

November 28, 2023

***Dear Friend,***

***How many times have you said or thought “TGIF” at the end of a tough week?***

Many of us use this acronym to express joy that the work week is done, and that weekend of leisure will soon be here, however, **thanks to you**, TGIF brings a different meaning of joy for Main Stay rider, Grace. Her love of Friday is not for the days that follow, but for what is going to occur on that very day. Her excitement begins when her parents help her put on her Main Stay shirt and tell her it's time to go ride her horse! Grace knows the route to the farm and shrieks with delight the entire way to Main Stay. Her mom loves to see the joy it brings her daughter.

Grace's smile lights up in the arena and her enthusiasm is infectious. Mikki, her instructor, her volunteers and Harry her horse all seem to reflect her joy.

Grace is in her early 20's and has been riding at Main Stay for about a year. She has developmental delays, is non-verbal, and is unable to walk due to weakness and balance issues. Her parents were concerned that she was losing strength after she was no longer eligible for school support services due to her age.



**GRACE TELLS HARRY TO “WHOA”**

**But then they found Main Stay, and it was just what Grace needed.**

Riding helps strengthen Grace's core and improves her balance, so she is able to sit tall in her chair and move around more easily when she is at home. Using cue cards and hand signals to communicate with her instructor and volunteer team has helped her to interact more easily with those who assist her outside of Main Stay. Plus, the social aspect of riding is something Grace can share with her whole family, including her cousins, who like to ask her about Harry and her ride. Grace's mom tells us that they love seeing photos of her riding Harry.

Sandi, Grace's mom, shares, ***“We love visiting with staff and volunteers, we love the animals, and we love just being at the facility!”***

Main Stay's therapeutic environment, horses, animals, and beautiful farm are irresistible motivators that make learning, growing, and building strength FUN!

***TGFY—thank goodness for you for giving Grace and her family the gift of Main Stay.***

**Fridays aren't the only day of the week that are popular at the farm.**

Because of your generous support, you can find different schools and agencies at Main Stay just about every day of the week. Several of the agencies serve individuals who may be coping with mood disorders or are trauma survivors. For them being at the farm and working with Main Stay's dedicated staff, volunteers and kind animals helps to promote good mental health. Research shows that being in the presence of animals prompts the body to release hormones which promote relaxation, reduce stress, and can lower symptoms of depression and sadness.

Agencies like Lake County Mental Health Department's Child & Adolescent Behavior Health Services who sent a group of adolescent girls to Main Stay on Tuesdays last summer to work on their coping skills. Avery wrote this letter to her favorite animal, goat Ernie, ***“you inspire me because you stay calm, are nice to every animal, and because you make a really great friend...you made this experience 1000x better.”***



Another group who benefits from their weekday visits to Main Stay comes from a recovery program that provides support to women who have come from abusive and exploitive situations. After a week of intense therapies, they look forward to coming to the farm on Friday afternoons to unwind. They spend time with the big horses, and the herd of small animals along with staff and volunteers. The farm and animals provide these women with a safe environment where they can find peace and reconnect with themselves and the natural world.

The women are filled with gratitude for their time at the farm. One of the participants, Jenny, wrote this note of thanks to our kind donors, ***“equine therapy.... is helping with my P.T.S.D. It takes a beautiful soul to care that much about people you don't even know; I can't thank you enough.”***

We agree with Jenny, **we simply can't thank you enough** for helping to create a place, like Main Stay, where individuals can find acceptance and peace to help them thrive!

At Main Stay, we recognize that every day is different for every person. We don't believe in “one size fits all.” Main Stay's adaptive riding and horsemanship, animal-assisted learning and adaptive gardening programs are designed to meet each person's needs and goals. We understand that those may be everchanging and we adapt our approach to meet each person exactly where they are at, at that moment in time.



Grace's joy, Avery's connection with Ernie, and Jenny's path to healing all stand as an important reminder - ***don't underestimate the power that you hold.*** Your kindness, generosity, and belief in our mission have transformed every day at Main Stay into something extraordinary for the many people that participate in our programs - - over 560 individuals last year!

### **TGFY – THANK GOODNESS FOR YOU.**

If your circumstances allow, please consider sending a gift to Main Stay today – any amount you are able to give will make a difference. If you are not in a position to give this year, please know that your past support will continue to echo through the hearts of countless individuals and families. It stands as living proof to Main Stay's ongoing mission and remains a source of inspiration and hope.

Thank you for all you have done for Main Stay.

Wishing you a holiday season filled with light and love and a new year of bright beginnings.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Loriann".

Loriann Dowell  
Executive Director

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