



CERTAIN IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

By Holly Graffunder

2020, what a year so far!! Days of certainty have disappeared, and times of uncertainty and unmet expectations have seemingly come to stay. I don't know about you, but our year definitely hasn't gone as planned—closing the ranch for the first half of the summer, limiting the number of volunteers coming out, horses sitting around waiting... but God isn't sitting around waiting. He's working! John 5:17 says, "But Jesus answered them, 'My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.'" **We haven't seen the full extent of how He's working this all out for our good, but we have been able to see a few things He's done through this time.**

In the last newsletter we talked about a large, unexpected donation that Haven Acres received this year completely out of the blue. With it we have been thrilled to double the size of the outdoor riding arena, and we are in the process of building a second barn with a meeting space for volunteers, an office, storage for hay and equipment, and more. We were also encouraged by our board of directors to use some of the money to finally buy some much needed equipment, including a horse trailer. In the past, we haven't really needed a horse trailer more than once or twice a year, but we agreed that it would be nice to have one on site rather than scrambling to borrow or rent one in an emergency.

Enter COVID-19 and all the changes that came with it. The pandemic forced us to shut down the ranch right when we knew people were struggling with mental health and family challenges more than ever. In an attempt to address these issues, we had multiple meetings with our board of directors and other similar ranch ministries trying to **brainstorm how to serve our community** while also respecting the Governor's mandates.

Enter God (who's always been working). Remember we just bought a horse trailer, a trailer that we weren't expecting to use much? God knew Coronavirus was coming, and He provided a trailer to prepare for it! So instead of sitting around isolated from the world, we loaded up horses two by two and brought them out to people!

First, we visited a nursing home close to the ranch! The residents had been quarantined in their rooms for months. We were given the opportunity to walk around the outside of the building with Trixie and Opie and visit everyone through their windows.

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" Now may the God of peace . . . equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. "

– Hebrews 13:20

Some residents hadn't been out of their beds in months, but the excitement of seeing the horses motivated them to get up for at least a few minutes. We were told by a staff member that one of the residents never smiled, but **a huge smile spread across her face when Opie peeked through her window to say "hi."** Some family members were so touched that they cried when they heard about the horses visiting their loved ones. God knew. God saw.

Next, we figured out a schedule to visit most of the kids and teens signed up to be in the program. A few times we joined a birthday car parade and brought a special horse to surprise the birthday child. Other times we took two horses and stopped by 3-4 different homes in a day. Some of these families had been unable to see friends or family for months and were struggling more than normal, especially those with mental health challenges. It was a good reminder to see that God knows what each family is going through, and **He used Haven Acres and the horses to brighten their days through our visits.**

Last, we started a partnership with a Christian day-treatment program near us! We brought Opie and Liberty to spend time with the teens and used the horses to teach a lesson on anxiety and fear. Some of the guys were able to conquer their fears by working with Opie, a tall Thoroughbred cross who can appear rather intimidating. Liberty, a 5 year old horse that we rescued a couple of years ago, demonstrated what it looks like to stand still and look at the trainer when scary things are going on around you—like how **we should stand still and focus on God when we are anxious about the circumstances going on around us** (Hebrews 12:2).

As we look back on this unusual summer, we realize that we never would have had time for these "out of the box" ministry opportunities if we were running our normal mentorship sessions, and **we never would have been able to do any of this if God hadn't provided the trailer for us!** God knew this virus was coming, and He was already working and getting us ready for it.

Now that the ranch is opening again, we have confidence that God in His sovereignty will continue to work. Please be in prayer that we will be able to stay open, and that no illness will occur as a result of our programs, and that God's kingdom will grow even with the adjustments and uncertainties in this time!

..... **2020 ROUND-UP!**

We are excited to announce that our annual Round-Up will be going virtual this year!

On September 12th at 4pm we will be streaming the Round-Up on YouTube for everyone to watch at home.

We will be showcasing our students and their horses, telling stories from the ranch, and hosting a virtual silent auction! Pull up a chair and cheer on the students through the comments section while they're participating in their events! To join the fun visit havenacresmn.org/round-up-2020.



Haven Acres

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2019 Round-Up
photo compliments
of Isabel Tomb.

