way to heal, but also my way to share positivity with others and to remind them you're not alone," she explains.

The emails became part of Whiskey in Your Coffee: 100 Short Stories To Remind You To Live With Grit, Grace and Go for



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the Life of Your Dreams, which Nikki self-published in 2019. The idea was to sell the book and speak publicly, but sharing experiences with mental health, over and over, became more draining than healing.

What if, Nikki wondered, she could help with prevention instead?

At The Corner Store, Nikki had begun to suspect that the kids were not alright. They'd shake their empty water glasses at servers, yell at staff, fail to make eye contact, and skip the basics, like saying please and thank you. Nikki joked in those days about writing a book on manners (which she did eventually in Pete Goes to Dinner). "I would always say, it's not for the kids, it's for the parents, because we're the ones apparently not doing the job."

Children were learning to behave in ways that might isolate and disconnect them. The Corner Store experiences spoke to Nikki's own—of depression, the wide-ranging skills she had developed, and life with her boyfriend, Andy Bailey.

Nikki had been passionate about horses since her Girl Scout days in Knoxville. Andy, whom she met in 2018, owned a ranch and brought horses back into Nikki's life. Their first date was a ride on Frank, who would become a character in Lessons From Pete the Pony.

Ranch life and research into horse health—today the focus of a master's degree that Nikki is pursuing in equine science—led her to think differently about human wellness. Horses need the three Fs to thrive: forage, freedom, and friends. Human beings were strikingly similar, it occurred to Nikki.

Nikki founded Planting Seeds Co. in 2020 to help prevent depression and anxiety, starting with kids. How to accomplish that wasn't clear in the



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beginning, but Covid afforded her time to think and experiment. One day in 2021, she noticed a book on her shelf from the Zen Pig series, a gift from a student at her yoga studio (which had since closed—a long sidestory with lessons about landlords). It was a kid's mindfulness book. "I walked by and put a sticky note on it that just said, 'horse mindfulness,'" she recalls.

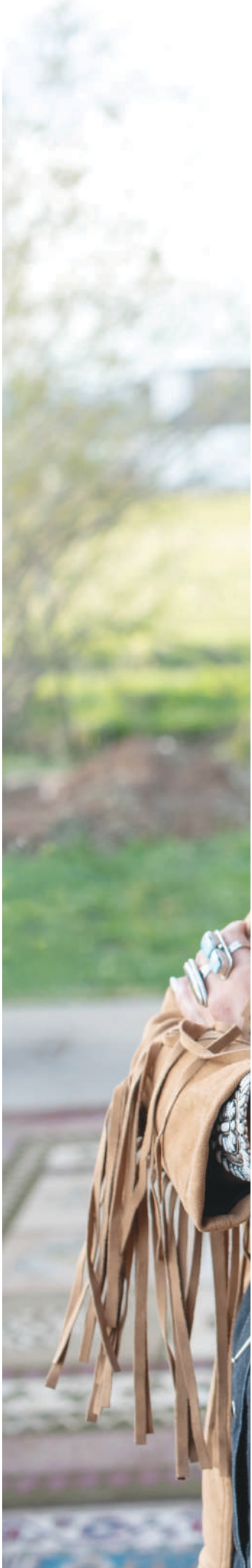
A few months later, Nikki was sitting in her truck at Rockport Reservoir with her late dog, Roscoe.

"I literally heard God say, 'Pete the Pony,'" she remembers. She wrote the first book right then and has since written and illustrated 13 books for the series, two of which have been translated into Spanish.

Pete's world focuses especially on the friends aspect of the three Fs. The stories are upbeat but don't sugarcoat reality. For instance, Pete learns in Meet the Herd that horses must look out for one another; otherwise, the wolves or mountain lions might eat them. "And my dad was like, 'Are you sure you want to say that?'" Nikki recalls. "And I was like, yes, because it's true. That's how a horse herd works. They have to get along, or they die."

As for those 40,000 books and 3,000 Pete the Pony stuffed animals, they've almost all sold. Three years of NFR, author's tours, and sales through Western events and boutiques have brought the book stacks down to a manageable size—which is good, because Nikki and Andy have a new family member on the way. And if their baby is anything like yours truly's 14-month-old, they will find joy in unstacking and throwing books.

Nikki's newest initiative at Planting Seeds Co. is Join the Herd, which she describes as a "community-driven kindness and literacy initiative" aimed at "helping spread kindness, gratitude, positivity, and a love of reading." Every $10 donation gifts a



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book to a child, while larger sponsorships help provide books to classrooms, schools, and community programs. “I have always said, ‘If I could just give the books away, I would, because I know the importance of the lessons in there,’” Nikki says.

Lessons From Pete the Pony is compelling because it takes the position that kindness, respect, and manners matter. It’s okay to be different and to be ourselves, Pete teaches, but the respect we hold for ourselves and for each other preserves the herd. Without a herd, we’re exposed not just to physical dangers, but also to disconnection, which can take our mind to a dark place. And without a sense of self, we may not recognize or appreciate the gifts we bring to the herd.

“I believe a lot of us are missing the mark on what love really is,” Nikki reflects towards the end of our conversation. “I think when I went through mental health stuff, there was a lack of self-love. I don’t mean taking a bubble bath. I mean like, love who you are. You were created magnificent. You were created beautiful. And there’s only one of you, ever.”