



Main Stay News

Fall 2003

Main Stay Therapeutic Riding Program, Inc.

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The Star(z)s ★ ★ ★ Shined Brightly

Is it possible for it to rain all over McHenry County and still “miss” Main Stay farm? For the past three years, that is exactly what has happened at our “Evening in the Country.” Main Stay’s good luck continued on June 28 as we celebrated a glorious evening of music and entertainment.

Just moments after guests arrived, dark, threatening clouds rolled across the southern skies, one wave after another. All of us held our breath, hoping that the Main Stay luck would hold strong. A strong gust of wind cleared some of the tables of the linens, but otherwise the storm rolled around us without problems. The final proof came during the viewing of the Main Stay video, when a beautiful rainbow broke behind the tents—how much more could you ask for?

The evening was filled with entertainment. Denny Svehla, a Neil Diamond stylist, wowed the group with his voice, talent and charm. Wandering through the tent, he serenaded tables one by one. His charm was evident as he even cleared plates from tables as he



“Elvis” serenades a Main Stay “star”—
Jane Palatas.



**Attendees at Main Stay’s “Evening in the Country”
enjoyed the entertainment while playing a vital part in
helping us raise needed funds.**

sang without ever missing a beat. You could hear over and over through the tent, “Is he really singing or is that a tape?” In the true spirit of the evening, Denny donated his performance to Main Stay. **THANK YOU, DENNY!** “Elvis,” aka Bob West, followed Denny and had several guests on their feet dancing with him to our favorite Elvis tunes to the delight of the audience.

The incredible music of the Bart Alonzo group played softly though dinner, but Bart got guests out dancing after the auction. People danced until Bart called it quits long into the evening! A huge thanks goes to Bart and his group for donating yet another year of their generous and talented time to Main Stay!

An auction and raffle helped raise funds. Main Stay would like to thank everyone who played a part in making the evening a success. Whether you joined us that night at the farm, purchased a raffle ticket or just sent good thoughts, you all helped make the evening a memorable success!

At the end of the night, the stars were still shining overhead as the last dancers left the floor. However, the real stars of the evening were the students and people of Main Stay—they fill our hearts and shine their light on us every day of the year! 🌟

From the Director's Desk

Life is surprising. A year ago if someone would have told me I would be working for an equine therapeutic program I wouldn't have even known what he was talking about. But life is also good. For here I am at Main Stay, part of a wonderful group of volunteers and staff doing wonderful things for some wonderful young people.

I have been overwhelmed by many things I have witnessed in my short time here. Of course, the work being done is very impressive and gratifying. Watching the smiling riders on their horses as they accomplish new goals brings a tear to my eye and a lump to my throat every time. Also impressive is the dedication of the volunteers who help in the arena as well as the equally dedicated people who help us financially, to provide this service.

Let me share a bit of information about myself so that you can start getting to know me. But I don't want it to stop here. I hope to chat with each of you and develop a personal relationship.

I grew up in Southern Illinois, near St. Louis. My early career was as a writer and director of educational and informational films. Although employed by several organizations in this capacity the most unique was Hanna-Barbera Studios, creators of the Flintstones, the Jetsons, Yogi Bear and countless other classic cartoon characters, in Hollywood. From California I moved to Kenosha, WI, to head up a newly created audiovisual department at the world headquarters of the Barbershop Harmony Society. In my nearly 20 years with this organization I moved from audiovisual to marketing and finally became Executive Director of the organization's charitable foundation. During those years I learned the ins and outs of nonprofit management, earned an MBA and became a Certified Association Executive (CAE).

I live in Kenosha, WI, with my wonderful wife, Ruth, a high school librarian. We have two grown daughters, April in New York City and Liesl in Kenosha. My hobbies include acting, singing, home brewing (beer) and vegetable gardening. Who knows, maybe I can add horseback riding to that some day.

As Main Stay's Executive Director I will be involved in many aspects of the organization. As well as supervising our fantastic staff, I will oversee the daily operation and, of course, work with the Board of Directors to achieve our Vision while carrying out our Mission and upholding our Values.

One of my major responsibilities at Main Stay is to oversee and conduct our fund-raising efforts. As you know, our riding fees cover less than ten percent of the Main Stay budget. As hard as I will try, I will not be able to ferret out all the grant possibilities, all the matching donor programs and all the prospective new donors that might want to support our great cause. We need your help in providing information on these possibilities.

I am happy to report that Loriann Dowell, who resigned as Executive Director of Main Stay in January, has accepted a Director's position on the Main Stay Board. Loriann's contributions as Executive Director were many and we thank her for the administrative talents she shared with us.

I've met some of you already and I hope to meet all of you soon. Please call me anytime to talk about anything that might be on your mind. My door and ears are always open to our wonderful parents, students, volunteers and staff.

Gary M. Stamm

- **Board of Directors**
- *President*
- **Sandy Swank-Sunserl**
- *Vice President*
- **Ursula Foszcz**
- *Secretary/Treasurer*
- **Sara Foszcz**
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- **Wendy Marchel**
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- *Administrative Assistants*
- **Joan Castell**
- **Diane Hesch**
- *Program Director*
- **Jean Maraist**
- *Volunteer Coordinator*
- **Karen Gallagher**
- *Barn Manager*
- **Jennifer Rizza**
- *Instructors* **Anna Whitworth,**
- **Jean Maraist, Sara Foszcz,**
- **Roxie Elliott, Sandy Barcus,**
- **Valerie DeBartolo**
- *Articles and feature stories*
- *contributed by*
- **Sara Foszcz, Jean Maraist,**
- **Gary Stamm**
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Feeling Is Believing by Gary Stamm

In my first three weeks on the job I talked to a number of our ring volunteers and heard over and over again about their love of what they were doing and the affinity they had developed with their riders. I believed them. But there's nothing like "walking a mile in their moccasins" is there?

My wife, Ruth, and I had already figured out that we wanted to become volunteers. We took the first opportunity to attend a volunteer training session. Ruth hopes to sign up for a regular volunteer slot and I figured I could be an emergency stand by, since I will be "near the ring" most of the riding sessions.

Little did I realize that my first opportunity would come the very next riding day following my training. A regular volunteer cancelled Monday afternoon for a 4 p.m. slot that day. I had no qualms, the training session had been ably handled by instructor Anna, and I had been an attentive student. I could handle it. I was to sidewalk with a student who had been in the program several years and was riding the veteran Shasta. No problem.

The lesson came off without a hitch. There were no stumbles or fumbles on my part. Seems like a rather dull story, doesn't it? But, dull or uneventful it was not. Those 45 minutes had a lasting impact on me. I still don't know what happened. I was merely walking alongside a horse playing a small role in a child's safety. But it was more than that, much more. Maybe it was the act of holding on to that powerful yet gentle animal while my arm rested gently over that vulnerable leg. Maybe it was because of the teamwork I became part of. Or maybe it was the look in that rider's eyes when I glanced up and saw her looking at me. Although she may be verbally noncommunicative, those eyes spoke volumes.

Whatever it was, I now have a taste of what brings our dedicated volunteers back week after week and year after year. I'm anxious for my next time. 🐾



These photos give us just a glimpse of how our horses open up a new range of experiences for Main Stay students.



Arena Happenings

One of Main Stay's own volunteers, Kandis Nissen, a certified occupational therapy assistant, came out to the farm for a continuing education workshop for volunteers and staff. Kandis shared her knowledge of *Brain Gym*, which is a series of movements that can help enhance whole brain learning. *Brain Gym* is similar to TTouch for horses (see the Learning Corner on page 6). It can help center you, reduce tension, increase your ability to focus and get both the left and right side of your brain "talking" to each other.

Some Main Stay students have already started incorporating *Brain Gym* techniques at the beginning and throughout their lessons. If you happen to come out to the barn and hear us talking about "brain buttons," "hookups" or "lazy eights," then you know *Brain Gym* techniques are being used.

These techniques can be used by anyone. Additional information is available if you're interested in learning more. (Paul Dennison has written extensively about *Brain Gym* techniques). Thank you, Kandis, for helping the participants learn something new and beneficial for staff, volunteers and students. As one of our staff members said, "I was so relaxed and happy the rest of the day after learning *Brain Gym*." Now that is something everyone needs more of! 🐾



Liz Wolodkiewicz is pictured with Blackie, the horse Main Stay purchased with funds Liz raised. Our Spring Issue featured Liz's story of raising \$3,000 to help replace Casper lost last year. Blackie has adjusted nicely to his new home and new duties. Thanks again to Liz for her hard work and dedication. We couldn't have done it without you!

What Makes a Good Therapy Horse?

It takes a special horse to be able to call Main Stay home. There is a long list of questions for anyone wishing to donate a horse or when we are in the market for a new horse. The main areas we address are the three "S's"—*safety, soundness and spookiness*.

First and foremost, therapy horses have to be safe for our students to ride. Our horses have to accommodate all different sizes and rider abilities. Horses may have to accommodate up to three humans surrounding them during a lesson. Since therapy horses are handled and ridden by many

different individuals, they need to be able to tolerate change and adjust to each lesson.

Soundness, or healthiness, is also important for both horse and rider. It is unethical and inhumane to use a horse that is in constant pain. A limping horse will not give the rider the symmetrical movement he needs. One of the most powerful tools of therapeutic riding is the rhythmical gait of the horse which simulates the human gait. A sore horse cannot provide that benefit to our students.

Spookiness refers to a horse that is easily frightened. Frightened

horses don't do well at Main Stay since our riding environment can be quite different from a regular barn setting. The horse by nature is a "fight or flight" animal. If they get scared, they run from danger. Main Stay needs horses that can handle wheelchairs, mounting ramps, hula hoops, basketballs, wild turkeys and a whole host of other things that would, most likely, frighten the typical horse.

Clearly, not just any horse will do. That's why Main Stay takes good care of our equine friends. Without them there would be no therapeutic riding program. 🐾



Volunteer Spotlight

Where would we be without the likes of our very special volunteers? We all know the answer to that is—nonexistent! In this issue we would like to introduce you to two people who make life at Main Stay *much* easier. Everyone immediately thinks of ring volunteers when they think of Main Stay. But there are many other volunteers behind the scenes making day-to-day things happen. They are invaluable ...

Ron and Trudie Gohl have been with Main Stay for more than eight years. Sean, their son, has ridden with Main Stay since he was eight. Ron and Trudie have been pitching in and helping out ever since Sean began. Getting involved just seems to come naturally to these two. Both are very active in their community as well.



Ron Gohl (above left) helps load up the hay for Main Stay's horses.



Trudie Gohl (above right) pitches in during one of our family events.

Whether it is working Fair or Fall Diddley, bagging *underwear* at Kohl's, sorting and tagging for a garage sale or helping with an in-house function, Ron and Trudie are always there. They are not only there, but they keep smiling as they work until the last chair is folded and the lights are turned out. Sometimes there is a need for them to even work in shifts—one comes and the other goes home to be with their kids. They have *never*, refused the call for help. From *Team* membership, to fundraising and party planning, the Gohl's have shared their time, talents and lives with Main Stay.

Ron is an active ring volunteer as well, working not only a regular weekly spot but also coming in to substitute whenever he is able to help. Trudie and Ron personify the word generous. Main Stay is extremely grateful for all they add to the program! 🏠

Are You Board?

Main Stay's Board of Directors has never had time to be bored. Sitting on the board of such a dynamic organization takes commitment, time, talent and dedication. Every member involved with Main Stay has these qualities and they are one of the many reasons the program thrives today. Main Stay is proud that no board member is just lending their name to our organization, but each of them is willing to *roll up their sleeves and get dirty!*

What are the duties of the Main Stay Board of Directors? As with the program itself, the Board and its duties are constantly changing. All nonprofit boards are legally and ethically responsible for the financial and business end of the program. Of course, that is only the beginning. Hiring employees, policy making, overseeing committees, fund raising, special events, communicating with other people in the program and being involved with activities in the barn, keeps our Board busy and dedicated. *Continued on page 6*



Learning Corner

Main Stay hosted a TTouch and Reading Horse Body Language Clinic at the farm on June 1. Marie Hoffman, a T.T.E.A.M. Practitioner II and a Centered Riding Techniques instructor, facilitated the session and donated her time. Participants spent the morning learning how horses communicate their needs. Since they can't use words to verbally tell us how they are, it is our responsibility to learn their language. By doing so, we can develop a better relationship with our equine friends making everyone happier.

Another way to make our horses happy is to use the TTouch techniques learned during the workshop. TTouch is a hands on method of using specific touches to enhance the horse and human relationship, ease nervousness, correct bad habits and for most horses, it

also just feels good. Therapy horses can benefit from TTouch since the majority of our horses are older and the majority of our riders need help staying balanced in the middle of the horses back. It can be stressful for horses to carry unbalanced weight just as it is for humans to carry heavy purses and briefcases on one shoulder.

Everyone had time to practice on Main Stay's horses and ask questions. The Main Stay staff, volunteers and all the participants were excited to learn new techniques that can help one of the most important parts of our program stay happy and healthy. A big thank you to Marie Hoffman for donating her services to our program. Her expertise helped make the workshop an educational day for all. 🐾



(Left) Marie Hoffman shows clinic participants what a specific "TTouch" feels like.

(Right) Marie demonstrates techniques for easing the stress on a horse's muscles.



Are You Board? *continued from page 5*

All of our members are required to work at least one evening of classes (as a volunteer) to have first-hand knowledge of whom and what our clients' needs are all about. The vast majority of our board members currently work (or worked in the past) in the arena as regular ring volunteers. We believe this service is necessary for them to fully understand the needs and complexities of the program.

Main Stay is also proud that 100% of the Board not only share their time and talents, but they also give financially.

Throughout last winter and much of the spring the Board reviewed and updated a three-year strategic plan. After completing the prior plan ahead of schedule in most areas, it was time to start thinking of the future once again. Anyone who has stepped into the "office" knows that space and storage are

major issues at Main Stay. As many as five people are working out of two offices, *within* the house of our barn manager. Closets, desks, floor space and yes, even the bathtub, are full to capacity! Opening a door can be life threatening if you're not prepared.

Knowing that the program is constantly moving forward, the Board placed providing additional space as a high priority. Along with office space, the need for stalls to house additional horses, year-round accessible bathrooms, and storage and meeting space for workshops are also being investigated. In order to best utilize existing space and structures, a site evaluation is currently under way. It is the Board's hope that this project will begin to move from a dream to reality within a year.

With a strong commitment to the future, our Board is dedicated to doing everything necessary to ensure Main Stay's continued success. 🐾



Mark Your Calendar!

Main Stay Horse Show & Volunteer Recognition Picnic

Main Stay Farm
Saturday, September 20, 1 p.m.

New Volunteer Training

Main Stay Farm
Saturday, October 4
9 to 11 a.m.

Volunteer Continuing Education

Main Stay Farm
Saturday, October 4
11 a.m. to 12 noon

16th Annual Bowl-a-Thon

Duffy's Palace Bowl, McHenry
Sunday, October 5

Fall Diddley

Boone County Fairgrounds,
Belvidere
Saturday & Sunday
October 11 & 12

Holiday and Wrap-up Party

Johnsburg Community Club
Sunday, December 7

Closing Thoughts

The evolution continues—what a wonderful thing. The one word never associated with Main Stay is *static*, and in my eyes that is a good thing. If we were static we would be long gone from this industry. We received the following saying as a wedding gift 20 years ago, but it works equally well for Main Stay:

“Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success!”

Success is working with an incredible ensemble of people at Main Stay. For 19 years we have progressed and moved forward. The danger has always been taking our success for granted. I believe our strength is that we work hard at avoiding that trap. We are constantly evaluating ourselves. Trying to stay true to our history and values, but still keeping an eye open for new ideas isn't always easy—but it is necessary.

New people bring fresh ideas and a renewed energy to the entire team. Staying within the comfort of what we *know* is easy—the hard work is staying in the present *and* looking to the future, if we are to continue to enrich the lives of our students. Each life shared with Main Stay has a lesson to teach us and we hope, we don't miss the opportunity to learn. With all of us continuing to work together the future looks very good indeed!

Love and thanks,

Sara



Participation Form

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

<i>Join the Main Stay Team!</i>	
Leg-Up Club	\$1–\$99
Bronze Stirrup Club	\$100–\$249
Silver Stirrup Club	\$250–\$499
Gold Stirrup Club	\$500–\$999
Platinum Stirrup Club	\$1,000–\$4,999
Grand Prix Club	\$5,000+

I'd like to contribute to the program fund. Enclosed is \$_____.

I'd like to support the monthly upkeep of a horse. Enclosed is \$_____.

I'd like to become a volunteer.

*Thank you for your support. Your contribution is tax-deductible.
Please return to: MSTRP • 6919 Keystone Road • Richmond, IL 60071*

STRIKKE ONE . . . for Main Stay

What: 16th Annual Bowl- a-Thon
When: Sunday, October 5
Where: Palace Bowl, McHenry, IL
Time: Registration @ 12:30 p.m.
Bowling @ 1 p.m.
Awards/Food @ 4 p.m.

Why: Because it's fun!
No bugs or bad weather *and* you still get to watch football!
All the proceeds go to our students' needs!
We need you to make it a smashing success!

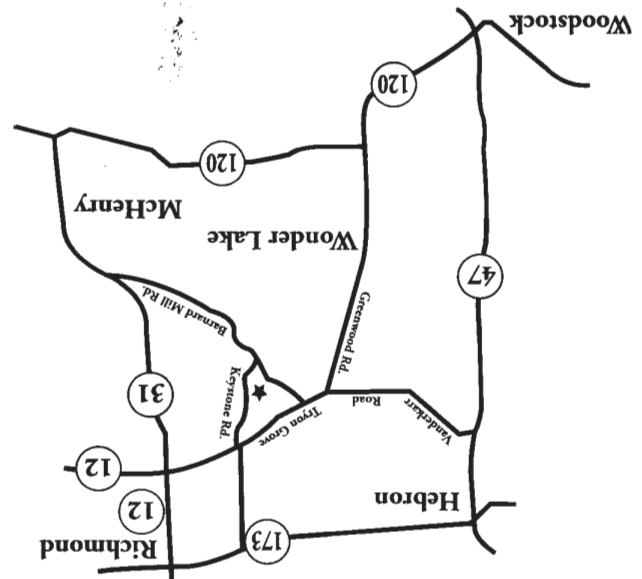
Are there any league bowlers out there who would like to get their league involved? Please call the farm to be a part of our winning team!

Remember, if you can't join us, you can still bowl with your own league or as an individual. If you can't bowl, then please consider calling the farm and sending in a pledge for one of our student teams.

For more information, call us at (815) 653-9374.



Last year's Bowl-a-Thon winners show off their trophies.



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