



Dear Friends & Family,

Happy Fourth of July! Life is moving pretty fast these days, so we thought you'd appreciate an update!



"Talk to Me, Goose!"

This winter, our team made it possible to provide 191 equine assisted services to 37 weekly participants. This spring we ramped up with the weather, providing 315 lessons to 43 participants. Despite some extremely cold and rainy days, most of our participants continued to prioritize their lessons on site. Telehealth services remained an option whenever sudden illnesses or extreme weather conditions occurred; however, the last few seasons have highlighted a rising demand for on-site services in our area. People really want to get out of the house, and they really enjoy being here – so much so that we've started a waitlist for fall!

Although there are a couple other therapeutic riding centers nearby, one only offers a 10 week summer program, while the other is not a PATH Intl. Member Center. This means that our year-round programs, dependable horses, and certified instructors are highly sought after, and we continue to be grateful for the standards and teamwork that make HGR so special.

Welcome, Tammy Staley & Abigail Scott

Because we need healthy horses to safely serve our participants and veterans, equine management requires constant attention with evolving responsibilities for staff. We want to thank Lynn Pfundtner for sharing her time and talents with HGR from 2016-2021, and we want to officially welcome Tammy Staley and Abigail Scott on staff after volunteering at HGR since 2017 and 2018 respectively. You may recall, Tammy was named Volunteer of the Year in 2019, while Abby earned that title in 2020.



A U.S. Army Veteran herself, Tammy Staley was one of our first volunteers who advocated for local support for our mission. Not only has she seen our herd and programs grow, but she has also been instrumental in streamlining daily duties back in the barn. Additionally, Abby Scott got a real feel for our therapeutic riding center when she had the opportunity to take a work release from school to volunteer even more throughout her senior year. What was once a personal hobby soon became a catalyst for career exploration. Needless to say, HGR would not be where it is today without the years of dedication from these women, and we look forward to future growth and sustainability with their combined care.



Herd Update

Like staff and volunteers, our horses have unique strengths and abilities, with good and bad days. They let us know when they need a break, and we do our best to listen, adjust workloads, and respond to their needs. In May, we sadly said goodbye to our beloved program horse and rockstar friend, Rufus. After he quietly struggled with seizures for the last couple years, our veterinary clinic advised that off-site exploratory diagnostics would ultimately offer no treatment or cure.



Rufus came to HGR in May 2019, after serving at Free S.P.I.R.I.T. Riders in Fond du Lac, WI for five years. When that center closed, after the death of their founder & Executive Director, we were blessed to have Rufus join our herd and growing program.

Known for his many tricks, Rufus loved showing what he could do. His previous owner, Lori Gottsacker, not only taught him to smile and kiss, but she also taught him to hug, shake (give hoof), and even bow! He was like an overgrown lab who never realized his size, loving life "off lead," never leaving your side.

When concerns of COVID began to soar and mounted lessons were no longer suitable for his health or our riders' safety, Rufus became the perfect partner to conduct telehealth services from the barn. From spring 2020-2022, Rufus was so animated and engaging, that all the kids still wanted to see him every week, even if it was only through Google Meets. While some of the other horses never seemed to understand where the voices were coming from, Rufus loved looking into the camera. Not to mention, with a curious mind and willing heart, he proved how fun it is to be a lifelong learner: Maggie Robertson taught him how to paint at HGR, which he perfected during the pandemic, by picking up brushes and moving them on a tall topper with his mouth. When we reopened for onsite services, everyone wanted to paint with Rufus! We were so sad to let him go this spring, but we will forever remember the time and talents he shared with everyone at HGR. A sincere thank you to his anonymous and loyal sponsor: you truly gave him a beautiful life!





Other News

If you have animals then you know how hard it is to get away sometimes, but we knew Wisconsin's Centennial Celebration of the VFW warranted the occasion. It was a 1920's themed gala, and Mac thought we all cleaned up pretty nicely after lessons!

This spring our staff was invited to attend the convention in Milwaukee, where we listened to keynote speakers share their stories of hope and survival. Despite losing portions of both arms & legs from an IED while serving on active duty in Afghanistan, U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Travis Mills of the 82nd Airborne left us with his motto, "Never give up. Never quit." As one of only five quadruple amputees from the wars in Iraq & Afghanistan to survive his injuries, we were stunned by his humor and humility.



Photo Credit: Volunteer Sherri Sandona Kamenski



As if hearing his story wasn't enough to light a fire under us, we then met Major General John Borling of the U.S. Air Force, who, after 97 combat missions in Southeast Asia, was shot down by ground fire northeast of Hanoi, North Vietnam. Seriously injured, he was captured and spent 6.5 years as a prisoner of war. As you can imagine, our staff came back to the ranch with a renewed appreciation for our veterans, and we were inspired to get ready for a full schedule this summer.

Photo Credits: Travis Mills & His Family (Pictured Left) from the Travis Mills Foundation and Major General John Borling (Pictured Right) from the Northwest Quarterly



After putting things into perspective again, it seemed silly to be bothered by the thought of flies, but with heat waves on the horizon, our spring break consisted of much needed property maintenance. Jeremy Ebert kindly leveled the uneven footing in our indoor arena, adding softer sand for the horses and humans tracking around the rail. Ben Singleton then treated the indoor arena with MAG flakes to control the dust, while volunteer Tim Miller generously scraped both paddocks, hauling load after load of manure offsite. The paddocks not only look pristine again, but more importantly, the horses have been relieved from these various seasonal stressors.



Choose Happy & Choose to Make a Difference

With recent tragedies making headlines across the country, we continue to count our blessings. It is easy to let the media consume your attention, grind your gears, and heighten your fears. Meanwhile, the sun keeps rising and the world needs good people like you to make our children feel safe, our veterans feel valued, and our community feel supported. So thank you. Thank you for choosing to make Heaven's Gait Ranch the happy place on Main Street, time and time again.

Years from now, our participants, veterans, volunteers, and their families will look back on their time here with fond memories, knowing that you really made a difference.

How You Can Help

You're Invited to our Annual Hayburner Fundraiser & Silent Auction on Saturday, September 10, 2022 from 5-9 PM at Plier's Full Circle Pub & Restaurant in Port Washington, WI! Join us for live music, heavy hors d'oeuvres, and a silent auction; proceeds support our operating costs to provide services for individuals with special needs & veterans with disabilities. Adults: \$50 and Children 12 & Under: \$20.

Tickets can be purchased at the door or in advance, by sending a check to 940 S. Main St., Cedar Grove, WI 53013 or by visiting our website www.heavensgaitranch.org. Can't make the Hayburner but still want to support our mission?

Mail a gift of any size to Heaven's Gait Ranch, Inc. at
940 S. Main St. Cedar Grove, WI 53013
or Text-to-Give at any time.

Text "horses" to 920-315-7551

and know that you make a meaningful difference!

Thank you again for all you do, and we look forward to seeing you in September!

Sincerely,

Margaret Mary McClaren

Margaret Mary McClaren
Founder, Executive Director



Photo Credit: PATH Intl. CTRI Beth Kettner