



**Dear Family and Friends,**

Since our last newsletter this summer, Heaven's Gait Ranch has continued to ramp up, and we'd like to give you an update as we look ahead to a new year full of more opportunities to grow.



### **Equine Assisted Activities & Therapies (EAAT) Education**

Our Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies (EAAT) Education Program included participants with a variety of special needs who were not medically cleared to ride in our therapeutic riding program. However, within 20 weeks of small group lessons, we were able to teach these individuals how to work toward their goals and develop their skills through unmounted horsemanship skills. By the end of their fall session, these participants were independently grooming and leading their horses in the barn, and we couldn't be more proud of their progress.

### **Equine of the Year: Ellie Mae (pictured above)**

We proudly recognize Ellie as our 2017 Equine of the Year. The 22 year old Tennessee Walker joined our program in February when her owners Cheri & Gene Eberhardy made plans to move out of state. To date, Ellie has provided more lessons than any other therapy horse on site, totalling 92 lessons for individuals with special needs and disabilities.

### **Therapeutic Riding**

For our therapeutic riding program, fall was our busiest session, retaining participants from spring and summer while adding more after school started again. To make our services more financially accessible to those in need, we filed paperwork back in April to request approval for financial support through Medicaid, and this summer we were approved to become an IRIS provider, which stands for *Include. Respect. I Self-Direct*. IRIS is a Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver for self-directed long-term supports. This program is an option for adults with long term care needs, and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Medicaid Services, and Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services oversee the IRIS program.



As a result, word is spreading that our services are approved under this waiver program, and fewer adult participants from day programs are paying the full rider fee of our lessons directly out of pocket. In addition to accepting funds from IRIS, this fall we also began accepting Children's Long Term Support Funding for participants who qualify. Unfortunately due to confidentiality laws, we were unable to take photos of some of the participants in our group lessons, but we were thrilled with the collective effort it took on part of our volunteers to make those lessons possible.



# Heaven's Gait Ranch

## Therapeutic Riding Center

Year End 2017 Newsletter

### Equine Services for Heroes

This program has included both unmounted and mounted activities for our U.S. military veterans, and through their weekly participation, they have developed quite a fondness for their horses, just as their horses have for their handlers and riders. Whether they're learning how to lead or lunge their horse, the veterans are intuitively quick learners who have a strong desire to work with their horses by listening to their nonverbal cues. We have started noticing a trend with the horses our veterans choose -- our alpha and leader of the herd, Ember, as well as Simpson, the horse who is lowest on the pecking order. In terms of their tendencies, Ember does not like to be idle; he needs meaningful exercise and does best when his riders give him clear directions. As the alpha, when he's working in the barn, he will often call out to the rest of the herd to let them know he's still nearby. Interestingly enough, while Simpson is the lowest in the herd, he desires to be social and prefers to be outside with others rather than confined to a stall by himself. Needless to say, it's been rewarding for our veterans to empathize with these two horses in particular.



In January, Heaven's Gait Ranch will begin group lessons Mondays and Wednesdays specifically for combat vets who have come to us from an outpatient clinic through the Milwaukee VA. Thanks to Readjustment Counselor Rodney Pearsall, transportation to the ranch will be coordinated for them, and they will not only participate as riders in the program, but they will also volunteer for each other as lead and side walkers.



### From the Board of Directors

In July, our Board of Directors proudly welcomed Devlin F. Gray as the new Director of Development at Heaven's Gait Ranch. A survivor of childhood cancer who has been in remission since, Devlin knows firsthand the power of positivity and drive while battling long term illness. He graduated from Marquette University as an Evans Scholar in 2013 with a bachelor's in marketing and has since devoted much of his free time toward creating fundraising initiatives that support improving others' quality of life. He currently works at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine, and we are very grateful to have him join our team.

In addition to welcoming Devlin, the Board extends its appreciation to all who supported The Hayburner fundraiser in September at Newport Shores. The event was a great success, and we couldn't have done it without you!

### In Closing

Thank you for another fantastic season and for all your prayers and support. Please visit our website at [www.heavensgaitranch.org](http://www.heavensgaitranch.org) or call us at 920-400-0628 for more information on our programs.

Have a Happy New Year!

Margaret Mary McClaren  
Founder, Executive Director

If you prefer to receive our eNewsletter, please email us at [info@heavensgaitranch.org](mailto:info@heavensgaitranch.org).  
Visit our website at [www.heavensgaitranch.org](http://www.heavensgaitranch.org) or call (920) 400-0628 for more updates from Heaven's Gait Ranch!