Discovering New Directions

Thanks to you, our generous supporters, Main Stay continues to celebrate the unique human—animal bond through our various programs. We have the honor and privilege of seeing this extraordinary connection daily at the farm. People unfamiliar with our programming seem surprised at times when they learn about the wide variety of clients we serve. On any given day there may be individuals who range in age from 3 to 93 experiencing the healthy and empowering benefits of Main Stay! What is the unifying component amongst it all – animals, whether they hail from our big or little herd. Below are just a few of the stories from 2013 that demonstrate the depth and breadth of Equine and Animal Assisted Activities at Main Stay.

A Gold Medal Showing

2013 marked the first year that Main Stay competed in the Illinois Special Olympics equestrian division and what an experience it was! Jen Kararo began riding over a decade ago with the help of a leader and sidewalker.

Last October, Jen, along with her instructor Lori Cohen, and her mount Pepsi, represented Main Stay at the Illinois State games.

She competed in a dressage and English equitation class. As an independent rider, she won two gold medals at her Special Olympics debut!

The sense of pride among the team was evident as Jen and Pepsi completed two nearly perfect tests, acting like a seasoned show team in the arena. There wasn't a dry eye on the Main Stay team as Jen hugged her beloved therapy horse, Pepsi, praising him for being the perfect partner. He seemed to revel in the spotlight and looked to be reliving some of his glory years as a previous reining horse competitor. Showing isn't just about winning. It offers riders a chance to set a goal, work towards it, and publicly share their skills. We'd like to say, the winning part isn't so bad either! As Jen so succinctly put it, “It was awesome!”

Our 25+ animals and 40 acres of land require constant care and attention – there’s always something that needs to be done! Main Stay has partnered with several local school districts and their transition teams offering job training to high school or post high school students in a real-life setting.

Volunteer, Jean O’Brien (along with a traditional school job coach) works with students on vocational skills, including soft skills needed in a job, such as arriving on time, appropriate dress, interactions with peers and following directions. Job tasks may include caring for the property, maintaining teaching supplies and animal environments, as well as working in the office. These skills provide students with invaluable experiences as they move out of the school environment and hope to enter the working world. Main Stay offers them the support, guidance and encouragement they need to make that next step.

A recent student went on to obtain employment after her time at Main Stay and her job coach shared with us, “Thank you for making this such a

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Happy New Year Friends,

As you’ll see in this issue, 2013 was a jam packed year at the farm. Traditional therapeutic riding, equine facilitated learning, animal assisted activities, horticultural activities, and vocational training—all at Main Stay—WOW! The depth and breadth of the services that we offer and the people that we serve continue to grow—all thanks to you.

We’re anxiously anticipating the upcoming year which promises more of the same with expanded community partnerships like Transitional Living Services and Turning Point.

You have our never-ending gratitude for your support—whether it’s attending or sponsoring our annual Black Tie & Blue Jeans or Fall Fest events, making a pledge for our annual Rideathon, “Hoofing it for Main Stay” in either the Human Race or the Santa Run (or both!), or contributing to our year-end fundraising appeal. And speaking of our year-end appeal, it’s not too late if you haven’t contributed and would like to, it’s easy to do so through our website at www.mstrp.org.

And there are other ways to help, too, through a myriad of volunteer opportunities like assisting with our equine or animal sessions, helping with property maintenance and care, or joining an event committee. Just give Danielle, our volunteer coordinator, a call at 815-382-9374.

We’re also seeking new board members—individuals that will be community ambassadors and network for Main Stay, assist with fundraising and ensure that the program’s mission and vision are being met. If you’re interested, feel free to give me a call at the farm or email me at ldowell@mstrp.org.

So no matter how you choose to get involved, your gifts of time or support will touch someone’s life.

Many, many thanks,
Loriann
Volunteer Spotlight

Putting in 190 volunteer hours in one riding season is quite an unbelievable task, however, Diane Massier did this over the last year and we are so thankful to her. Diane began volunteering in 2009 and has become a very familiar face since then. As a wife, mother, grandmother and avid traveler, Diane keeps busy, but she always makes time for Main Stay.

She can be seen at the farm up to five days a week. Yes, you read that correct, five days a week! Along with holding regular slots in the volunteer schedule, she is able and willing to come in at the last minute to fill in as a substitute leader or sidewalker. With a long history of equine experience that began at age 7 while growing up on the family farm, Diane is a wonderful asset when the program begins the search for new therapy horses as she often accompanies our Equine Manager when looking at prospective horses. She also assists in exercising the current program horses to help keep them in good physical condition.

Diane shared her thoughts on volunteering at Main Stay, “I have met so many wonderful people…the staff, the volunteers, the amazing riders, and the fabulous horses, all of which form such a special team. I have formed some wonderful friendships at Main Stay that will last forever.” She brings a true compassion to both the students and horses with which she works. We hope that Diane continue to share her many skills with us for a long time to come.

Volunteering is a blast throughout the year!

Volunteer, Sign Up Today!

Main Stay couldn’t operate without our wonderful volunteers. Mark your calendars for upcoming new volunteer training dates. Come out and make new friends and a difference in someone’s life—you’ll be glad you did!

Please call 815.382.9374 to register.

March 22 ……. 5:30 p.m.
April 26 ……. 11:00 a.m.
May 17 ……… 11:00 a.m.
June 21 ……… 11:00 a.m.

Making a Difference

Main Stay and its clients are very, very grateful to our foundation partners for their support in 2013:

Grainger
Helen Brach Foundation
Willow Springs Foundation
Roberts Family Foundation
Mary E. Gardner Foundation
Blowitz-Ridgeway Foundation
Mental Health Resource League of McHenry County
D.A.S. Charitable Fund for the Preservation of Feline Animal Life

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts—we couldn’t do it without you!
“A LITTLE ABOUT THE LITTLES—ANIMAL ASSISTED ACTIVITIES”

Our small livestock herd, known as “The Littles” around the farm, has settled in to their home at Main Stay. Some of the horses were initially skeptical of their tiny hooved neighbors, but everyone eventually made new friends.

The Littles work with a wide variety of clients including senior groups, individuals, and youth groups from local schools and mental health agencies. Clients enjoy the easy rapport that they have with the animals and are able to work on personal, behavioral, or emotional goals in a fun and inclusive environment.

A recent session provides a snapshot of how AAA sessions can impact a participant. A group had identified a goal of wanting better experiences with friendship. After brainstorming with each other, they came up with some qualities associated with friendship, like being trustworthy, honest, a good listener and accepting. The participants then went to work with the small herd. They each tried to model at least three appropriate friendship skills, while interacting with the Little herd.

After the session the group reflected upon and shared their experiences with each other. One young woman shared that she’d been using a brush to work through mini horse Daisy’s unruly mane. She had started combing the mane with great care but it wasn’t really getting the tangles out. She “agreed” with Daisy that she could comb a bit more aggressively because she and Daisy had discovered that they trusted each other. Ultimately, Daisy’s flaxen mane was tangle-free.

For some individuals, recognizing and appropriately interpreting social cues, and this sort of social progression within a friendship, can be very difficult. It was amazing to see this lesson learned in such a short time, and taught by an understanding miniature horse named Daisy. The young woman went on to say that she could use this experience to help guide her in other friendships, particularly in the areas of trust and cooperation.

MAIN STAY’S OWN

Fall Festival highlighted the successful fund raising efforts of some of our riders.

The top three Rideathon fundraisers were Sara B., Caz and Collin. The Rideathon raised a total of $8,766 and had a very generous matching grant, bringing the total to an incredible $17,532! We are very grateful to everyone who helped make the 2013 Rideathon such a tremendous success!

Sam H., chose Main Stay’s “Little” herd as his focus for a Bar Mitzvah fundraising project. Sam raised over $1,000 for Main Stay! Way to go, Sam! As a not-for-profit organization, fundraising efforts of all kinds are vital to Main Stay’s success and progress. Our thanks to Sam and his family for thinking outside the box to help us – help so many others!
Main Stay staff and volunteers continue to further their knowledge both near and far. Nancy Steinmeyer, a Tellington TTouch student currently working towards her certification, professional fine artist, horse and pet owner shared her knowledge of TTouch at a Returning Volunteer continuing education workshop last fall.

TTouch (developed by Linda Tellington-Jones) helps relieve tension, soreness or discomfort using gentle bodywork including circular touches, lifts and slides along the horse’s body. Most horses love it as it loosens and stretches sore spots and just plain feels good! Nancy demonstrated a variety of techniques which help the horses perform even better in the arena. Our equines carry many unbalanced riders throughout the week and TTouch along with the traditional massage work they receive helps them stay in the best shape possible.

Several of the instructors attended the PATH Intl National Conference held November 6-10 in Orlando, Florida. Attending conferences is a great way to learn new ways of approaching how we provide services to our clients. The wide variety of topics presented ranged from improving teaching techniques, running the administrative aspects of the program more efficiently and learning about other programs and what they offer at their centers.

Friends and supporters enjoyed a beautiful day at the farm during our Fall Fest. The day had many highlights including drill team and equine demonstrations by the Midwest Renegades and a Main Stay team. Music provided by Cassandra and the Gravel Road Band and Bart Alonzo, along with delicious food from Porkies, stage coach rides provided by Dan Holian and his handsome team of Clydesdale horses, a chance to meet the little herd and games for young and old alike made the day one we haven’t forgotten.

Our thanks go out to the many volunteers who donated their time to the event and to the sponsors for helping make the day such a success.

Jean, Roxie, Danielle and Lori help Jean O’Brien celebrate her Region 7 Volunteer of the Year award in Orlando.

Main Stay drill team demo at Fall Fest

Stagecoach rides in the hay field at Fall Fest
NEW MEMBERS OF THE HERD

PISTOL, a former dressage horse, is a 16 year-old palomino paint gelding donated by a generous Main Stay supporter. Pistol enjoys being around people and loves being part of the action, including debuting his talents as part of the Main Stay drill team demonstration at Fall Festival.

LILY joined the Main Stay herd after completing a successful show career as a hunter/jumper. Lily is in her mid-teens, and is a beautiful golden palomino color. Lily is a wonderful addition to our herd as she has active, forward movement and responds quickly to a rider’s cues.

KAY is a 12 year-old Norwegian Fjord mare. Typical of the breed, Kay has a sturdy draft build but is short in stature so she can carry a wide variety of riders with ease. Kay is very people friendly and enjoys attention. You may find her blissfully closing her eyes as she’s being groomed or carrying even our smallest of riders with care and kindness.

JASMIN is a beautiful Oberhasli goat. Jasmin was raised by a local family as a 4H project. Jasmin loves people and enjoys walking on a leash to explore the world around her. Like her friend, Kali, little Jasmin arrived at Main Stay in the back seat of a car!

ERNIE is a Nigerian Dwarf goat who will celebrate his first birthday in March. Ernie has a gentle but playful nature and is quickly making new two and four legged friends. Kali, our miniature dwarf horse, is particularly smitten with him, and will even let Ernie use her sturdy back as a springboard for wild leaps into the air.

CELEBRATIONS

Main Stay celebrated its first full year providing therapeutic riding, Equine Assisted and Animal Assisted activities under one roof! We moved the Year-end Awards party to a new venue to celebrate our riders and volunteers, and loved it. Thanks to Woodstock North High School for sharing their fabulous facility with us. Recognizing our riders for all their accomplishments and our dedicated volunteers is one of the best days of the year!

Troy, with his instructor Liz, receives his certificate of achievement.
Dear Friends,

In reading this issue, I hope you took it all in with a sense of satisfaction and pride, because you certainly helped create these success stories! Your generosity allows us to create possibility; encouraging people to find a new way to do something they thought impossible. *What a gift that is – thank you!*

As Main Stay seeks new ways to touch lives, we recognize the enormous stake we each have in the program. Gifts of time in the arena, the donation of professional skills, funds shared by a child, a parent, a “new friend”, or a long-time supporter – are all gifts that are vital to the success of those who need Main Stay. The “gifts” that staff and board members bring to the table add incredible depth to our program and allow possibilities to become realities for children and adults with a range of needs that are wide and diverse.

Together, we shape our future, whether from the back of a horse, gazing into the eyes of a sheep, sitting at a desk learning new skills, being a ring volunteer, feeding & cleaning, teaching, raising funds, or by replying to our requests for support. Let’s keep our focus on opportunities that lift each other up, allowing each of us to reach for the stars. It’s by doing this that we all soar - reaching heights we could never imagine alone!

*With Love and Deep Gratitude,*

*Sara*

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**YOU COULD BE OUR HERO**

The 3rd annual Human Race is scheduled for April 27th. Help Main Stay by registering at http://www.mchumanrace.org/ . Be sure to sign up for Team Main Stay.

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**ANNUAL GIVING CLUBS**

- **Leg-Up Club** $1-$99
- **Bronze Stirrup Club** $100-$249
- **Silver Stirrup Club** $250-$499
- **Gold Stirrup Club** $500-$999
- **Platinum Stirrup Club** $1,000-$4,999
- **Grand Prix Club** $5,000+

Please return to:

**MSTRP**
6919 Keystone Rd.
Richmond, IL 60071

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**YES! I want to help support equine-related therapy at Main Stay.**

Name ____________________________________________________________

Address __________________________________________________________

City __________________________ State _______ Zip ______________________

Phone _________________________ Email _____________________________

**Gift Amount** ☐ $25 ☐ $50 ☐ $75 ☐ $100 ☐ Other $________

☐ Please designate my gift to the area of greatest need.

☐ I’d like to support a horse through a monthly gift of $50 to the **Stable Angel Club**

☐ I’d like to support a rider through a monthly gift of $50 to the **Therapy Angel Club**

☐ I would like information on providing a Bequest to Main Stay.

☐ VISA ☐ MASTER CARD ☐ DISCOVER

Acct # _________________________ Exp. Date __________________________

Signature _______________________________________________________

*“Thank You” for your support. Your gift is tax-deductible as provided by law.*
Mission Statement
To encourage, enrich and empower individuals through the therapeutic benefits of horses, animals and nature in an uplifting and nurturing setting. Main Stay is a place where bodies are challenged, minds embrace possibilities and spirits are renewed.

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Main Stay is a registered 501c(3) with no federal or state funding.

Please help us save some trees and money by sending your email address to info@mstrp.org

Save the Date
Main Stay’s Annual Black Tie Blue Jeans Fundraiser will be Friday, May 9 at Donley’s Banquet Hall. You won’t want to miss this year’s event “Inspiring New Directions” and see the surprises we have planned for the evening! Sponsors, auction items and volunteers are needed. Any and all help would be greatly appreciated. Call the farm if you’d like to help.

Like us on Facebook or visit www.mstrp.org

Thank you to the Crystal Lake Kiwanis Club for making this year’s Santa Run a huge success—close to 1000 runners! Funds raised benefited Main Stay and other McHenry County agencies.