

Dear Friend,

I want to tell you about the remarkable impact you've made for so many individuals this year at Main Stay. Individuals who have gained physical strength from riding a horse, the calm felt by those when softly brushing a mane, the pride and confidence experienced guiding an animal through an obstacle course and the trust earned from working with a classmate to complete a task in the barn—these are just a few of the impacts of the equine and animal-assisted programs at Main Stay.

This is the impact YOU have when you make a gift to Main Stay.

The Impact of Relationships

Every day we see the impact of the strong bonds between our clients, animals, volunteers and staff.

This year, our horses and other animals have been working with victims of human trafficking and sexual assault through a partnership with an agency that provides a place of escape for sexually-exploited women.

Many of these women have never been eye-to-eye with a 1,000 pound horse or shared a quiet moment with a curious goat. Unsure of what they will find, the women are greeted by our horses and other animals with openness and honesty—the only expectation for them is to be present and in the moment.

One newcomer to these sessions was visibly resistant to being there—her body language said “leave me alone” to her peers and to the animals. However, a shy brown and white miniature horse by the name of Sweet Pea seemed unfazed by the woman's demeanor and inched closer and closer until she could nuzzle the woman's hand.

Upon the feel of Sweet Pea's warm breath on her hand, the tension in the woman's body melted away as she knelt down and began quietly stroking and reassuring the little horse. ***This seemingly small connection made a huge impact.*** In weeks following, she walked into the barn with a smile, sharing with her peers and our staff that she had grown up with horses.



She shared this in a recent writing assignment:

“Horses meant the world to me growing up. It was a place of purity and peace. After the trauma that I have endured and the great difficulty and effort it takes participating in active healing all week, I find so much relief in being able to come back to the peaceful times through the horses, they re-center me so I can keep going and focus on the future. They give me something to look forward to when things get hard.”

Because of you, these women have a place where they can feel safe and connect with our therapy horses and animals to help heal from their painful past, cope with their PTSD and find happiness —**thank you.**



The Impact of Movement

Meet 8 year old Tommy. Tommy was born with Down Syndrome. When he started riding at Main Stay, he had very low muscle tone and difficulty holding up his head. Tommy was shy and timid and spoke very little.

Today, Tommy is all smiles when he walks into the barn and helps put the reins on his pony, Miss Kitty. Initially, he needed the support of two side-walkers. Now, only a single volunteer walks alongside and serves as his spotter. Miss Kitty's rhythmic strides move his hips and help to strengthen his core. He sits up tall as he confidently steers Miss Kitty around

the arena. His face is filled with pure joy as he interacts with his riding instructor and volunteer.

Tommy and his family recently attended Main Stay's annual Rider Recognition party where our riders are celebrated for their accomplishments. He could hardly wait for his turn. He beamed with pride (as did his parents) as his instructor shared how much he had grown throughout the riding season and presented him with his certificate of achievement. ***What a huge impact riding has had on Tommy—an impact only possible because of you and your support.***

The Impact of Support

Thanks in large part to you, this year has been a year of impactful and unprecedented growth for Main Stay! *We will serve close to 500 individuals* through our therapeutic riding and horsemanship, equine and animal-assisted learning, adaptive gardening and personal and professional development programs.

Our small, but dedicated staff and volunteer force of more than 125 weekly volunteers help to deliver our programs to community agencies like NISRA, Turning Point, One Hope United, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Family Alliance, McHenry County Specialty Courts, Allendale and Clearbrook.

You should be proud of what we've accomplished together.

And I'm sure you understand, the costs to support the increased programming also grow, which is why your gift is so important to us. Because the fees that we charge our clients cover less than 20% of our actual cost, we rely on your generosity to help us continue to offer our services at minimal cost to those who need them the most.

You've helped us in the past and just look at the impact that your generosity has had for so many individuals. Won't you help us reach our year-end goal of \$150,000 to continue delivering life-changing services to children like Tommy and adults who have endured unthinkable traumas?

Thank you for all that you've done and continue to do for Main Stay and the people we serve. We hope the kindness and generosity you have bestowed is returned tenfold during this holiday season and throughout the new year!

With gratitude,

Sara Foszcz
Board President

Lorian Dowell
Executive Director

