



Miracles in Motion

THERAPEUTIC EQUESTRIAN CENTER

Miracles in Winter by Karla Miller

January 2022

For almost three seasons of the year, Miracles is bustling with activity. Volunteers working on the farm: gardens, horses, property. In October, classes begin to slow, vegetation dies back and another year of services winds down. By early November, most activities change over to preparing for the long winter to come and a whole set of activities continue. With the coming of winter, preparation is in progress to batten down the hatches.



Chores are being done two times a day, alternating members of the herd coming in for grain and medication in the morning and ones coming in the afternoon. Zip and Blaze come in twice a day every day. Everyone is groomed, despite the weather (except for rain-nobody likes grooming a wet horse and, frankly, what's the point?). Still, we tend to their feet.

The real challenge comes, though, when many of you are still in your beds. Early, early in the morning, when it is minus degrees actual and much below zero with the windchill factored in, volunteers gather to set out food and medicines, put water in stalls and brave the cold to bring in the boys for the chore ritual. We open the north barn door to be greeted by four faces: two short and two tall as Mr. Sea, Little Guy, Don Pecos, and Brett wait eagerly for us to lead them in to the breakfast waiting in their stalls. Then, we trudge to the pastures and diet lots to bring in the rest.

We fill the water tanks and make sure they and the automatic waterers aren't frozen over. The hay is delivered to all stations in the various pastures and lots. Fences are checked because Raven and Blaze are especially hard on them. Manure is scooped out of the loafing sheds where the horses huddle to keep warm. We empty the buckets and food bowls from the stalls and make sure the stalls and arena are free from waste.

If it's warm enough (20 degrees or warmer), the exercise riders and trainers work with the boys to keep them in shape and healthy. The farrier comes every six weeks. The vet comes as necessary. We doctor minor bites, cuts and abrasions and take care of sore legs from old injuries. We clean the troughs by the big barn doors and knock any ice off so we can close them. The horses are worked on by equine body workers performing massage and Masterson techniques in cold stalls on some of the horses to ease tension, pain and increase movement. Not much on the coldest days, but sometimes.

Perhaps one of our most important tasks and the one most rewarding is cleaning the ice out of each hoof on each horse. As the saying goes, "No hoof, no horse." Ice, mud and manure pack in tightly in the hooves. Sometimes the ice build-up creates large convex balls (like baseballs) making the horses unstable on hard ground and concrete. We pick their hooves and make sure they are clean and free of ice. (One hoof the other day took me 10 minutes or so to clear, so hard was the ice!)

When we have swept the barn, tended the horses, and put things away, we often sit by the heater for a few moments to make sure that Ace has had his attention.



Volunteer moment with Tina Koepnick

After a rewarding 35-year career as a high school science teacher, I have discovered a new passion volunteering with Miracles in Motion. The work at Miracles is a perfect combination of my love for young people and horses. My lifelong quest to have a horse never having come to fruition is now realized through the 17 “boys” in our herd. A relative novice at horse care and training, I have soaked up the wisdom and experience provided by the incredible staff and volunteers at Miracles. I began volunteering in June 2021 and in the last 6 months have tried many of the “jobs” for volunteers. Horse lead, side walker, barn assistant and even chores are rewarding in so many ways. With the addition of some new horses this summer, I have also been involved with groundwork and the importance of this training in developing horse behaviors necessary for our work at Miracles. The positive experiences I have witnessed with students in adaptive riding classes and hippotherapy sessions have been amazing, and in many, life changing for all involved.

The opportunity to volunteer with the Miracles in Motion family has blessed me with new friends, new challenges, and a new outlook on the usefulness of horses in creating positive experiences for people of all ages and abilities.



From the Director of Operations, Deb Leichsenring...

Here at Miracles we lost a valuable member from the farm family, Todd. Todd was one of our two farm cats. Todd truly was definitely more than just a cat. Most anyone who came to Miracles, Todd was there to greet you. Whether it was a vendor, a student or their family member, a volunteer. Todd was in the know. Todd was always out in the field with you, he wanted to know what you were doing. Then it was chore time, Todd was there. Todd lived harmoniously with the horses. I think that the horses knew in the animal kingdom here at Miracles who was at the top and that would be Todd.



Todd has been a part of Miracles since he was a kitten. He came through the field and decided this is where he wanted to spend his life. Todd never wanted to be a house cat (some have tried). Todd, I feel, had a sense of responsibility to the farm. He had to make his rounds. He always came back. This was his home.

Todd, as he lived his life here at Miracles and when he went on to his next life, was surrounded with Miracles volunteers. We know that our other cat, Ace is missing his partner. We are making sure that Ace is getting extra attention.

Todd’s passing makes me think how important animals are in our lives. Animals are pure, precious. Interactions with our animal companions are less complicated and complex than between us and another person. Let’s face it, we seldom argue with our pets. We have daily interactions and routines with our animals that help us get through the day. Like each animal we have in our life, each we learn from and they help build who we are. Find ways to stay warm this winter.

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Thank you to all that donated through our end of the year campaign, “when you meet one Miracles student...” We surpassed (by a considerable margin) our goal, bringing in over \$37,000. All the donations were matched, which puts Miracles in a great position going into 2022.