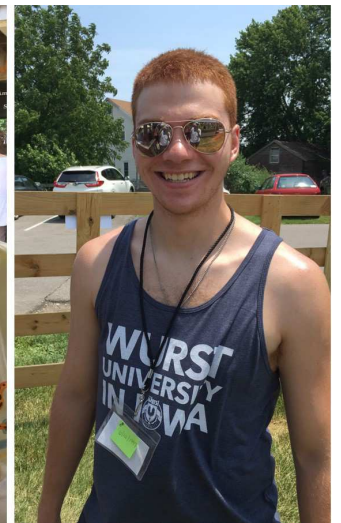




Premier sponsor for our 30<sup>th</sup> year

**SOUTH SLOPE**  
PHONE INTERNET TELEVISION



## Wurstfest

In addition to being one of the hottest days this summer, June 16<sup>th</sup> was the date of Wurstfest in the Amana colonies. Our loyal volunteers sweated it out, working four-hour shifts to raise money for Miracles! Thanks also to Becky Tranter who organizes volunteers for events like this and earmarks the money to benefit local non-profits! Oktoberfest will be another opportunity for anyone interested in spending part of their day to benefit Miracles.

## From the Barn

I travel around the state and local area quite a bit, telling various people and organizations about what we do at Miracles. One of the more common questions is: "How do you get your horses?". A good question.

All our horses are donated. Being a nonprofit, we just don't have the funds to go out and buy horses when we need them. Consequently, we rely on folks like yourselves to give us a call when you find a horse needs a good home, maybe a young rider has outgrown a horse, or the animal is getting up in years and can't quite work as long as he used to. (continued on the next page)



Lucky, a potential new therapy horse at Miracles



Thanks to Leash on Life for sponsoring our newsletter. You can visit them on their website at [www.leashonlife.net](http://www.leashonlife.net)

## From the barn, continued

Our newest acquisition, Lucky, is a good example. He came from a family that has had horses for years, but their two older horses had passed and Lucky was lonesome. He is a Piebald mini and is only 10 years old, our minimum. His owner came to the farm to donate some materials and mentioned the little guy so we decided to take a look.

Our horse team, consisting of me, Maddie DeVore, assistant barn manager, Haley Paulson, barn assistant, Jackie Wallace, long-time volunteer, Ashley Garretson and Dabney Hofammann, instructors. We work together to evaluate new prospects to determine if they will be a fit with our current program.

Most important, the horse must be physically sound. It must not startle easily, crow hop, buck or rear for *any* reason. If so, it's a no-go: We simply cannot take any risks with our students. Their safety is our top priority. Also, the horse must be at least 10 years old and a gelding. (We don't take mares for reasons I won't go into here.)

Finally, the horse must be trainable. It may be great at trail riding or barrel racing, but that is completely different from our environment. A horse that is wonderful with adults might not act the same way with horse leaders, side walkers, and an active child on its back.

Typically, we accept horses on a 90-day lease program. This gives us time to have our veterinarian look them over, as well as our team. We take them into the arena and expose them to distractions, noise, crowds, kids jumping up and down on them; you name it, we do it. During this time, we will also carefully introduce them to the herd. This is a slow process because we don't want to rush the animal.

It's a new environment with an established herd. Horses are social animals and have an established "pecking order" in each herd. We generally will put the newcomer into a pasture with one of our old-timers to kind of pal up with.

The other horses get to meet him over the fence and go through the "meeting ritual" without any chance of an injury should they not get along. That, however, is rare.

One of my favorite things is to watch new horses meet each other and to observe the dynamics of the greeting. There is a lot of head tossing, squealing, pawing the ground, and even biting, some serious, some playful. It is all part of that pecking order I mentioned. Everyone wants to meet the new guy and give his own evaluation.

Lucky, our new boy, established himself right away with Raven, the herd bully. Despite being less than half Raven's size, he walked right over and bit him on the nose. There was a lot of kicking the gate, pawing the ground, biting and squealing and now they are best buddies. Raven can often be found across the fence from Lucky nickering and neighing.

Acclimating a new horse to the herd is a slow process and patience is required. Generally, we like to go visit a horse at its home where he is comfortable. We bring toys, balls and ropes to test him. Tossing beanie babies at their heads, throwing ropes over their backs, and balls at their feet all help determine how they will react. We will saddle him and ride him around his home turf to evaluate his level of training and obedience. We talk to the owner to get a feel for his likes and dislikes.

All this information goes into the horse's "book" where we keep all his records. After this is complete, the team meets to discuss whether he's worth a try. This is a team effort and we always reach a consensus; everyone on the team needs to be comfortable with our decision. If we agree it's worth a shot, I write up our recommendation for the board of directors to review. If we receive the go-ahead, we arrange to move the new guy to the farm.

Miracles is not a home for old horses who can't work anymore, unless they are members of our existing herd. Horses that live and work at Miracles will stay with us until they die. They will receive an easy retirement, good care, comfortable surroundings, and the love of our staff for each of them. If, at the end of 90 days we determine a horse will not be a fit, we return him to his owners.

In the past two years, we have turned down a lot more horses than we've kept. Not every horse can do what is required of a well-trained, cooperative, and safe therapy horse. It's not an exact science, but the process works for us. I'm always happy to answer questions, or to look at a new horse for our Miraculous herd.

Ken Manley  
Barn Manager  
[ken@miraclesinmotion.net](mailto:ken@miraclesinmotion.net)



**Shots from Horse 101**, our ground program to teach students about caring for and understanding horses.

### 30th Celebration

South Slope has continued its generous support of Miracles by donating four tickets to a Cubs game for our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration Silent Auction. Just one more reason we hope you'll save the date and plan to join us September 13<sup>th</sup> at South Slope's Community Center. The celebration will run from 4:30 to 7:30 and bids for silent auction items will close at 6:00. If you have an item you would like to donate, please contact [loisjames@gmail.com](mailto:loisjames@gmail.com). See you then!



### From the Acting Executive Director

It's July, Freedom is on our minds, and in my stream of thoughts, horses are not far behind.

Watching Miracles' herd run full-out in broad pastures, embodies the very concept of freedom. Sometimes they're chasing each other; sometimes they're racing, and sometimes they're running for the sheer joy of running! Is there anything more entrancing than the muscles and form of a horse running, or even while at rest? Is there anything funnier than when they are mischievous (and they are) and playful? Isn't it fascinating to see them choose who to hang out with and who annoys them - or who they annoy? How do they choose just where the grass is sweetest?

These are large, powerful animals and yet, how gentle they become when they work with our students. From the time the students excitedly point out "their" horses, to the time the horse and team meet the instructors, therapists and students at the mounting ramp, the horses are attuned and awaiting instruction. It is said that while the hide of a horse is thick, it is also so sensitive that it can feel a mosquito on its back. Horses feel the students - precious cargo - on their backs. They know that they are trusted and must be worthy of such faith.

When I was a little girl, I remember my excitement at anything related to horses: The colors, muscles and form; the sounds when they would whinny, snicker, snort and stomp their feet; the smells of grass, horse sweat and manure (ah, if they could only bottle that smell!); the roughness of their manes and the softness of their fur, and the movement of their bodies, balancing and counter balancing. Their quiet way of listening, sometimes nudging, sometimes still. Is there anything more fantastic -or ubiquitous - than the horse in all of history?

For 30 years, Miracles has built on the love and relational aspects of horses to benefit our students. In return, our students and volunteers have benefited our horses. Our herd is older, yet active and healthy. Someone once said that to be happy, a person needs three things: something to do, someone to love, and something to look forward to. I think that is true of horses as well.

Standing and watching these magnificent beings during their off-duty time, I appreciate their strength, athleticism, and behavior in their environment. It's their free time: Free to run, to choose, to groom and to enjoy each other's company. And all this wonder goes on always, even when no one is watching.

If you have a child with a disability or are a veteran facing challenges, call us (319-857-4141) and find out how to connect with these incredible equines. Anyone is welcome to come see our facilities located on 76 acres approximately two miles west of Swisher, Iowa. Call ahead and we'll be glad to show you what I have been telling you about so you can experience it for yourself - maybe once again or maybe for the first time.



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Our thanks to interns from Alliant Energy for helping out with the never-ending farm maintenance tasks at Miracles!



## Tribute to Verne Upmeier

The following was presented at the Kirkwood Horse Expo in 2003. Miracles in Motion was 15 years old. For those good at math – that makes this our 30<sup>th</sup> year – and time to revisit how it all started. Here's the tribute:

If you are attending this horse expo today, you likely have an interest or a passion for the horse. But few of us here can spend as much of our time with horses as we would like. It is the fortunate horseperson who can step outside the house in the morning and be at work: feeding, grooming, tacking up, vetting, shoeing, riding and training horses.

Verne Upmeier has lived and worked with horses all his life. Along the way he has shared his love, knowledge and respect for horses with others. Nearly everyone in this area who has been in the "horse world" has met someone who rode or bought a first horse from Verne. It says a lot about the man who has been a horsetrader and lived and worked in the same area all his life.

Hundreds of children have experienced horses and hay rides at Upmeier Stable, but about 15 years ago one special rider made a different impact on Verne: Andi wasn't always connected with her world the way other children were, but it was obvious she loved her pony rides! Verne vowed she would always have a pony to ride at his place. The idea grew and with Verne's quiet but steady support, Miracles in Motion was born.

In its early years, Verne helped keep the program alive in countless ways: finding horses and ponies suitable for the riders, boarding the horses, providing Upmeier Stables as a site for classes, equipment storage and the annual Ride-a-thon, and serving on the Miracles Board of Directors from its beginning. In horseman's terms, to Miracles in Motion, Verne was the foundation stock. Without his support it is unlikely the fledgling program would have survived to grow into the expanded program it is today. It was Verne's unselfish sharing of what he had in life that we are honoring today.

From six riders on borrowed horses for the first year, Miracles in Motion now serves over 100 children and adults each year. They benefit physically, mentally, socially, and recreationally from weekly interaction with one of the most exciting animals on earth.

We've all heard the quote "The best thing for the inside of a man is the outside of a horse." (Winston Churchill/Lord Palmerston) Sir Winston Churchill also said "I say to parents,... 'Don't give your son money. As far as you can afford it, give him horses.' No one ever came to grief – except honorable grief – through riding horses. No hour of life is lost that is spent in the saddle."

This, too, applies to Verne Upmeier: "If you have *it*, it's for life. *It* is a disease for which there is no cure. You will go on riding even after they have to haul you onto a comfortable, wise old cob, with feet like inverted buckets and a back like a fireside chair." (Monica Dickens)

From all the riders, the parents and families, the volunteers, and the staff at Miracles in Motion: Thank you, Verne Upmeier, from the bottom of our hearts for sharing your enjoyment of horses with all of us.