

AROUND the FIRE

NEWS FROM CRYSTAL PEAKS YOUTH RANCH

WINTER 2007

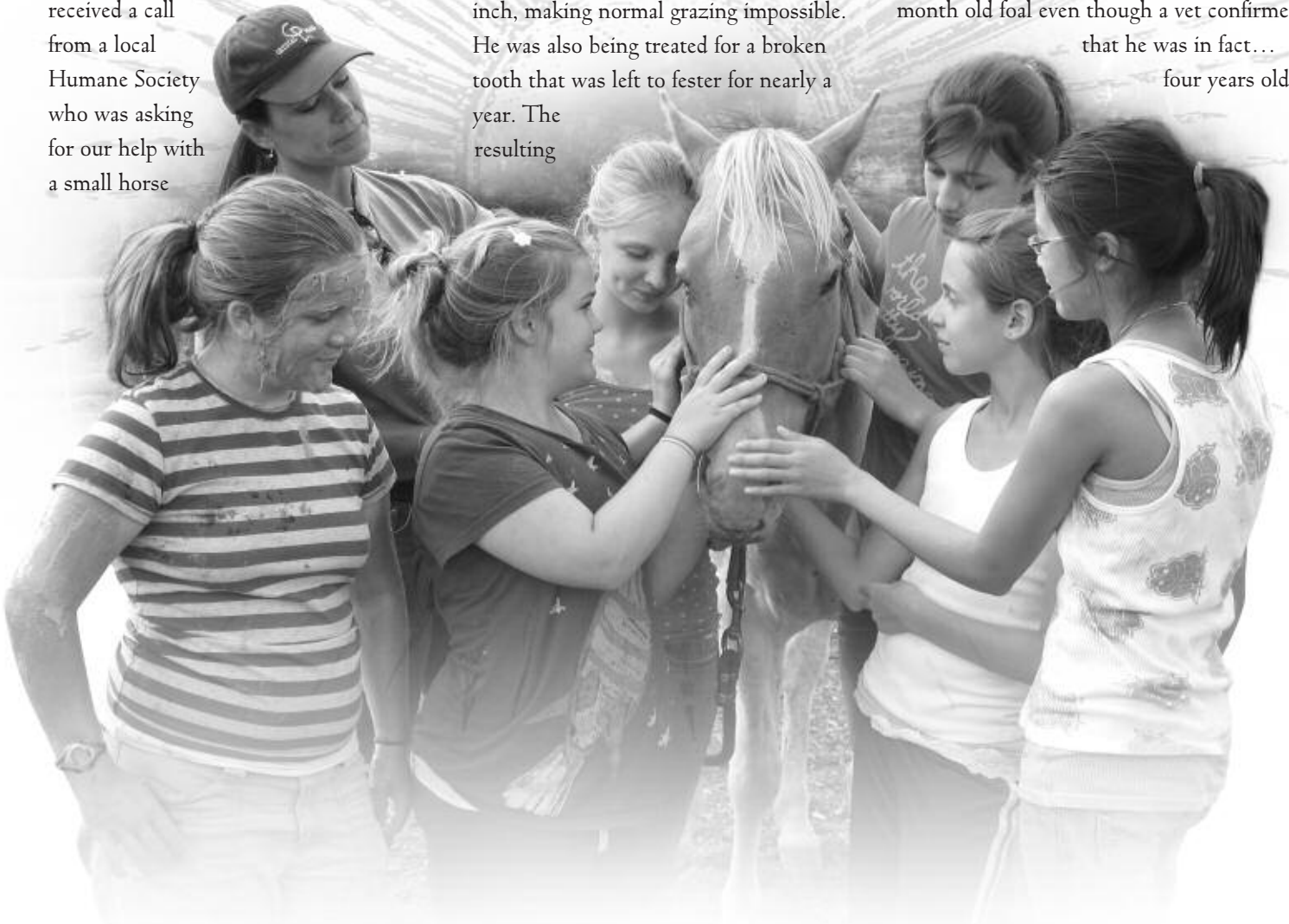
Those words “God is Good” resonate with such a deep peace... when all is well within our lives. But, when we are hurting, it is easy to feel like God’s “goodness” applies to everyone but us. Thankfully, we have the choice of not just building our life on ‘how we feel’... but instead on what is true.

Kelsie and I had just received a call from a local Humane Society who was asking for our help with a small horse

GOD IS GOOD

they had confiscated. Apparently, he was fraught with troubles and would need a very special home. During our evaluation of the tiny Mustang-Quarter horse cross we were made aware that his incisors not only did not meet, but that his lower jaw jutted beyond his upper jaw by nearly an inch, making normal grazing impossible. He was also being treated for a broken tooth that was left to fester for nearly a year. The resulting

abscess was so severe that it blew out a grapefruit-sized portion of his lower jaw. And, to our mounting dismay, there was something wrong with his right hip that caused him to occasionally swing his leg out to the side in a very abnormal movement. Adding to his woes, because of his misaligned teeth and near fatal oral infection, he had only grown to the size of a ten month old foal even though a vet confirmed that he was in fact... four years old.



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“Lord, what is Your purpose in such a young life that is filled with so much misery?”

I wondered.

Yet, for me, the most devastating news about this little survivor came at the very end of our conversation. Since the Humane Society had paid for his urgent medical needs, they would not release him to our care without a \$1500.00 donation to understandably help recover their costs. Kelsie and I simply looked at each other, both thinking the same thought.

Because the ranch is located on nine tiny acres and is usually full with a resident herd of thirty horses, we rarely purchase horses unless they are in critical need. This little man was currently out of harms way and had been placed in a stable ‘foster care’ situation until a permanent home could be found for him. Even though my head understood the logic of my own ‘rules’... it did little to console my heart. This smidgen of a gelding needed our help. As we drove away, Kelsie and I prayed, “Lord, show us how to help in the right way... show us YOUR way.”

For the next two weeks I daily considered the pocket sized horse that had stolen my heart with his sweetly endearing ‘bull dog’ jaw set. Often my thoughts swirled

into simple prayers of, *“Lord, he has been through so much already. I know that You love him more than I do. Whether it involves me or not... will You provide what is best for him...”*

It was early Thursday morning and I already had fourteen different places that I needed to be at once. One of my staff alerted me that a small group of junior high girls had just arrived from Seattle, four hours early, for their special day of volunteering on the ranch. Even though I was already fully engaged, they urgently requested that I meet with them now, before the day got started, to present a small gift for the ranch. I could feel my brain starting to ‘ping pong’ between all the things that were vying for my attention when, as if being invisibly lead by hand... I walked straight to the girls.

Seven young women turned to greet me. With brimming enthusiasm, every one shared how they had held ‘fund raisers’ that mostly consisted of cleaning yards and hosting bake sales in their neighborhood. With preplanned ceremony, each girl placed her portion of their gift in my hand. I watched in mounting amazement as they began placing hundred dollar bills in my outstretched palm. “Oh my gosh! You’re just a kid! How did you DO this?!”

I asked with astonishment. My question was answered with only glittering eyes and toothy grins. Finally, the last little girl approached. Her eyes were brimming with glass as she nearly squeaked, “I hope that you can use this to bring home a horse that REALLY needs to be here.” Mirroring hers, my eyes also began to shimmer with tears. “I believe I might know who that horse is,” I said as much to myself as to her.

While I confirmed my plan with Troy, Kelsie slipped away and secretly called the Humane Society. Her question was simple, “How much would you take for the little rescued horse?” After what seemed like a pause for mental accounting, the answer finally came, “Seven hundred dollars.”

When Kelsie told me the good news, that they would take less than half of their original asking price, I just laughed out loud. The amount that the ‘Seattle Girls’ had only moments before laid in my hand... was EXACTLY seven hundred dollars!

While Kelsie attended another appointment, Julie and I eased the truck down the driveway as quietly as we could... with our horse trailer in tow.

Upon our return, “Round-up Thursday” was in full swing and from what I could see over the rail, everyone was already soaking wet and applying something gooey to each others faces for what I assumed would be the next game.

I called out, “Hey, Seattle Girls... come over here. I have something to share with you!” In an instant they were all gathered around, blinking up at me through inquisitive eyes surrounded by peanut butter.

“Sometimes when you do good things and pray... it’s kind of like putting a ‘note in a bottle’ and throwing it into the sea. You never really know the outcome of your love or your efforts. You just have to trust in the Lord that He does and that HE will do what is best with your gift... that He will make it into ‘loaves and fishes.’”

Yet, every now and then, you get to see exactly where your kindness goes and what it does. Girls, TODAY... is that day!" As I finished my simple exhortation, I guided the girls toward the back of the trailer.

In nearly perfect unison, my little entourage gasped as they rounded the back of the rig and saw who was waiting for them. I then watched, in utter delight, as pure amazement began to settle into their astonished hearts. Each responded in their own unique surprised, excited, incredulous, laughing, tearful way.

Julie stepped to the side, leading the

tiny gelding nose to nose with those who earned his freedom. I watched as he just stood there... looking with wide eyed wonder into a gathering crowd of inquisitive kids... into a brand new world. As he seemed to consider the face of each child, I was left to imagine what might be going through his beleaguered equine mind, "So THIS is what Heaven looks like..."

As he stepped forward into a growing mass of outstretched arms and peanut buttered kisses... his plight suddenly made sense. All that he had survived, all of his hardships and misery were all leading to a

moment such as this. Out of his pain was forged the perfect place to receive the winsome gifts of love from a group of kids who extended their heartfelt offering with childlike faith. Without his pain, he would have little need of us. Yet, *because* of his pain... he became the very canvas upon which the hopes and dreams of a handful of little girls... became a reality. *Each one* transformed into a witness of how their gifts made a difference. Each saw how their love fell on a needy heart... and because of their faithfulness... that weary heart... found its way home.

It is true - God IS good. Only He can make something so joyful out of something so painful. However, there are times when His truth and purpose are easily masked by the storm of pain that we currently feel. Yet, if we will choose to trust Him, to reach through the torrent and grasp His hand that is permanently reaching toward us... we will enter the 'eye in the storm'... where there is always peace... His perfect peace.

Because of this truth, it only seemed appropriate to name our special little horse "Mateo"... which means "God IS good."



FOCUS ON THE FAMILY



If you missed the March 2007 airing of Kim and Troy's interview with Focus on the Family... it will be re-aired December 5-7 as part of their "Best of the Year" broadcasts. Check your local stations or go online to www.family.org.



Information Clinics 2008



BY JULIE LOVE

It is hard to believe that we have just concluded our 12th riding season here at Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch. As snowflakes threaten to fall and the horses have grown their thick winter coats, we as a staff also have an opportunity to reflect over the past year and dream for the future.

The red rock wall rising out of our back paddock is a daily reminder of where this small ranch has grown from. The cinder rock that once was the only floor on this property is still highly visible. As I stand near the easternmost boundary of the ranch, I am amazed at the view in front of me. My eyes and heart are not only filled with the majestic Three Sisters Mountains, but also the beautiful landscape of Crystal Peaks. Since we are situated on such a small acreage, I can take in nearly the whole ranch from up on top of the hill. Even though every square inch is being used, it still feels spacious and very safe.

As we evaluate our programs each winter and look for ways to make positive changes in creating further opportunity for



more children to spend time here at Crystal Peaks, we are excited by the other way that our ranch is 'expanding.' Over the years, many same-hearted individuals have contacted us, each asking how they can start a similar program in their own area. Starting in 2005, we have hosted four 'Information Clinics' here on the ranch to a combined total of 450 individuals. Throughout each clinic, we have had the privilege of encouraging and teaching others with a similar passion to serve disadvantaged kids, abused mothers and broken families.

Currently, we have two separate Information Clinics planned for 2008.

The dates are set for May 21-24 & also June 4-7. If you are interested in attending, please visit our website at www.crystalpeaksyouthranch.org to find registration information. If you are interested in sponsoring participants, please contact the Development Office at 541-389-6523. The capacity for each clinic is limited, so we encourage you to register early. It is with great anticipation that we look forward to these events and to the 'new ministries' that

will bring hope and restoration to those in need.

ONLINE STORE

Hello to our extended family and friends. We wish to offer a piece of Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch to you in



a continuing effort to keep our hearts close to yours. We have created some clothing and accessories that we're so excited about! With a variety of styles, colors and items, it is our hope that everyone will find something they like. Each garment has been uniquely inspired and designed for the use and support of Crystal Peaks. Many of these items are inscribed with messages of truth and hope. You can find our store by logging onto our website, www.crystalpeaksyouthranch.org, and clicking on "Merchandise."



ECHOES

BY RACHEL HANSON-MCBRIDE

There is an amazing feeling that overtakes your soul when glancing out across a breathtaking landscape. You can do nothing but gasp, totally overwhelmed by the radiance that fills your heart. You can't get enough. Gazing, your eyes scan back and forth, desperately trying to soak in every last drop of beauty. Inside, your soul feels so full.

If only the moment could last forever.

Maybe nature is not your passion. Perhaps music, or art, or watching children play brings your spirit to this same place. Isn't it good?

Years of working at the ranch has ushered into my life so many of these "glimpses" of beauty. A child's face as they travel on horseback for the first time, a storm devouring the cascade foothills, the tranquil "exhale" of a mother as she sits down to watch her kids ride... all these highlights are such a pleasure to my soul. For so long I have simply appreciated them for the fleeting moment they lasted.



Then today, as if out of nowhere, the Lord gently reminded me of something. Something I knew all along but had slowly lost to the "important projects" of life. He reminded me that all beauty is simply a reflection of its Creator. It is an echo of who He is; a reminder of His perfection and existence.

Because of this simple truth, perhaps the next time your breath is taken away by the warmth of a full moon, the exuberance of a child's genuine smile, or the rhythm of your favorite song, you can choose to let it be what it is for that moment, or you can let the echo bring your attention back to its source: our loving God and Creator.

If you don't believe in God, let beauty make you wonder.

If you believe in God but don't know Him, let beauty make you want to.

If you know God, let beauty—like an echo—remind you to hear Him.


ROMANS 1:20; PSALM 19:1-4







WE'RE OFF...!

BY KIM MEEDER



For me, the serenity I derive from merely looking at the mountains . . . is vastly multiplied by actually being in the mountains. The season or modality has never mattered to me. If you're in the wilderness . . . it's ALL good!



Perhaps, one of my deepest joys concerning the great outdoors . . . is sharing it with those I love. This past season the ranch staff was blessed and challenged with many adventures such as hiking, white water rafting, surfing, riding, backpacking, marathoning, mountaineering and horse packing. Over the years, we have learned that there is remarkable benefit for those who work together . . . to also play together. It is within our 'play' that we learn and appreciate the true heart of those we shoulder with. It is also within our play that we purpose to 'lock arms' with greater unity, focus and strength for all that is to come. Within this amazingly beautiful world that we live in, I can think of no better classroom to genuinely learn what true 'fellowship' really is.



SOAR

BY ANNE-NICOLE WALTERS

From the very beginning of Crystal Peaks, it has always been clearly recognized that touching children's lives is only one piece of an expansive puzzle. God's healing grace poured into one life of a family accomplishes only a portion of what pouring into an entire family can do. While Crystal Peaks continues to be 'child-centered', there has always been a great effort to involve more of the family as well.

One of the greatest ways this has occurred has been through our bi-monthly Ranch Fellowships. It is during this time that families gather together to eat, worship and learn a simple truth taught from the Word. Recently, a new door has been opened for a key portion of the family to have a special time of interaction with Him...the women of Crystal Peaks are being invited to SOAR (Seek Only A Relationship... with HIM FIRST and then one another).

Earlier this summer, the Lord used a few specific encounters to reveal to me His heart for women to have a special time to meet together. This time was not simply to meet with each other... but to meet with HIM. Truly, it is within the presence of God that we are renewed and strengthened. It is through His word that we are directed and disciplined, and most of all...it is before Him that we come to a place of knowing we are loved in a way we desperately need... and can find nowhere else.

It has been an enormous blessing to see women carve time out of their very busy lives to gather together here at the ranch. Each woman who graces this special place carries with her a personal story, and there are moments within each of those stories that a woman needs the support of her 'sisters'. The Lord has truly been the author of this group, and it's very exciting (and challenging!) to seek Him week by week and see what He has in store.

"But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." (Isaiah 40:31, NIV) It's a fact that we will all know times of running and walking, working and toiling. Yet, what a joy to know that HE will give us the strength for every portion of the journey that lies before us. When women redirect their focus to see themselves through God's perspective, and drop hindrances that have burdened them—while resting in the knowledge that they are loved and supported by other women—it is my deepest hope that through every challenge of this life... they will SOAR!



Yes! I would like to help Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch fulfill their mission

Please use my donation for:

- Where it is needed most
- Endowment Fund
- For the children
- For the horses
- Ranch Equipment
- Staff education
- Volunteer program

Payment Method:

A check payable to Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch CPYR for \$_____

*Credit cards are accepted at:
www.crystalpeaksyouthranch.org*

*Send donations to: Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch,
19344 Innes Market Road, Bend OR 97701.*

You can also make your donation at
www.crystalpeaksyouthranch.org

Our current wish list is also available at our website

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CIRCLE OF MOUNTAINS

BY TROY MEEDER



As Sam, Marshall and I pulled down the worn boards of the round pen, I couldn't help but wonder, "Has it really been twelve years?" If these old pieces of wood could speak, I can only imagine what they might say. Perhaps they would reminisce of frightened horses realizing that they are safe and loved. Or maybe they would chuckle at the countless times a hurting child was soothed by the comfort and wonder of a horse who chose to follow them. Maybe they would just bask in silence at the pure wonder of hope and healing within this simple place.

While the boys and I began to hammer up bright, new tongue

and groove boards, each within our own turn atop a ladder, had to stop and just stare at the glory of the mountains soaring before us. During these moments of

private reflection, it was my deep hope that the rising of these new walls would be a symbolic 'passing of the torch' for even more restoration to happen within this unique circle.

Once the walls were nearly complete, a creative idea came to mind. 'Of course, this would be the perfect way to finish this extraordinary place,' I thought. A heartfelt 'thanks' to Matt and Tim for helping to bring our beloved mountains... *inside*.

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