



“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

Dear Friend,

Thirty years ago two women, an equestrian and a physical therapist, had a dream: to share the unique healing power of horses with individuals who would benefit from the rhythmic and therapeutic movement of riding.

In the beginning each week a bus from the Special Education District of McHenry County would arrive at Main Stay Therapeutic Farm and, for the next two hours, 8 students would enjoy the freedom and therapeutic benefits of riding a horse.

We’ve come such a long way from that single bus of students a week, and that only has been possible thanks to people like you.

Today our program offerings have expanded to include equine and animal-assisted learning activities and adaptive gardening in addition to therapeutic riding, which will always be the cornerstone of Main Stay. This year Main Stay will see close to 350 people and provide over 4500 individual sessions.

Main Stay’s vision has grown and matured through the years but our fundamental focus and core culture hasn’t wavered. Main Stay welcomes all who come through its doors and continues to see the highest potential in everyone who comes to the farm.

Three decades later, there have been countless stories of progress and triumph—***all because of you***. Let me introduce you to Mike.

He suffered a traumatic brain injury after a near fatal car accident. Mike began his riding journey 10 years ago needing significant support from his instructor and a team of three volunteers in order to safely stay astride his horse. Over the years he has made significant improvement and is now able to ride his horse independently. ***Mike’s confidence and sense of accomplishment increased along with his physical progress.*** He is now quick to offer an encouraging word, friendly hug and a huge smile every time he walks, unaided, through the barn door each week.

And there’s so much more we can do with your continued support.



Mike’s positive attitude and significant strides are an example and inspiration for younger rider, Julia. Early last year Julia also experienced a life-altering car accident driving home after a cheerleading practice. Her recovery has required her to dig deep and find the strength to regain her independence as an active teenager. Julia returned home from the hospital in a wheelchair with limited physical mobility and found even basic communication challenging. Now, Julia can stand up and walk. Each week she gains confidence and the strength to balance herself with the motion of her horse. ***Interacting with her supportive team of instructor and volunteers encourages her to use her voice and improve her speech and communication skills.*** Her progress continues to unfold as her determination drives her onward week after week.

Julia walked down the barn aisle after a recent lesson and was asked how her ride went that day. “It was awesome,” she replied brightly, flashing a thumbs-up to support her enthusiastic response. Just like Mike, Julia is finding that the effort she demonstrates each week at Main Stay is helping to support a brighter future.

Horses aren’t the only ones that bring hope at Main Stay—sometimes it can be found through a friendship with a goat as this troubled young teen discovered.

She had frequently thought about ending her life and she knew just how she would go about it. She believed she had nothing to live for. Arriving at the farm for their first session, the group of teens went out to meet the herd of rescued farm animals. Surrounded by the inquisitive gentle herd, the other kids laughed and petted the animals; however, this fragile teen wanted nothing to do with the experience. Ernie, a small goat in the herd, was undeterred by her outward disinterest. He caught the teen by surprise when he snuck up behind her and rubbed his nose on her shoulder. She shooed him away. Ernie returned again and rubbed his nose on her shoulder only to be shooed away again. After repeated attempts, she eventually allowed Ernie to lean against her. The following week when they arrived for their session, the young teen asked if “that goat was going to be there”. From that moment on, she began to warm up to the rest of the herd, to the volunteers and the rest of her group. ***At the end of her time at the farm, she shared how life-changing the experience had been.***



Sometimes it just takes an intuitive friend to help get past our defenses and to let us know, we’re not alone.

With your help long time clients like Mike will continue to progress and grow, while new clients like Julia will have hope for a brighter future. Because of you partnerships with agencies such as Allendale, One Hope United, JourneyCare, Turning Point, Clearbrook and Family Alliance, who otherwise couldn’t afford our services, are made possible. These community collaborations offer a safe setting for clients, old and new, to continue to reach their highest potential.

For thirty years, Main Stay’s team of special animals, compassionate volunteers, dedicated staff and ***kind, generous donors like you***, have helped individuals regain their independence, find their voice, and feel accepted and loved.

It takes a village—thank you for being a part of our community.

We hope we can count on you to send your gift today and join us as we embark on the next 30 years of inspiring unbridled joy.

Thank you for all you have done to help Mike, Julia and a scared young girl. You have made such a difference by giving them and the many others at Main Stay hope for a better tomorrow.

With gratitude,

Loriann Dowell
Executive Director

Sara Foszcz
President, Board of Directors

~Inspiring Unbridled Joy~