



The Prairie Post



A publication of Blazing Prairie Stars, Inc., Maple Park, IL, provider of therapy in the natural environment, and Hoofbeats & Heartbeats, a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization.



*Blazing Prairie Stars, Inc. derives its name from the blazing prairie star, a prairie flower that is indigenous to Kane County. Also known as *Liatris pycnostachya*, this lovely lavender flower is differently developing; it opens from the top down instead of from the bottom up.*



A message from the president

Dear Friends and Neighbors...

The prospect of Spring is upon us! That truth will bring us bouquets of flowers, singing birdhouses, and celebrating horses romping and chomping on new green grass.

Today the sun is shining and everyone seems joyous. I can feel the happiness throughout the barn as the horses blow new breaths through their muzzles and the children giggle deeper and ever more heartily. Children are so beautiful because they quickly bring their smiles to the surface. They never hide their hearts. Perhaps that is why they love the horses and the horses love them. For whatever reason, there is a truth that children smile more at the barn, and that makes everyone smile more back.

I am also grateful everyday for the many BPS volunteers who give their time and talents. They are some of the most genuine people



Lessons in Life

Happiness depends upon ourselves.

-- Aristotle

I have ever known. They bring their smiles and share them, too.

Come and visit us. Feel the joys of Spring, children, and giving volunteers. Practice happiness and laughter because they are the roots of healing and

living well. And don't forget that May 4th is World Laughter Day. Prepare yourself by taking a deep breath of new Spring air.

Warmly,

Cathy Raack





A happy Red Dog looks like he's ready for World Laughter Day. He's getting his cuddle-quota from Sharon Weimer, horse professional, and Lesley Kerns, therapeutic riding instructor.

The Laughter Arts and Sciences Foundation offers a few "Proclamations" from Steve Wilson, President, in preparation for May 4th, World Laughter Day:

Whereas, Laughter is a free and natural expression of the joyful human spirit and promotes health, improves morale and increases productivity at work, facilitates the healing of illness, melts away stress, works wonders in the classroom, is the hallmark of healthy family life, and promotes international harmony, and

Whereas, On World Laughter Day, all citizens are encouraged and invited to set their cares and differences aside and engage in good-hearted arts of mirth, laughing out loud, smiles, silliness, giggles, clowning, chuckles, guffaws, titters, grins and happy

Dynamic Workshop Connects on Many Levels

Temple Grandin connected with over 650 parents and professionals who came to Kaneland High

School on March 1 to learn more about children on the autism spectrum at *The Dynamic Child* workshop. Dr. Grandin, professor of Animal Science, author, and nationally-renowned speaker, shared experiences and strategies related to her own diagnosis of autism.

In addition to Dr. Grandin's keynote address, a full day's line-up of speakers



Dr. Grandin and Rana the cockatoo share a smile.

presented information on many different aspects of children on the autism spectrum, including treatment strategies, nutrition, and social and emotional health. *The Dynamic Child* was presented by Community Therapy Services and sponsored by Hoofbeats & Heartbeats, Kaneland School District 302 and Unlocking Autism.

After the conference, Dr. Grandin visited the BPS barn and enjoyed meeting many of our therapy partners. Learn more about Dr. Grandin's work at www.templegrandin.com.

Kudos to our staff!

Blazing Prairie Stars is home to two published authors! Lesley Kerns and Jeanni Bonine wrote an article that will be featured in the next issue of Hippotherapy Magazine, the journal of the American Hippotherapy Association. Jeanni, BPS's lead therapist, and Lesley, our therapeutic riding instructor, have also been asked to be co-editors of future editions of the magazine.

The article, "Exercises and Maneuvers and their Benefits to Horse and Rider," helps explain the training routines for horses involved in hippotherapy. Conditioning exercises for therapy horses not only impact the client, but also have specific benefits for the horse itself. During a hippotherapy session, the horse may be instructed to perform "Serpentines" or S-curves to give sensory input to the client. Practicing this move also has many benefits for the horse as well. It increases flexibility, suppleness, and hind end strength. To learn more, visit www.americanhippotherapyassociation.com.



E. Jeanni Bonine, OTR/L, HPCS (left) is a graduate of Western Michigan University with a degree in Occupational Therapy. She is a Board Certified Hippotherapy Clinical Specialist, NARHA Registered Therapist, NARHA Registered Instructor, and AHA Level 2 trained. Jeanni is lead therapist at BPS. Lesley Kerns is a Horse Professional, Trainer, and NARHA Registered Therapeutic Riding Instructor at BPS. She has been riding horses for 19 years and has been involved in equine-assisted activities for four years. Lesley attended Michigan State University's Agricultural Technologies Horse Management program and specializes in Dressage and Natural Horsemanship.

Cover photo: Madisyn is ready to begin her hippotherapy session.



Madisyn Tunes in to the Animals

by Kelly Marie Meucci, OTR/L
and Cathy Raack, M.A., CCC-SLP/L

The moment she enters the barn, Madisyn quickly declares, “Hi Miss Kelly Marie, I’m ready to play!” Every week she brings great big smiles to her therapy session, and she continues to smile even while working hard in therapy.

Madisyn’s mother shares that, “Madisyn is working from the moment she comes to the barn to the moment she leaves. She has been in therapy since she was three months old, including Developmental, Speech, and Occupational therapy, but the barn is where she has made extreme strides. The school noticed it too, and they came out here to see her therapy sessions. She has really made great gains in her self regulation skills, impulse control, and social awareness.”

Madisyn loves the horses. She knows all of them by their names and unique markings. Someday, she wants to have a horse of her own. “Madisyn doesn’t always read people well, but she has a unique ability to read the animals,” Madisyn’s mother says.

“Chloe’s foot hurts, Mom,” Madisyn recently said at home. Soon afterward, their household cat began to lick her foot over and over again.

“Midnight didn’t feel well today, Mom.” It turns out that Midnight’s back was sore and he was scheduled for a massage.

“Louie is sad because he can’t be with us.” Interestingly, Louie had been taken “out of work” to rest a leg injury he received in rumpus play with his paddock friends.

“Madisyn is very pure-hearted and doesn’t understand when people are mean,” says her mother. “This is one characteristic of children with Turner Syndrome. She loves whole-heartedly and so we are working on understanding social boundaries and appropriateness. Having occupational therapy here with Kelly Marie and the horses has really helped her.”

Turner Syndrome occurs in one out of every 25,000 female births. Madisyn’s mother is the parent chair of the Turner Society. She encourages others to learn more about Turner Syndrome by going to www.turnersyndrome.org.

“Many people with Turner Syndrome do not ever drive due to significant spatial challenges, but receiving her therapy on horse has also helped her greatly improve her spatial deficit,” Madisyn’s mother says.

Madisyn is always smiling. She has flourished in this non-traditional environment because of the sense of pleasure it gives her to do well and to be around the animals. She is a joyous person, and a true pleasure to have at the barn.



Madisyn magnanimously blows Debi Greaux (program coordinator) a kiss from atop her horse, Sabrena.(left). After her therapy session, she is always happy to reward Sabrena with a treat of carrots, apples, or peppermints. Below, Madisyn and her occupational therapist, Kelly Marie, share a great big hug before saying farewell until next time.



The Healing Effects of Playing, Happiness, and Laughter

When things are meaningful to us, we jump higher, listen closer, or run faster. Because a child's occupation is play, there is an innate desire to explore and interact. This interaction and play encourage developmental progress. Some of the children we work with have factors blocking their curiosity and ability to assign meaning to the world around them. Working in the natural environment with highly motivating tools (movement, animals, etc.) can "wake up" that natural curiosity and open the doors for development of specific skills. Happiness is awakened and children feel successful and more sensorily aware when they attain this curiosity.

Jeanni Bonine, OTR/L

Happiness is...



Motor Mouths

The barn and the butterfly gardens are perfect for learning new speech and language skills! This group is for children ages 3 to 5 who have delays in speech

development or are difficult to understand. The speech therapists who lead the group have developed kid-friendly activities that

promote sound awareness and speech production. This class meets 90 minutes per week for 4 weeks, or in a camp format, four 90-minute classes in one week. Maximum child/staff ratio: 4:1.

Tue - Fri 9:30 - 11:00 AM
(6/10, 6/11, 6/12, 6/13)

Tue - Fri 9:30 - 11:00 AM
(6/17, 6/18, 6/19, 6/20)

Tue - Fri 9:30 - 11:00 AM
(8/5, 8/6, 8/7, 8/8)

Tue - Fri 9:30 - 11:00 AM
(8/12, 8/13, 8/14, 8/15)

Fridays 9:30 - 11:00 AM
(6/6, 6/13, 6/20, 6/27)

Fridays 9:30 - 11:00 AM
(7/11, 7/18, 7/25, 8/1)

\$280.00 per session

Above, Aaron gives a thumbs up to his therapist. At right, OTs Kelly Marie and Jeanni present an "O" and a "T" for Occupational Therapy Month.

Sensory All Stars

Exploring nature = discovering me!

What could be a better sensory experience than our own Blazing Prairie Stars therapy barn? The sensory butterfly garden, the animals, and the great outdoors make an ideal sensory camp location. An occupational therapist facilitates

this group, designing nature-based activities with a sensory twist. For ages 4 to 6. Maximum child /staff ratio: 3:1

Tue - Fri 9:30 - 11:30 AM
(6/10, 6/11, 6/12, 6/13)

Tue - Fri 9:30 - 11:30 AM
(6/17, 6/18, 6/19, 6/20)

Tue - Fri 9:30 - 11:30 AM
(8/5, 8/6, 8/7, 8/8)

Tue - Fri 9:30 - 11:30 AM
(8/12, 8/13, 8/14, 8/15)

\$280.00 per session



Super Sibs

Super Sibs is a program especially for children who have a sibling with a disability. It is sponsored by Hoofbeats & Heartbeats and is offered to families for only \$10.00 per session. In non-mounted activities with the horses, children learn about their own special families, exploring issues related to self-esteem, empathy, and learning to express needs. This 8-week program is facilitated by a licensed marriage and family therapist and a horse professional. Children are grouped by age.

Friendship Connection

This motivating and effective group helps young people of all ages learn about making friends and being a friend. Participants learn how to establish and maintain positive relationships, collaborate and problem solve with others, and gain greater self-awareness and social understanding. Horses and the dynamics of the herd make the learning process exciting! Led by a licensed marriage and family therapist and a horse professional, these groups are formed by gender, age, and skill level. Friendship Connection is an ongoing group that can be joined at any time.



Great summer groups at BPS!



Equine-Assisted Occupational, Physical, and Speech Therapy

The use of the movement of the horse as a treatment strategy may be incorporated in physical, occupational, or speech therapy. Specific individual goals are addressed by our licensed and uniquely trained staff. Private sessions are offered during the following times:

Mondays 9:00 AM - 7:30 PM
Wednesdays 2:15 - 7:30 PM



Prairie Players

Theater activities, games, role-playing, and music help youth build communication skills, social awareness, verbal and non-verbal language abilities.

This group is led by a speech-language therapist and a music therapist. Children from 7 to 12 years old may enroll. Participants will be grouped by age (7-9 and 10-12).

Prairie Players meets for 90 minutes per week for 4 weeks, or in a camp format, four 90-minute classes in one week. Maximum child/staff ratio: 4:1.

- Tue - Fri 9:30 - 11:00 AM
(6/10, 6/11, 6/12, 6/13)
- Tue - Fri 9:30 - 11:00 AM
(6/17, 6/18, 6/19, 6/20)
- Tue - Fri 9:30 - 11:00 AM
(8/5, 8/6, 8/7, 8/8)
- Tue - Fri 9:30 - 11:00 AM
(8/12, 8/13, 8/14, 8/15)
- Mondays 9:30 - 11:00 AM
(6/9, 6/16, 6/23, 6/30)
- Mondays 9:30 - 11:00 AM
(7/7, 7/14, 7/21, 7/18)
- Thursdays 2:30 - 4:00 PM
(7/10, 7/17, 7/24, 7/31)

\$280.00 per session

Clockwise from top: Colette and Amanda, speech therapist, are ready for a hippo-therapy session; Jacob gives us a warm, sweet smile; Diamond appreciates the big hug from Matt.

Lessons in Life

The grand essentials of happiness are -- something to do, something to love, and something to hope for.

-- Allen K. Chalmers

**Call
630-365-5550
to register!**

Family Therapy & Personal Counseling

Disabilities can have significant effects on families. Some of these effects are often difficult or stressful, but some effects can be positive. Our marriage and family therapist / LCPC uses the relaxed natural environment of the BPS therapy barn to help families and individuals explore their strengths, challenges, and goals. Understanding one's own family dynamics and needs can help each family member learn and grow and can result in a stronger and more effective family.

Call for an appointment.



Spring is here and the piles of snow are finally melting! Soon the daffodils will be peeking up in Meara's Garden. We are excited to announce some additions to the garden this year. With a generous grant from the Community Foundation of the Fox River Valley, HBHB has purchased soaker hoses and a timer. While we do try to limit watering, it is often needed in the heat of summer. The soaker hoses and timer will actually help us conserve water while keeping the garden healthy.

GARDEN HELPERS ALWAYS

WELCOME! If you have only a minute to pull a weed or want to really dig in the dirt, please give garden coordinator Janie Grillo a call at 630-584-5883. Every day can be a working day in Meara's Garden, but if you want

Meara's

some company, Janie will be there most Thursday mornings from 9 to Noon.

COMPOSTING BEGINS

IN MEARA'S GARDEN! Also made possible by the Community Foundation of the Fox River Valley are two compost tumblers which will be set up sometime in early May between the arena and the shed at the far end of Meara's Garden! Visitors are welcome to participate in our efforts to recycle and create our own fertilizer for the garden! **VEGETABLE SCRAPS ONLY** may be brought in and added to whichever tumbler is labeled "Add to" at that time. As the BPS staff is always busy, participants are asked to please visit the garden and deposit your composting material on your own. Thank you for helping us go green!



Happy birthday to all our horses!

Most foals are born in the spring when there is plenty of fresh, green grass for them to eat. Most foals are born at night when it's dark and peaceful. At first, the foal wobbles on its weak legs. After a few hours, he or she can walk and run!



Chaves	3/11/99	9 years
Diamond	4/20/00	8 years
Grace	4/6/98	10 years
Hannah	5/10/03	5 years
Lili	2/11/97	11 years
Marcus	5/5/03	5 years
Zella Ray	4/25/05	3 years
Savannah	5/11/06	2 years
Sabrena	5/1/80	28 years



Clockwise from top: Marcus shows all his teeth in a big snicker; Patrick is surprised that Chaves enjoys a peanut butter sandwich as much as anyone else; Trevor has a tender pat for Chaves; It looks like Grace has seen a birthday cake and she's ready to eat!





Important news from....

Hoofbeats & Heartbeats

Hoofbeats & Heartbeats Association was proud to participate in the Dynamic Child workshop which was hosted by Community Therapy Services on March 1st. HBHB coordinated 31 exhibits and/or advertisements by companies that provide products and services to individuals and families touched by Autism and other disabilities. With the generous donations from local restaurants and businesses, including Unlocking Autism, HBHB was also able to offer 4 gift baskets as raffle items at the event. The sale of \$1 raffle tickets brought in \$785 which will be used to support HBHB scholarships and programs.

Besides assisting families in need, one of HBHB's missions is to educate the public on the benefits of therapy in the natural environment. As a part that effort, HBHB was pleased to sponsor BPS therapist Jeanne Bonine as one of the conference presenters. Education was also one of the goals at the HBHB exhibit where those attending picked up literature about HBHB and its programs as well as studies touting therapy in nature. All in all it was a most rewarding day!

As with any event, none of it would have been possible without helping hands. HBHB would like to thank Rosemarie Frey, Linda Castle, Molly Holman, Janie Grillo, Brandon Anderson, Michelle Campbell, Amanda Corris, Jason Frey, Carolyn and Don Grillo, Clarence Holloway, Kim Hancock, Reidun Juszcak, Mary Kaminski, Myra and Molly LeGrand and Tyler Shoup for all of their assistance.

Many thanks!

As a nonprofit charity, Hoofbeats & Heartbeats depends on the generous contributions made by individuals and organizations. We would like to thank those listed below for their recent donations which enable us to

provide therapy scholarships and sponsor programs like the upcoming Super Sibs which will include 8 siblings of special needs children, including three whose families learned about the program at the Dynamic Child Workshop!

Our thanks to:

- Bill & Carli Bergeson
- Susan Brandstad & Steve Clement
- William & Rosemary Connaughay
- Donna & Robert Cutrara Jr.
- Tom & Sue Gresge
- Richard & Karen Herreid
- Nora Kline
- The LeGrand Family
- Peter & Linda McDonough
- Tracy & Kathy McFadden
- Mike & Jean Moravek
- Bill & Nancy Mogk in honor of their friend Mark Atkins

- Cynthia Rod in honor of her niece Cydnee J. Djanicki
- Jerry & Polly Murphy
- Ron Pentz
- Linda & Bob Reines
- Joan Szwaya
- David Taylor & Susan Angell
- Sue Top & Dierdre Jennings
- Geneva Community Chest
- Mothers Club of Geneva
- Westminster Christian School
- Doty & Sons Concrete Products
- BP Fabric of America Fund thru Renee Peterson

Lessons in Life
 At the height of laughter, the universe is flung into a kaleidoscope of new possibilities.
 -- Jean Houston



Hoofbeats & Heartbeats Association is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization dedicated to raising funds for programs and scholarships for families in financial need. Meara's Garden and garden programs are also supported by HBHB. Please consider making a donation to HBHB for a special occasion, special person, or just because you and your family have been fortunate. Mail donations to:

Hoofbeats & Heartbeats • 47W635 Beith Road • Maple Park, IL 60151

THANK YOU!



Upcoming Events

Tour de Cure Saturday, June 7
This bike ride benefits the American Diabetes Association. A water stop at BPS is sponsored by Trader Joe's.

Programs

Check out our summer programs and groups page 4

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Smiles and Laughter Abound at the Barn

Look inside to see more happy faces of children, animals, and therapists!



Meet Madisyn, who has an uncanny understanding of animals, page 3.



Patrick and volunteer, Peter, share a big belly laugh during a therapy session.

(Call 630-365-5550)

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www.blazingprairiestars.com

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