

HoofBeat



A Note from Susie

Dear Friends,

Freedom Farm continues to offer exceptional programming with the quality of our lessons being the number one goal. We have accomplished this with specific and in depth training of our horses and volunteers.

We pride ourselves in the ability to offer continuous therapeutic riding lessons to our riders with small group sizes. The lessons are planned with the individual rider in mind, all having different goals.

For the first time, we took 5 Freedom Farm riders to a horse show. Practice. Nerves. Excitement! At the end of the



day, they were so proud of their accomplishments (and so were their families!) They had competed in a HORSE SHOW.

They received ribbons to remember the day and the confidence gained will last forever.

The 2012 Freedom Farm Polo Event will be remembered as one of our best. A new Prelude Dinner was held Friday evening sponsored by Ryan Gilbertson and Rob & Linda Berg. Our guests enjoyed learning about the sport of polo from the players themselves, and



Lauren received a standing ovation after sharing her experiences at Freedom Farm! The Polo Event is vital as it raises 35% of our annual revenue allowing lesson fees to remain steady for the past 6 years with no increases to our families.

The Annual Riding Celebration continues to be a fun day for our families and volunteers. In 2012 over 300



guests cheered as 30 riders gave demonstrations of their riding skills.

God has blessed Freedom Farm with a depth of support which I continue to be in awe of. Our donors know their gifts are 100% impacting the lives of so many. In 2012 we received extremely generous donations given specifically to purchase much needed items or complete projects (arena insulation, tractor & office addition) which have improved our programs greatly.

I look forward to 2013 with much excitement as we get ready to unveil another trend setting program enabling Freedom Farm to reach out even more.

**With love,
Susie Bjorklund**

January 2013

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Fundraising Events in 2013 ... save the dates!

6th Annual Polo Event

September 7, 2013



Riding Celebration

September 28, 2013



2012 Riders Celebrate 10 years at Freedom Farm

Fall will be a very busy time for Freedom Farm. We hope you can join us at our celebrations.

Please save the dates!



Staff & Volunteers... passionate and dedicated

Freedom Farm has begun our 13th year partnering with the horse to provide the best possible experience for our riders, families and volunteers. Freedom Farm is an accredited center with PATH International which offers ongoing educational opportunities through conferences and online community support. We are held accountable by following their high standards. It is a huge benefit for us to be able to attend the International Conference each year. This keeps us excited about our program and up to date with current trends in this growing field.



November found Susie, Sue, Amy and Sandee Gould at the PATH International Conference in Seattle, WA this year. Sandee was the PATH Region 6 Volunteer of the Year and received a plaque and a great big belt buckle!

We are proud to represent Freedom Farm and all we have achieved with a staff of three!

'Healing with Horses'... giving back to those who have served us A woman veteran shares her Freedom Farm experience

"I came to Freedom Farm three years ago just hoping to get to ride a horse, once. I grew up riding and loving horses and the idea of a program for veterans involving horses, free of charge, just sounded way too good to be true. At that time, I trusted no one and expected to be treated, at best, as a nuisance.

How wrong I was. I connected with Susie immediately. I felt like I'd known her all my life and she seemed happy, yes happy that I was there. Wow. Was that ever a new experience for me! I doubted, though, that she'd be happy to see me week after week. Eventually she would get sick of me and she'd find an excuse to get rid of me. But she didn't. And neither did the veterans who started coming to FF to ride. I never made friends easily or felt like I fit in anywhere, but I do at Freedom Farm. I feel like I belonged there. And now I have friends, real friends.

Gradually, my confidence began to grow. Not just at Freedom Farm, but because of Freedom Farm, in all areas of my life. I started to feel like a



grown-up, like I was a worthwhile person who people didn't just tolerate, but actually liked. Someone they looked forward to seeing and spending time with.

I still have many PTSD symptoms, and they are annoying, but they don't define who or what I am anymore. My worth as a person is not diminished because I have PTSD. In fact, sometimes my symptoms give me something to laugh about.

Freedom Farm brought the smile back to my face, opened my heart to giving and receiving love as well as feeling the joys and the pains of life. I look forward to life now, instead of wishing I would die."

'Healing with Horses' is a very worthy program and was honored with an endorsement by DVA and was a grant recipient from Veterans4Veterans. The program was chosen to be featured in the Bus52 documentary and received national press recently in The New York Times. With the growth of this program and recent publicity, we are optimistic in having this program funded.

Volunteers... sharing time, talent & love

WOW! We say it every year. Our volunteers are incredible. They give their time, share their love and share their talents every time they come to Freedom Farm. We love them all.

Over 120 trained volunteers assisted our riders during lessons, helped at fundraising events, kept up the grounds, helped in the office



and numerous other activities.

The Volunteer Appreciation Dinner in November honored many talented volunteers.

**2012 Volunteer of the Year:
Nikki Rischmiller!**

Corrie Stevens was Horse Handler of the Year and 7 volunteers earned their 5 Year pins.

Riders... are what it's all about!

a story from the therapeutic riding program

Bob's Story

Nine years ago I received a call from Mary Ann. She told me about her brother Bob. She wondered if there was any way he could come to Freedom Farm and if I thought maybe one day he could ride again.

Bob had ridden horses all his life, had owned a stable, trained horses and... had a stroke.



Bob and Tango

He lost a lot, including his farm, his ability to walk and talk and his independence. Bob moved from Montana to Cokato, not too far from Freedom Farm, to be near family and began intense therapies. He started walking with a cane and working on his speech.



Bob & Susie perform at the Riding Celebration

When I met Bob, his walking was unsteady and he could not say more than 'Hi' to me. I had his horse ready, attached reins to the halter, had a leader and 2 sidewalkers ready to go. He was very fidgety handling both reins in his left hand. I did not figure out until the second lesson—Bob had always ridden with *split* reins and was trying to hold the reins like he remembered. I changed the reins and got a huge smile and "YES!"

It did not take Bob long to regain his balance in the saddle and

achieve his goal of riding independently. I will never forget the first time Bob and I rode outside. It was the first time I heard him say two words in a row. We stopped in the middle of the field. He smiled and said, "Beautiful day."

Bob has ridden Cash, Ted and now Tango. They are all solid horses allowing Bob to help with the cows in the arena while Tom works his cutting horses, bringing Bob much joy.



Bob receives a trophy

I care deeply for Bob and his family & I am honored to share my passion for horses with them.

Bob's life has drastically changed. ***His independence is still gone, but once a week he rides independently and feels freedom while riding a horse.***

Blessings... we count them every day

- ◆ Insulated arena
- ◆ Visit from 'Bus52' for 'Healing with Horses'
- ◆ The Polo Event ~ amazing sponsors & support for our #1 Fund Raiser!
- ◆ John Deere Tractor from Eaton Industrial Sector and Friends of Freedom Farm
- ◆ Loving friends to provide homes for retired horses
- ◆ Volunteers so willing to give of their spirit, time and love
- ◆ Attended first Horse Show with Freedom Farm Riders
- ◆ Recognition & support from Veterans4Veterans for 'Healing with Horses'
- ◆ A beautiful picnic table for the Lake Ida Schoolhouse American Legion Womens Auxillary
- ◆ Office Addition began in December, completed In January 2013



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Freedom Farm enriches lives by partnering with the unique attributes of the horse to improve mobility, build confidence and encourage personal growth in children and adults with physical, mental and emotional challenges.

Freedom of balance

Freedom of movement

Freedom of expression



Horses... our angels

We consider our horses our partners.

They give so much to our riders; unconditional love, forgiveness, confidence, movement, strength and most of all... freedom.

In return, we give them the best care we can. This means 'whatever they need, they get.' Quality hay, some need special supplements and some routine chiropractic care.

Volunteers who will be Leaders attend a specific training, ensuring the horses are handled consistently. This promotes a happy horse that is ready to work.

Thank you for your support and understanding the importance of the physical and mental health of our Equine Angels.

WE'RE ON THE WEB!
FREEDOMFARMMN.
ORG

2012 Freedom Farm Fun Facts...

Our Clients

62 = Lives enriched along with their families

1755 = Hours of Client Services, Equine Assisted Activities & Therapy Sessions

Our Volunteers & Staff

127 = total volunteers & staff

92 = weekly program volunteers

2515 = total 2012 volunteer hours

31% have volunteered over 5 yrs

Our Horses & Ponies

12 = horses and ponies of various breeds served our Riders in 2012

