



From the Director:

Sometimes it hard to believe that it is December and 2020 is coming to an end. To think what we have been through this year with a pandemic and the Derecho, we cannot let those two events define us. The hardships we faced provided us the opportunity to take a fresh perspective and learn to adjust our standard operation in new and different ways. Our vision at Miracles stayed the same: To enrich our community by creating opportunities for people to bond with the energy and spirit of the horse. It just looked different than previous years because we needed to ensure we were keeping our community safe and healthy.

With that in mind, we launched our Blaze a Path Forward campaign to raise the funds necessary to make much needed property improvements to enhance the experience for our students with special needs and for our veterans. The construction is in progress and so is the fundraising for the capital improvement. We cannot wait to introduce this new addition in 2021. Updates for the campaign and progress are posted on our website to keep everyone informed.

We had to adjust our classes to virtual zoom classes. Diana, our PATH instructor, spearheaded these classes beginning in June and continuing through December. The sessions taught students how to lead a horse in from the pasture, grooming, tacking, and much more. For our student base and community we filmed, Behind the Scenes videos. Events filmed and posted on our Miracles website show the farrier working on the horses' hooves, volunteers bathing horses this summer, and the arrival of new horses to name a few. The fan favorite was the Boo at the Barn Horse Parade. These videos were our way of keeping our community in touch with our therapy horses and Miracles.

I feel that we will look back on this year and realize how it changed us, how it propelled us forward, and how it strengthened us at Miracles. We have so much to be thankful this year, especially for everyone who has supported us during this challenging year. We are also grateful to all our donors, volunteers, our board, and the rest of our community who are propelling us into 2021.

Happy Holidays and on to 2021! Deb Leichsenring



Sam's Club & Walmart Giving support Miracles

Great news! We just found out that we received a grant from Walmart Giving to help with the costs of the addition to the arena. These grants are approved by a local store – in this case, Sam's Club in Cedar Rapids. Lauren Crippes, secretary of the Board, was on hand to thank Sam's Club in person and pick up the check. This is the second year we have been honored to receive support from Walmart Giving.

Giving Tuesday kicks off “Do you remember me Aspen?” campaign

I want to thank Cooper and Becky for allowing us to share their story of what Miracles has meant to them.

In Becky’s words: “There have been so many benefits that Cooper has gained from Miracles. In addition to the more obvious core strength, balance, following directions, and social skills, such as turn-taking, I was in awe sometimes watching Cooper ride. He was relaxed, proud, and confident...skills that he struggles with off the horse. And skills that are difficult for me to teach as a mom. For that alone I will be forever grateful to this program.”

I hope you have had a chance to check out the video of Cooper and his mom on our website – here’s the link

<https://miraclesinmotion.networkforgood.com/projects/111609-do-you-remember-me-aspen>



Over \$5000 was raised on Giving Tuesday – all of which will be matched, thanks to Jim & Mary Pratt in memory of Ethan, Seth, Mira and Eleanor Sueppel. Thank you all so much for your generosity. If you missed Giving Tuesday, it’s not too late – donations through the end of the year will be matched in memory of my horse, Sanchez.

You can donate through the website, or send a check to Miracles, 2049 129th St NW, Swisher, IA 52338,

If you are on the website, check out the construction progress on the Upmier Arena and completed Pavilion project.
Lois James



Joe Petta Named Board President

As we prepare to say good-bye – and good riddance - to 2020, I am preparing to assume the role of board president, having served a secretary for the past three years. Miracles has been blessed with a dedicated board of directors and strong leadership under our past presidents. With the support of the board, the dedication of our staff, and the commitment of our volunteers, we will be ready to reopen in 2021 as soon as health conditions allow. With a new year, new leadership, and a newly expanded arena we are looking forward to 2021 with anticipation and excitement as we continue our long tradition of steadfast service to our student riders and to the veterans who participate in our programs. I know I can count on you all to help us make 2021 a year to remember at Miracles.

Miracles Moment from Volunteer Brenna

I started as a volunteer in July 2020. I was looking for an escape to fill my time and help with my stress as a pediatric ICU nurse. With being raised around horses, I thought what better thing could I do than volunteer with horses and children. Miracles has provided me with so much more than I could have imagined. Miracles has been an outlet for me, a place to come to, relieve stress, and enjoy time with the herd. I have made new friends, furry and not, and have grown to cherish every opportunity I have to be at Miracles. The herd has welcomed me with open hoofs, and every week we have been making improvements together. The herd is learning to trust me, as I trust them, and now some even come running when they see me. I’ve created numerous bonds with different horses, that I can’t even pick a favorite. Let’s be real, I love them all. Learning the personalities and quirks of each horse has been my favorite part so far because each horse is so different and entertaining in their own ways. I thank miracles and the herd for welcoming me as a volunteer and I continue to look forward to volunteering every week!





Thanks to Aureon and South Slope for their continuing support

We are very pleased to receive a grant from Aureon and matching money from South Slope for construction and furnishing of the quiet space/therapy room in the new arena. We weren't able to have our usual "check presentation ceremony" because of safety concerns, but here is Deb Leichsenring, Director of Operations in front of the roughed-out space in the new addition to the arena.

Closing thoughts from outgoing president, Lois James

As I think about the end of another Miracles season – a very unusual season - I am filled with gratitude and optimism. None of us envisioned what 2020 had in store for us as we trained the first group of volunteers in March. It was an exciting time – and the volunteers were so enthusiastic. I know we will be there again, hopefully early in 2021. Things have changed, but many aspects of Miracles have stayed the same – we are still committed to our mission to connect our horses with those that can benefit from what I view as their understanding, feedback and compassion.

I hope you and your family have been able to adapt and thrive through the changes we faced in 2020. I know for many it has not been easy. For me it was a time to think about what is important – personally and where Miracles is concerned. We had an opportunity to make significant upgrades to our facilities and I am so grateful that so many stepped up to make that happen. I look forward to sharing our enclosed pavilion and expanded Upmier arena lobby area next spring. I also knew it was time to have someone else take over as president of the board so I could continue to focus on other aspects of this very unique non-profit. I'm delighted that Joe Petta agreed to be our next President and I know he will do a great job with the support of an outstanding Board of Directors.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank those of you who did daily chores, weeded the gardens, exercised the horses, helped with fundraising, zoom classes and a myriad of other tasks and projects that keep Miracles going. Our Director of Operations, Deb Leichsenring, Property Manager, Nick Andeway, Volunteer Coordinator, Maggie Elliott and PATH instructor, Diana Harris, have been the glue that has kept all aspects of Miracles functioning within the confines of COVID. And to our donors, grant partners and sponsors, thank you from the bottom of my heart. Your encouragement and support have been so meaningful to our entire program and will have an impact for years to come.

Although the holidays may well look different for you and your family this year, I hope you find contentment, peace and share my optimism for 2021 and beyond. Lois James