



Miracles in Motion

THERAPEUTIC EQUESTRIAN CENTER

June 2023



Karla Miller's Miracles Moment

On May 19, Miracles volunteers Jackie Wallace, Nancy Fisher, and I arrived early at Miracles in Motion to groom Mr. Sea and Little Guy, two of our three minis, for the trip to Oaknoll East in Iowa City. Oaknoll East resident Nancy Hauserman and I had been planning the visit since last year.

Oaknoll Residents Meet the Minis

At Oaknoll we were met by residents out on the lawn, and soon a sizable crowd gathered. While

some residents petted and groomed the horses, we introduced the minis. Mr. Sea is a purebred Falabella miniature horse with a beautiful brown coat changing from winter shaggy to a summer look. He is 29 years old and about the size of a big dog. Little Guy is a part pony/part miniature horse, around 26 years old. (Our third mini, Lucky, did not make the trip.)

Some residents had experience owning or riding horses. You saw on their faces the look that comes over people when they reminisce about their own horses. Meanwhile, Mr. Sea and Little Guy munched on Oaknoll East grass and, by the way, found it superior to their usual pasture fare.

An Extraordinary Story About Miracles Minis

We talked about the mini ambassadors' appearances at schools, parades, special occasions, and a visit to a resident at a hospice in Iowa City at the request of the man's family. As if on cue, a woman said, "You brought those minis to visit my husband at the Bird House. It meant so much to him and to us." It turned out, her husband had once been a volunteer at Miracles in Motion and loved horses, especially his own Tennessee Walker. His cowboy hat was on a peg on the wall of his room. One regular-sized horse from another town had visited by sticking his head into the man's window. I told the staff that our horses were too short for that. They said just bring the horses into the man's room. So, we did. Mr. Sea and Little Guy behaved like perfect gentlemen, standing at the man's bedside, taking turns being the closest to him.

This man had been unresponsive prior to our arrival. He reached out and petted each mini in turn, talking to them softly. We were there for about forty minutes while his family looked on in delight and appreciation of what these horses were doing with their presence. We visited with the family, and they documented the visit with many pictures. The man died a week later.

His wife said that visit meant so much to them. In this extraordinary encounter at Oaknoll East, I had the opportunity to tell her that it had meant so very much to us as well.

Miracles thanks the MidWestOne Foundation for their recent generous donation in support of our programs. We appreciate this support from our local business community!

Grow with Miracles: The Next InSTALLment Kickoff

Miracles welcomed more than 80 guests the evening of June 3 to kick off the public phase of our campaign Grow with Miracles: The Next InSTALLment. The overall goal is to raise \$750,000 to replace our aging barn with an expanded, more accessible structure—and thanks to many generous donors, we are well on our way!

As this was the first visit to the farm for many, we wanted to showcase what we do at Miracles. Attendees observed a half-hour Adaptive Riding class before “moseying” up to the pavilion for drinks and dinner. The miniature horses were also out to meet guests. Many Miracles volunteers helped before, during, and after the event to keep things running smoothly.

A short program after dinner highlighted the difference Miracles is making for its riders and volunteers--in the past, present, and looking to the future with the Next InSTALLment. Jackie Wallace (a volunteer for some 34 of Miracles’ 35 years!) recalled how the program was started in 1988 and the milestones since then. Ted Abel, director of the Iowa Neuroscience Institute at the University of



Iowa and parent of a Miracles rider, spoke about the impact of therapeutic riding—and Miracles in Motion in particular—on son Seamus, an adaptive rider who is on the autism spectrum. When Seamus started therapeutic riding, “he found his people,” Ted noted, “and they were horses!” Concluding the program, in a video interview Miracles volunteer Michael Coconate highlighted reasons he supports Miracles and why the new expanded barn is crucially needed.

Thank you to our event sponsors:

Leash on Life, Home Repair Team, Raining Rose, & Walmart (Blairs Ferry Road, Cedar Rapids)

From the Director’s Desk

Calling all Veterans! Miracles in Motion is reintroducing the Veterans’ Program, which we call **MVECS--Military Veterans Equine Care Squad**. This program brings unlimited possibilities for veterans through the healing power of the horse. Research has found that equine therapy is effective in providing emotional, social, and physical benefits for veterans. There are many other benefits: increased self-esteem, increased trust in others, emotional awareness to name a few. Everyone’s benefit will be different. Working with horses also requires participants to understand and interpret nonverbal cues and behaviors, and this can help facilitate social interactions.

The program is no cost to veterans and runs for 6 weeks. Equine-assisted therapy focuses on the participants working with the horse in a stable and farm setting. One of our veterans said, “There is something peaceful about walking out to the herd. It becomes like being around your closest friends in the military. You don’t have to say anything; you just know that they know.”

If you have any questions about the program or how to participate, just call 319.857.4141 or email: miraclesinmotion@gmail.com

—Deb Leichsenring

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