The **Inspiring New Directions** program was launched this year for high school aged clients as an alternative to detention or suspension, and other traditional interventions needed in a school setting. The program teaches students to gain insight into their own behavior and internalize practical behavior skills.

One common challenge faced by a majority of the program’s participants has been the negative impact of anxiety and stress on day-to-day decision making. “Most of the behaviors and difficulties that we are noticing in school are often correlated with environmental conditions. I often feel that more needs to be done to help them; more people need to believe in them. The last thing these students need is a consequence; they need a connection. Main Stay has been the connection for these students,” explains Ashley Burger, a McHenry High School Social Worker who attends sessions with the students.

Keeping these needs in mind, the program has two main objectives; develop reflective coping skills to recognize and replace unproductive behaviors, and to implement restorative skills if needed. Each week students observe and interact with animals through hands-on activities that help students relate to, and connect with, animals and each other in a caring and meaningful way. The focus on internalizing calming and coping skills helps students to self-regulate behaviors without the need for intervention. These skills help students experience greater self-worth and contribute more positively at school and the greater community.

Media coverage indicates a strong interest in the Inspiring New Directions program. A cover story from the Daily Herald has been reprinted by other local newspapers as well as at least one out of state paper in Idaho!

A generous grant from the Community Foundation for McHenry County made this program possible.
Happy Spring!

2018 is off to a great start at Main Stay—new faces, programs and community outreach opportunities—all of which, I’m pleased to say, were key initiatives in our most recent strategic plan update. This plan focused primarily on increasing Main Stay’s awareness in the community, fortifying our organizational structure to ensure we are attracting and retaining top talent, and making sure we have a sound financial plan in order to sustain the program long into the future. These strategic actions reflect our commitment to providing our clients with the highest quality of individualized programming while honoring our donors’ financial investment in Main Stay.

I’m filled with gratitude for those who supported our annual year-end fundraising appeal. It was one of our most successful year-end drives yet. These funds go towards supporting our operating expenses which include riding instructor and group facilitator salaries, animal care expenses, and insurance. This support allows us to pursue new collaborations with groups like Options & Advocacy and the Refuge for Women. Your support also makes it possible for riders like sweet Olivia (who you will read about in this issue) become stronger and more engaged in the world around her.

We’re working fast and furiously on our upcoming annual gala which will feature a Kentucky Derby theme. “Jockeys & Juleps” will be held May 4 at Starline Factory in Harvard. We welcome your help to make this event a success and are in need of sponsors and items for our silent auction. This year’s event includes a Triple Crown raffle. The raffle prize is a FABULOUS weekend in Chicago, July 20-22 and features box seat tickets to the Cubs vs. Cardinals on Friday afternoon along with a $200 Wrigley Field gift card, a 2-night stay at the chic Kimpton Hotel Allegro, 2 tickets on Saturday to the Broadway sensation, Hamilton, and $500 in gift cards for food and incidentals! The weekend is valued at over $2,000. Raffle tickets are $100 each and only 300 tickets will be sold and are available in advance or the night of the event (winner need not be present). You can purchase them online at www.mainstayfarm.org or by calling 815-653-9374. Watch your mailbox for your invite—we hope you can join us!

Thank you for your continued partnership with Main Stay,

Loriann

― Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Did you know that fees paid by Main Stay clients cover less than 15% of our actual costs? Please consider supporting Main Stay’s clients.

We hope you join our “Circle of Hope”

Please see the attached envelope to see how you can make a donation today. Or, donate online at www.mainstayfarm.org

Giving Levels

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**Rider Spotlight**

Meet Olivia

You won’t find a much cuter pair than Olivia and her equine partner, Miss Kitty. Although both are tiny in stature, they are mighty when working together.

Olivia’s mom, Christina, says “Olivia lights up as we pull in the parking lot to the barn. Riding sparks the fire in her. We see the results both during her ride and afterwards.” Her mom loves to watch her ride and looks past her disability when she’s up on the horse and only sees the great connection she has with her team. In the 2 years Olivia has ridden, she has become stronger, allowing her to walk with assistance as she gets ready to ride instead of using a wheelchair. Christina feels riding “awakens her muscles” and when she’s home after riding she vocalizes more and moves around the house more.

Gains are tangible – she can crawl up the stairs in her house, lay herself down instead of having someone do that for her and she is more engaged after riding. Her mom believes she has had fewer hospitalizations for her GI issues because of riding. We are thrilled that riding makes such an impact in Olivia’s life and look forward to many more years of progress and fun as Olivia grows up with us at the farm.

**Program Spotlight**

Harness the Power of Your Team

Main Stay continues to look for opportunities to support our mission in order to keep program fees affordable for those who need and benefit most from our services. One of these new opportunities is a program that is being offered to organizations and companies.

**Harness the Power of Your Team** is a unique self-discovery experience that incorporates Main Stay’s serene 40 acre farm and animals to provide an interactive learning opportunity for you and your team. We work with you to design activities specifically to meet the needs and goals for your group. **Harness the Power of Your Team** focuses on areas of development like team-building and communication which help your team work more effectively together (plus, it’s fun!) Main Stay has hosted several workshops for local organizations and here’s a few of the things they have said about their day at the farm:

- “I thought it was a really spectacular method to teach leadership.”
- “I have better insight and (will be) more open to fellow team members.”
- “It was a reminder to stay focused in the present. I lost myself in the moment. It was absolutely wonderful and amazing.”
- “It helped me learn not to underestimate what was in front of me and to pay attention to silent (non-verbal) cues.”

Experiential learning is an opportunity for you and your team to be directly involved in creating a meaningful experience which benefits each individual in all aspects of their lives.

Contact Jean at jmaraist@mainstayfarm.org or 815-653-9374 for more information.
Main Stay Hosts PATH, Intl. State Meeting 2018

Main Stay hosted the 2018 PATH Intl Illinois State Meeting in February. Over 70 equine-assisted activities and therapies professionals gathered to earn continuing education hours and network with their peers. Sessions covered a wide range of topics in this unique and complex field with a focus on how each of us can become better at what we do to benefit our clients, animals and each other.
Congratulations to Bob Murray, the recipient of the 2017 Founders Award. As a Master Gardener, Bob has been instrumental in helping grow our adaptive gardening program allowing clients to get their hands dirty in the soil, pick and enjoy a fresh veggie right off the vine and maybe try something new. Bob not only volunteers with clients, but coordinates all the Master Gardeners at the farm, who logged over 444 hours of volunteer service in 2017. Bob is a great advocate of Main Stay raising funds for the program through his participation in events as well as seeking outside funding. Bob’s enthusiasm for gardening and people has helped the program grow deeper roots and serve more people. Thank you Bob!

Inspiring Unbridled Joy, Everyone Benefits!

Without our many wonderful volunteers who choose to make a difference, our program would not exist. We are always grateful to welcome new volunteers to Main Stay, come for a VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION to learn more about volunteer opportunities.

You just need the desire to give your time; we can almost guarantee you will receive more than you give!

Community Partners

Thank you to the following charitable foundations and organizations for awarding grants in support of Main Stay’s mission to help people achieve their goals through the infinite healing abilities of our animals and nature.

Grants received from September 2017

- Allstate Giving Campaign
- Amazon Smile Foundation
- D.A.S. Charitable Fund
- Kiwanis Club of Crystal Lake
- Knaack Foundation
- Knights of Columbus – Hampshire #13034
- Knights of Columbus – McHenry Council #1288
- Knights of Columbus – Richmond Council #8366
- Mary E. Gardner Foundation
- Mental Health Resource League for McHenry County
- Richmond – Burton Community High School
- The Community Foundation for McHenry County
- Willow Springs Foundation

Want to help raise funds for Main Stay?

- Double your gift by asking your employer if they have a matching gift program
- Host a designated Main Stay fundraiser at your office
- Attend or sponsor an event
- Join a committee

Call 815-653-9374 or email segan@mainstayfarm.org for more information

Individual and corporate donors contributing to our Annual Appeal, Capital Campaign, Farm and Animal Sponsorships and Special Events are acknowledged in our Annual Report.

~WWW.MAINSTAYFARM.ORG~
Looking for a unique space to host a workshop or meeting?
Main Stay’s new facility has plenty of space to host workshops and meetings. A wide variety of rooms seating from 30-130 are available at the farm. Situated on 40 beautiful acres of land, the farm also has space to walk and reflect outside. It’s a special place we want to share with the community. Contact us at 815-653-9374 or info@mainstayfarm.org to learn more about room rentals for your group.

Changing Faces Around The Farm

**Rusty** is a big & sturdy gelding. His kind demeanor, training and easy going personality have made him a favorite around the farm. Purchased with funds raised during the 2017 Riders Challenge.

**Hope** is a 10 year old Nubian goat who joined “The Littles” in January of 2018. She is a gentle soul, and a little quirky, too!

**Howie** is a sturdy Haflinger gelding with smooth gaits. He has a curious personality and enjoys attention. Howie was purchased with a grant from the Mary Gardner Foundation.

**Ozzie & Harriet** are a bonded pair of bunnies who joined the “Littles” crew after Luigi retired. They enjoy attention and daily fresh veggie treats.

**Shawna Egan** is helping to develop and implement a Corporate Partnership program. She brings a wealth of experience AND has a deep love of Main Stay’s programs.

**Brittany Giannoni** joined the team as an instructor and volunteer coordinator. As a certified Recreation Therapist, working with horses & people is a wonderful combination of two of her passions. She brings a great enthusiasm to all her roles at the farm. Brittany rides and shows hunter/jumpers in her spare time.

**Harry** is a sweet Haflinger/Gypsy cross gelding. He is easy going & kind, taking care of each rider’s needs. He was purchased with funds from the Riders Challenge.

**LeAnn Belt** is an Equine Assistant who helps our equine staff in their own continuing education and development.

~ Inspiring Unbridled Joy ~
Hey Friends – After nearly three decades of writing articles for this newsletter, one would think it would get old…nothing is further from the truth. Main Stay is always evolving with the needs of the community. The programs shift, the building shifted and sometimes faces also shift, but the commitment, curiosity and compassion remain steadfast. These qualities continue to feed our hearts, souls and conviction.

This edition fills me with stories that inspire…a student reaching a sought after goal, a generous soul that has long-term vision, our staff renewing by learning and stretching through their comfort zones to meet a new need, and the beautiful 4-legged beings that are our forever teachers and partners. Again – things that inspire, ignite and refresh us daily - this time, not qualities but “beings.”

Certainly, the most valuable parts of Main Stay are people like you! People that care deeply, challenge us to improve, live in a world of “yes” and possibility! Thank you for being you and doing what you do to make Main Stay a valued asset to our part of the world.

As we settle in deeper to our new, incredible building, we have realized there is much more that Main Stay can offer to our area. At times, we are still in “pinch me” mode. However, the spaces we worried might be “too big” are being filled on a regular basis. Programming is close to year round. Schools, neighboring agencies and private clients continue to find Main Stay’s programs a huge benefit and “an enormous bang for their buck!” Traditional therapeutic riding in the indoor arena, animal assisted programs in the original (north) barn, a classroom of kids working in the gardens (with Master Gardeners of McHenry County), and professional team building and leadership development running simultaneously with any of the above…there is a lot happening at Main Stay.

Once again – it comes down to our dedicated people. So many people, doing so many “little” things. Actually – nothing is little. Every action is part of something much, much bigger. Your role - no matter how you perceive it - we see as something quite grand. We are incredibly grateful for every one of you. We need you! If there is something more you need from us - please let us know.

Let us continue to grow together in our commitment, curiosity and compassion. The world is in need.

Love Always -
Sara

Mark Your Calendar!

- April 22, 2018 – **Human Race 5k Run/Walk** – 8:00a.m., McHenry County College, Crystal Lake
- May 4, 2018 – **Jockeys & Juleps Gala** – 5:30p.m., Starline Factory, Harvard
- May 20, 2018 – **Fair Diddley** – 10:00a.m., Woodstock Historic Square
- July 2018 – **Riders Challenge** – Main Stay Therapeutic Farm
- September 30, 2018 – **McHenry County Farm Stroll**, 10:00a.m.
- October 13 & 14, 2018 – **Fall Diddley** – 9:00a.m., Boone County Fairgrounds, Belvidere
- December 2, 2018 – **Kiwanis’ Santa Run for Kids** —Crystal Lake

Participating in, and supporting these events helps to lighten the financial load for all of our amazing clients
Main Stay’s mission is 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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~INSPIRING UNBRIDLED JOY~