



Heaven's Gait Ranch Therapeutic Riding Center

December 2, 2019

Dear Family & Friends,

We hope your Thanksgiving was filled with the warmth of love and laughter to prepare you for the winter months ahead! While this holiday season always seems to pass more quickly than others, know that we are thinking of you at Heaven's Gait Ranch, and we wish you every bit of happiness your heart deserves in 2020!

A Message From the Heart

As you may or may not know, I was in a bad car accident earlier this year, and to say the least, it shook me to my core. Thankfully, no one was critically injured, and during my recovery, I was given quality time to reflect on the many blessings life continues to give. Months later, as I write to you today, I can't help but share the message that is really in my heart as we head into this holiday season together.



Eyes Wide Open

If you've ever been in a car accident, then you know how fast it all can happen. It's not like the movies, where everything slows down, and there's a beautiful montage of memories with your favorite people, places, and songs to ease the ride. It's so fast, that when you blink upon impact, you don't know if your eyes will open again. For me, I didn't know what hit me: there was just the sound of glass shattering and a calamity of crunching, colliding into my chest. Eyes closed, I could feel the car spinning, and the *only* thought that came to mind was "this is it."



After an unexpected blow like this, your adrenaline kicks in: you somehow don't feel pain, and you become hyper-vigilant of your surroundings. Time does not exist; it stops. And then your eyes open -- wide -- searching for something familiar. You notice the littlest things -- like feeling the miraculous beating of your own heart -- hearing the deep sound of your own breath -- and seeing a calming kindness resting in someone else's eyes. You can see goodness staring back at you. And as long as you breathe and remain present with those eyes, you feel safe in that moment.

Marvelous Miracles

If you or a loved one can empathize at all with this experience, or if you've ever felt time abruptly stop, then you might also understand a glimpse of what it feels like for the many participants we serve at Heaven's Gait Ranch. Wide-eyed and soul-searching, our riders with special needs and veterans with disabilities have experienced miraculous moments like this time and time again, with caregivers, nurses, doctors, with family members and complete strangers. Yet what makes their perspective different from most, is that they hold onto their wonder and gratitude, as if that miracle just happened yesterday, and they are simply now breathing on borrowed time.

Heaven's Gait Ranch, Inc.
Therapeutic Riding Center

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As for you and me? You eventually move on. You put the past behind you, and your awareness becomes muddled as time quickly gets away from you again. You "keep doing you" while days or months pass, and that marvelous moment fades into a mere memory, a matter of fact really, and it becomes something that just happened. So you begin to live for the "big events" again -- the holidays, the parties -- the birthdays, the baptisms -- the weddings and funerals -- because you lose sight of the daily blessings right in front of you -- and deep within you.



"This is it."

What if, instead, you chose to live for the Mondays? For a fresh start. For the drives with your parents. For reading time with your kids. For coffee dates. For walks in the rain with your dog full of mud. For late night cookies & milk in March. Or letters to each other instead of to Santa. What if you chose to first see the sunrise instead of your phone? Or what if you started seeing happiness on a Tuesday and not just a Saturday? What if you chose to see joy at the end of your workday? And *in your work throughout* the day? My guess is you -- too -- would see the miraculous gifts you've been given, and you'd want to share them, not just today, but everyday, with others.

Share the Gift of Presence

Whether your name comes to mind or comes up in conversation, or whether your name appears on our phone or crosses our desk, know that when we think of you, we smile, because you are "good people," and we think of all the gifts your presence has brought into our lives. Your presence has taught us to be grateful -- to acknowledge and appreciate the gifts of time, health, family, and support, not granted or guaranteed to everyone. Your presence has taught us to be compassionate -- to search for, find, and evoke the good in every heart you meet. Your presence has taught us to be generous -- to recognize the blessings you have and those you are called to share. And finally, your presence has taught us faith -- to believe that you really can make a meaningful difference in someone else's life -- you just have to open your heart.

Now, today, as we approach the end of 2019, we invite you to open your heart and share what's inside. Give a gift to Heaven's Gait Ranch that allows individuals with special needs & veterans with disabilities to be present in joy. You'll make their Tuesday -- or bitter February -- full of wonder & gratitude they'll carry well into 2020 and beyond. Warmest wishes to you & your loved ones this holiday season, & we wish you a happy, healthy new year!

Margaret Mary McClaren

Margaret Mary McClaren
Founder, Executive Director

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