



Miracles in Motion

THERAPEUTIC EQUESTRIAN CENTER

December 2023



Julie Sears Britcher's Miracles Moment

It was the first farmers' market in Cedar Rapids for 2023. I had never been before, so my son Josh and I went. The next-to-last booth was for Miracles in Motion. I saw pictures of horses, and I was drawn in. Being that horses are my favorite animal, I had to find out more. I was greeted by Megan, the volunteer coordinator, who shared what Miracles is about. I shared with her that I had had a couple of horses on the farm as a child, had been a rodeo photographer, and had worked with people with disabilities for years. I gave her my information, and on the last day of June 2023, I was in a volunteer training class and haven't slowed down since.

In the short time that I have been there, I have met some of the most wonderful people. The riding program's fellow volunteers and students have been so inviting, treating me as if I had been there forever. I was told by many that the best way to get to know the horses better is to do chores and groundwork in the off-season. They could not have been more right. I love the challenge of learning everything I can about the Miracles horses, and horses in general. By being there so much, the horses now know who I am, and some, like Aussie and Jake, seem happy to see me every day. I came to Boo at the Barn dressed as a scarecrow and took pictures.

I love working with the students and watching them grow and change from one class to the next and seeing their eyes light up when they are on the back of the horse. They are truly in their happy place when they are at Miracles, and I can relate, cause so am I. Okay, gotta get up and do chores in the morning. I love life at Miracles.

From the Director's Desk

I cannot let the year end without giving a resounding thank you to our instructors at Miracles, Diana Harris and Carrie Drum. We need a healthy herd to carry our riders AND we need certified PATH instructors to plan and conduct our classes here at Miracles. Carrie (below left) and Diana (below right) are our instructors for Adaptive Riding—and so much more!

Diana is a CTRI (Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor) and PATH mentor, and Carrie is a CTRI. The CTRI certification is for individuals in the equine-assisted services profession who provide riding instruction of therapeutic value to people with disabilities and differing needs. This includes mounted and unmounted work and ethically partnering with a horse.

In addition to horsemanship skills, CTRIs need excellent communication and organizational skills to ensure safe and effective teaching for our riders. Instructors must also have a current CPR and First Aid certificate. The PATH CTRI process can take a year or longer. Instructors are certified to a set of field standards to ensure the highest levels of safety, ethics, and effective programming. Diana and Carrie both meet these high standards!

Diana is the head of the Horse Committee; Carrie is a member. Both Diana and Carrie are exercise riders for our herd. Carrie helps facilitate one of our groundwork crews that work with the herd to ensure that the herd stays ready for classes. Both Carrie and Diana are also out at Miracles one day a week doing chores. They both help with the training sessions of the volunteers each year prior

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From the Director's Desk (continued)

to classes and during the class season. They both truly embody the mission and vision of Miracles and they do this on a volunteer basis.

Diana has interests outside of Miracles, including travel to visit family and friends. Carrie is a full-time nurse at the University of Iowa Hospitals, and has a horse of her own and family that fills her time.

I asked each of them, "Why be a PATH CTRI?" Diana replied, "Being an instructor keeps me connected to horses that are doing such a great service and seeing the amazing changes that individual riders make in their riding journey." Carrie said, "I enjoy being a CTRI for Miracles in Motion because I get to teach about horses and riding skills. I also get to care for the horses, be a part of an organization and see the smiling faces of the participants, families and volunteers. My training and work as a CTRI is a life accomplishment and the best hobby ever."

To both of you, thank you from the Miracles family!

—Deb Leichsenring

Good Things Comes in Threes (and a Half)

Every year at Miracles, we highlight one rider's story to illustrate the impact of our incredible community of donors, volunteers and sponsors. As this year, 2023, marks our 35th Anniversary of providing equine-assisted therapy, we chose to highlight three very special riders: Ben, Jackson, and Adam—and of course, Adam's service dog, Turbo.

These three young men have been riding together at Miracles for over a decade. Some have ridden at Miracles for over 20 years, but once they began riding together they never stopped! Now, they ride together almost every week, 24 weeks a year. Not only have they achieved milestones of strength and flexibility throughout their riding careers, they have achieved much more: solid bonds of brotherhood, shared experiences, joy and laughter.

The families of these three young men have also bonded in this time—sharing stories, resources, and support over the years. Miracles farm has been their backdrop for years of positive experiences, and your generosity has been crucial to making this joy possible.

As I reflect on this year and the past 35 years, I also think about the future and where Miracles will go next. We have done so much for so many families in Iowa—I'm so excited to see this tradition of joy, growth, and community continue for another 35 years. I ask that you, our Miracles community,

reflect on the impact you've made by investing in us and all that we can accomplish through working together for a better future. Please consider continuing this tradition of impact and invest for the next 35 years of equine-assisted therapies.

With deepest gratitude and sincerest respect,

—Tess Bracher-Dorrington, Director of Income Development



Thank you, Miracles Volunteers, for over 15,000 service hours this year!

As of December 10, we have surpassed our total volunteer hours in 2022! We could not create life-changing experiences for our students and care for our herd without our outstanding crew of volunteers. Thank you for all you have done and continue to do this year, 2024 here we come!

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