



# Miracles in Motion

THERAPEUTIC EQUESTRIAN CENTER

April 2021

## Classes get off to a smooth start at Miracles!

So many pieces need to come together to put on an adaptive riding class at Miracles. The horses need to be conditioned, brought in from the field, groomed, tacked up and lead into the arena. The arena needs to have been dragged smooth and wet down. The instructors need to have evaluated the students and determined which horse, saddle, leathers and stirrups to use for that student. The volunteers need to have been recruited, trained and given specific responsibilities for each class session – sidewalkers, horse leads, barn assistants and team leads. The students need to have applied and provided paperwork from their parent or caretakers as well as their doctor. Volunteer work days need to be scheduled and coordinated to get the property, arena and barn ready for the season. Last week was the first week of classes in well over a year, and it was all worth it to see the smiles on the faces of our riders! Thank you to all who did so much to make this possible!



## 4H Club Spend Day Volunteering at Miracles

This past Sunday, 28 members of the Johnson County 4H Horse and Pony Club spent the day volunteering their time working around our 76-acre farm. The arena received a much-needed paint job, all the equipment was moved outdoors and pressure washed, along with the water buckets and feeding dishes from the barn. Fans were cleaned and put up in the stalls in preparation for the hot weather, halters were all cleaned, and stalls were cleaned and freshened. There was also a grounds crew that cut and removed dead brush and branches and cleaned the overgrowth along the parking lot. The group was able to escape the damp, windy weather by having lunch inside our newly enclosed Pavilion. It was a productive day, and an incredible amount was accomplished to help improve our appearance after having no outside help for a year. Hats off to this hardworking group of volunteers!



## On the Road Again!



Tuesday, April 6th marked the beginning of another season of visits for the Miracles in Motion Mini Ambassador Team. Mr. Sea, Little Guy and Lucky go out and represent Miracles at community events, parades, and other venues. Their job is to increase awareness about Miracles and to let people get to meet them and enjoy their company. Tough job, huh? Nice work and they got it.

First off on the schedule was a ride to Stoney Point Meadows Senior Living Center in Cedar Rapids. Mr. Sea and Little Guy had been tapped for the first outing. Deb and Nick had them perfectly groomed. By the time the minis were ready, Jackie Wallace, Carlotta Antonelli and Jamie Smith took over to handle the visit.

As the minis came into the view of several residents waiting for them, one woman started laughing in delight! One of the most rewarding things about the Mini Ambassador Program is the instant effect the little horses have on those they visit. They evoke smiles and light-heartedness effortlessly. Taking turns petting them, reactions run from the sheer joy one can't help but experience in the presence of these creatures, to nostalgia for a time when they had horses of their own or had special experiences with horses that remained in their memories.

And, as the minis returned to Miracles and their dinner, they knew they had done their job. Or maybe they just ate their dinner. We will be keeping you posted on the adventures of the Ambassadors. Who knows where they will show up? Perhaps at an event near you!



## A Day in the Life of our Director, Deb Leichsenring

People often ask, what goes on in a day at Miracles? Let me give you some insight to one day here at Miracles this past week!

Tuesday morning started at 7:00 with the morning chore team feeding part of the herd.

Next, Mr. Sea and Little Guy were brought in to be groomed and cleaned up for the first mini visit into the community since Fall of 2019! Like the good Community Ambassadors that they are, both minis stood still while we groomed them. Next, they were loaded into the Miracles' trailer and off with three of our volunteers to spend time with the residents of Stoney Point Memory Care in Cedar Rapids. As always, the minis enjoyed the attention, and the residents were appreciative to be able to be close to horse.

As the trailer with the minis went down the driveway at Miracles, next up were 11 students from University of Iowa physical therapy department for a workday. Here at Miracles, we could not do what we do without the help of the work groups that come out to assist with projects around this 76-acre farm. We had Nick, our property manager and two of our volunteers help guide the PT students through the projects. It is surreal what can be accomplished in four hours with that many hands! When they finished, they got to meet the herd and received a big thank you from all of us!

Just as the PT students were leaving the volunteers for the second class of the season arrived. We are so thrilled to be able to offer hippo-therapy and adaptive riding classes again at Miracles. Because of COVID, last year we did not offer any in-person classes. For the herd and us to see the enthusiasm of the students was so rewarding. It takes minimum of 10 volunteers, plus two instructors for each of our classes. While the classes are being taught, the barn team is bringing in the horses for evening chores. This all wraps up around 8:15 in the evening. Lights out!

Not all days are that full, but I have to say most are! I am so appreciative for our volunteers who come to help with workdays, who help with chores, who help ensure that the horses are tacked correctly and ready for the classes, for our instructors who work so hard to provide classes that help the students ride to the best of their ability each week, and to our donors who help make Miracles happen. A heartfelt thank you!

## Just What IS Mr. Sea?

By Karla Miller

Question: What do you call a horse who is just 28 inches high at the withers? Answer: Mr. Sea.

We're often asked, "Is he a baby?" "Will he grow bigger?" "How old is he?" We answer that he is a full-grown adult miniature horse who was born in 1995 making him 26 years old.

He is a true miniature horse, meaning he is not mixed with any other breed. In an article about the Falabella Horse Breed (published by Dani Buckley, "I Love Horses Page," Sep 21, 2020), there is an amazing story about the breed. The long and short of it is that when Spain tried to conquer Argentina and failed, they left their horses (Andalusians and Barbs). Andalusians are from Spain and are elegant and strongly built and a Barb or Berber horse is a North African breed of riding horse with great hardiness and stamina (Wikipedia).

These horses evolved to become smaller and hardier to survive. A man named Patrick Newtall was interested in these horses and sought out as many of the smallest horses he could find. He then bred them for a smaller size, while keeping the proportions of a large horse. Then, he gave his stock of these miniature horses to his son-in-law, Juan Falabella. They perfected the breed over years and in 1940, sold them worldwide. (If you are interested in knowing more information, I encourage you to look up the article.)

Falabellas are said to be "docile and hardy animals and require low maintenance." There are some at Miracles who would argue with the "low maintenance" claim. Just ask our vet or volunteer Colleen! They breed naturally. In fact, my entire opinion of Mr. Sea changed abruptly when I learned a couple years ago that he had sired seven little Falabellas with three different Falabella mares! I looked at him and he just looked back and winked. Mr. Sea was trained as a driving horse prior to his coming to Miracles. He became one of the original members of the Miracles Ambassador Program where he remains active today.



## TOGETHER WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The mission of Miracles is to foster personal achievement for persons facing challenges by providing diverse equestrian activities with therapeutic, educational, and recreational benefits. Miracles Volunteers make it happen!

In April alone, forty volunteers are showing up for a class at Miracles, putting a saddle on a horse, a helmet on a student; walking alongside a horse, their hand on a student's ankle to ensure safety; and, celebrating as a team with each *walk on*.

As Miracles celebrates National Volunteer week, we want to send out a heartfelt thank you to our wonderful volunteers. The partnership of our Miracles' horses with our volunteer team helps to create amazing physical, educational and emotional benefits for our student riders. Thank you for making Miracles a special place.

Training is required of all volunteers at Miracles annually and include hands-on experiences as well as a trove of resources online. If you are interested in joining this amazing team of volunteers, fill out an application on our website: [www.miraclesinmotion.com](http://www.miraclesinmotion.com)



## MAY 2021 TRAINING FOR SIDEWALKERS, BARN ASSISTANTS and HORSE LEADS

Training will be a combination of on-line instruction and in-person.

In-person trainings is scheduled

**Saturday, May 1st**

1:30-2:30 Horse Leads and Barn Assistants

2:30-3:15 Side Walkers

Everyone -- both new and returning volunteers -- needs to go through the training if you are interested in working with horses. If you can't make this day, there will be more trainings throughout the year. Attendance limited to 15!

Please contact Maggie at [volunteermiraclesinmotion@gmail.com](mailto:volunteermiraclesinmotion@gmail.com) if you would like to attend. Questions/comments welcome!



### Miracles Poo Will Grow for You!

Brought to you by the Miracles' Herd, which has continued production throughout the Pandemic, you can get a bag, bushel or truck load of manure for a donation that will be used to purchase food to start the cycle again! Spring plantings and garden season are right around the corner. Think globally, compost locally. For more information, please call Deb at Miracles.

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