

# AROUND the FIRE

NEWS FROM CRYSTAL PEAKS YOUTH RANCH

SPRING 2010

## THE CHRISTMAS PONY

BY MICHELLE DESAPIO

Being the mother of a soldier is never easy. Nor is being the seven-year-old sister to the same. It's even more difficult when the soldier is that daughter's hero.

The strain of our son's deployment has weighed heavily on each member of our family. During this time, and throughout the past three years, Crystal Peaks has been our sanctuary. The horses and staff have become our angels in disguise. It's our special place to go when we need to feel peaceful and safe from all our worries. Both of our daughters, aged 7 and 9, love coming up for sessions and Round-Up game times. They've said they feel God's love at the ranch and find comfort in knowing so many amazing people are praying for their brother's safety. No matter what kind of a day my girls are having, they always feel loved and special when they leave Crystal Peaks.

Amaya, our youngest daughter, once said, "Of course my family loves me... they have to. But the people and horses at the ranch love me just because they *want* to. I know I'm special because God led us there to hang out with people like Julie and horses like Isabella."

Isabella is a black-and-white draft cross that Amaya connected with the first time she rode her. Somehow, this beautiful mare always seemed to know exactly what Amaya needed during each session. Whether their time together was slow and steady, or full of silly antics, Amaya always felt confident and in control with Isabella. For the past two years, she has worked exclusively with her favorite horse.

I believe most little girls dream of ponies, but when Amaya dreams, she sees Isabella.

Nothing could have ever prepared me for a call I received in early December.

Kelsie, one of the staff at Crystal Peaks, called to tell me something astounding. She and Kim had come to the decision that Isabella needed a quieter life, due to some early arthritis issues, to maintain her longevity. They knew that it was in Isabella's best interest for her to leave the ranch. My heart sank.

Why was Isabella being taken from Amaya—then of all times?

Didn't God know how much she needed this special horse?



*Continued on page 2*



The next statement I heard Kelsie speak will forever echo in my heart. "We all know how much Amaya adores Isabella, and we would love your permission to give to her to Amaya for Christmas." In the silent moment that followed, I realized *God did care about a single child. He did care about how important this horse was in Amaya's life.* This was going to be a Christmas one little girl would NEVER forget!

For the next two weeks I arranged with Kelsie how this "gifting" would occur and somehow managed to keep the surprise a secret.

Setting a date, my husband and I told our girls we were all going to help the ranch. We planned to do some chores that would include taking our trailer so we could haul something (which was not *entirely* a fib).

The night before revealing our surprise, I overheard Amaya tell her sister, Brooklyn, "Imagine if we get to the ranch and they let us ride Isabella while Mom and Dad helped with chores. That would be the BEST!" Smiling, I thought, Not *quite* the best.

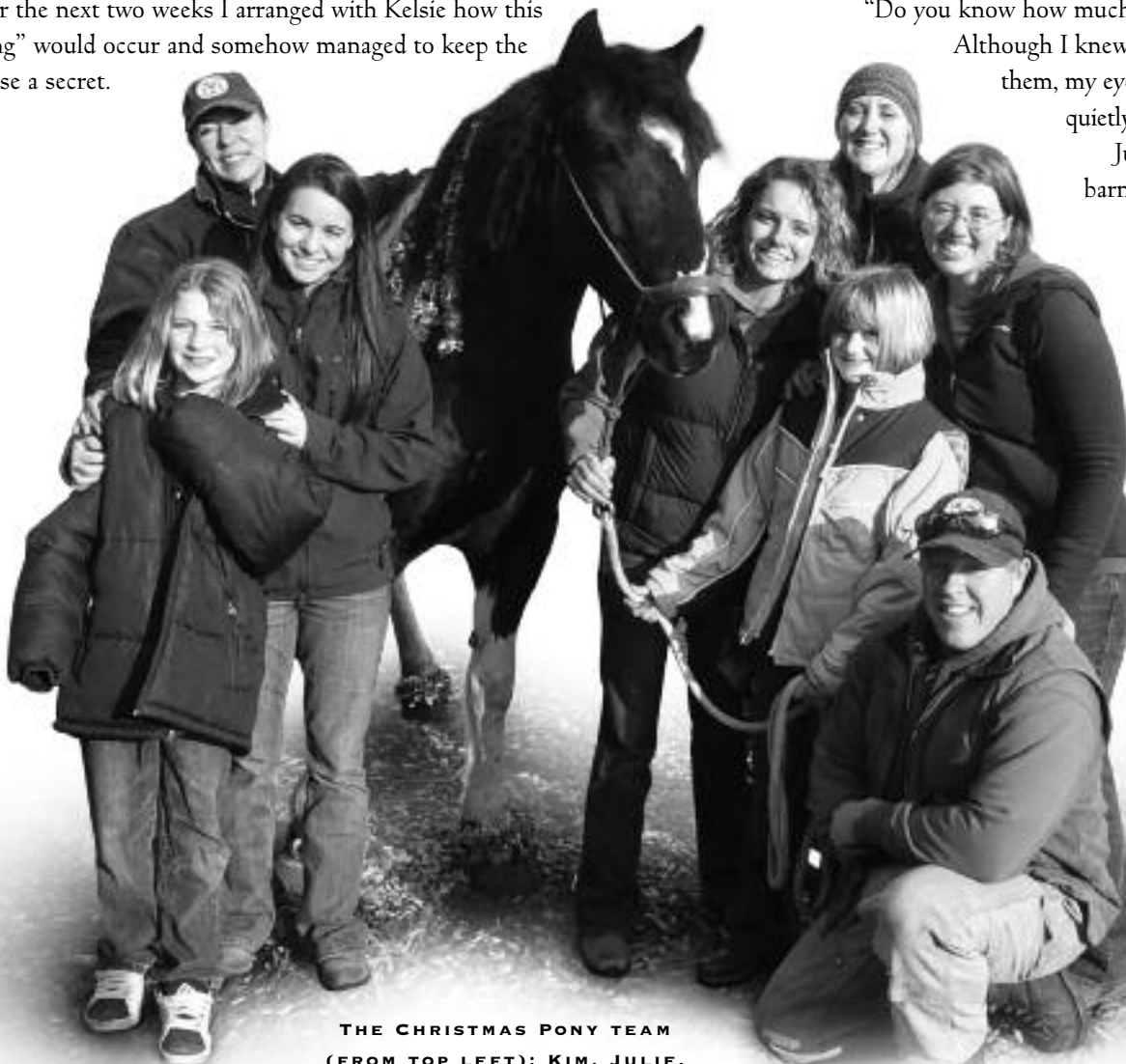
Once at the ranch, the girls set out to help with chores. As they finished cleaning Templeton's pen, Kim arrived and asked Amaya & Brooklyn to assist her in moving some donated hay. They were excited at the opportunity to help Kim, and they set off hand in hand. Walking a few steps behind the trio, I overheard Kim ask them, "Do you know how much God loves you?"

Although I knew she was talking to them, my eyes welled up as I quietly said, "Yes, I do."

Just outside the hay barn, Kim instructed the girls to get some gloves out of the shop. When they opened the tall wooden doors, before them stood the most beautiful horse in the world.

*"When I ride Isabella I feel big. I think she might be an angel God sent just for me. Thank you everyone at Crystal Peaks. I promise to take good care of her. I will love her forever and ever."*

~Amaya, age 7



THE CHRISTMAS PONY TEAM  
(FROM TOP LEFT): KIM, JULIE,  
BROOKLYN, ISABELLA, LAURIE, KELSIE,  
SARAH, AMAYA & JEFF.

Adorned in bows and ribbons, Isabella was waiting for her girl. Spread across her broad chest was a sign that read, "Merry Christmas." The kids froze. Time stopped. Tears flowed.

Quietly, Kim said, "Girls, we fibbed a little. This day isn't about chores or hay, it's about a Christmas pony." Amaya blinked hard. She looked back and forth between the horse and Kim, trying to make sense of what was really happening. Seeing her struggle, Kim clarified, "Isabella is not dressed to be ridden by you... Honey, she's dressed to go home with you. Isabella is YOUR Christmas pony. Would you like to take her home?" With huge eyes, Amaya nodded slowly. Still speechless, she led the large horse down the gravel drive with more confidence than I've ever seen.

Without a word, my daughter was transformed. She was no

*"Crystal Peaks is AWESOME!  
I love all of the horses and  
everyone there. They teach you to  
care about other people and to  
love God. When my sister got to  
take Isabella home, it was great  
for two reasons. One, because I  
like Isabella, and, two, because I  
love my sister. It made me feel  
good to see her so happy."*

~Brooklyn, age 9

longer the shy, self-conscious little girl I knew. She was strong and empowered. I met her down by the trailer and gave her a big hug. It was then that she whispered in my ear, "Can you believe this, Mom? They want ME to have Isabella!" In that moment, my daughter's heart broke free. It soared above every fear, every sorrow, every anxiety of being apart from her big brother.

Amaya's life is forever changed by a ranch, a day and an extraordinary horse.

Crystal Peaks isn't just a ranch. It's not just about kids and horses. It's a place of peace and love—*God's love*. For me, it's where God revealed that no

matter what happens, He's *always* with us. We love our Crystal Peaks family and thank God every day for leading us to them.

God Bless,  
Michelle

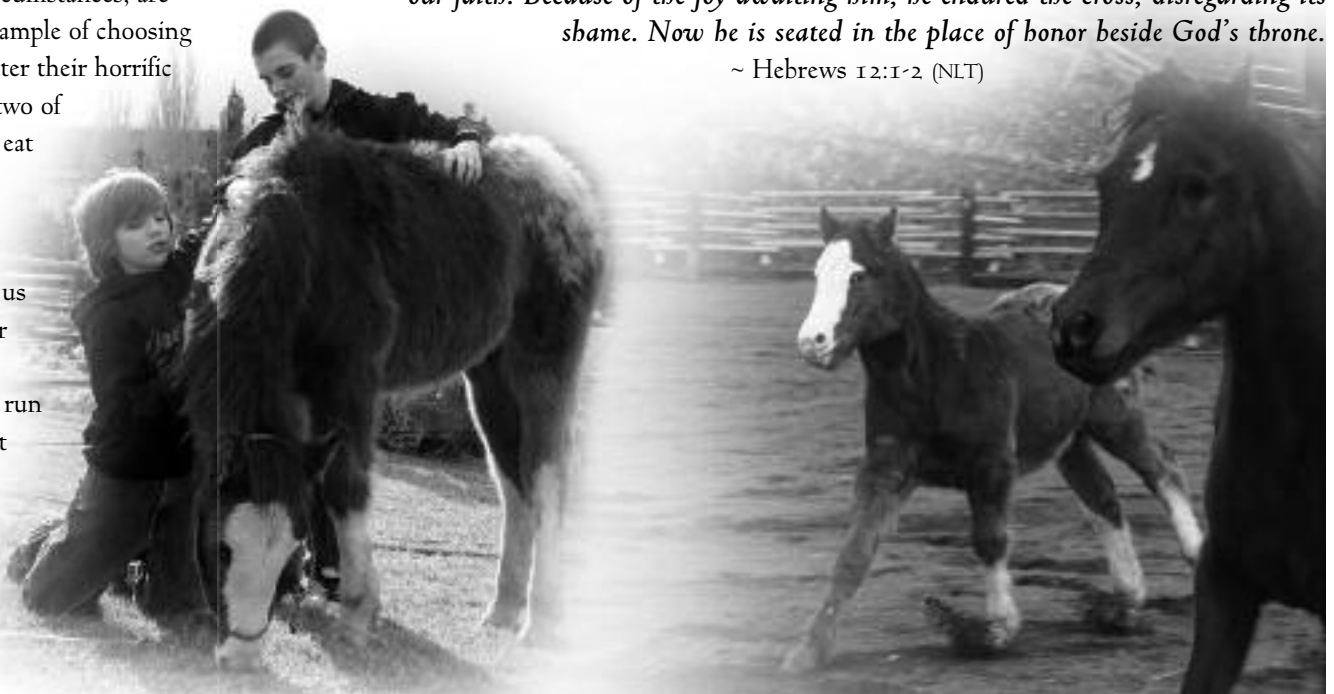
## HERO & TEMPLETON

BY KELSIE PATKA

As the winter months have passed, it has been a delight to watch Hero and Templeton build a friendship. These two horses, who have overcome extremely difficult circumstances, are such an example of choosing joy no matter their horrific past. The two of them play, eat and live together, constantly reminding us to shoulder with one another to run the race set before us.

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.*

~ Hebrews 12:1-2 (NLT)



# Awakening

BY BETH FISCHER

"So, you wanna come with us on our next pack trip?" Kim's mouth curved into a dimpled grin. Her green eyes sparkled under the brim of her hat. I didn't know it then, but my answer to that question would inevitably change my life.

I hesitated. Didn't she know what a green rider I was? I barely knew how to saddle a horse—let alone ride one. Kim's gaze held steady, and I heard my mouth speak before my brain could stop it, "Sure! I'd love to!"

My connection with Crystal Peaks came while filming their video a few years ago. To my delight, the Lord continued to grow my relationships with many who worked at the ranch. The awakening desire to be joined to this place in a deeper way was galvanized the moment Kim asked me to go on their annual pack trip.

This awakening was only the beginning.

At the trailhead, we packed all our gear and supplies into panniers. I was introduced to by my packing buddy, a gentle gelding named Lightfoot. Though still uncertain of what I was getting myself into, I couldn't disregard the peace I felt—peace from the Lord. As though stepping into a world I somehow already knew, I was transported back into my childhood, giggles and all.

Leading our fully packed horses, we hiked into the wilderness. Breathtaking doesn't even begin to describe the beauty we saw. The South Sister towered beside us, jutting more than 10,000 feet straight into Heaven. This beautiful mountain lay dressed in all the fall glory she could muster. Moving like a multicolored thread, our little caravan wove a single file strand

through hills, lush meadows, towering forests and lava rock highlands. After seven gorgeous miles, we came to our campsite. It was a unique peninsula of land hugged between two creeks. A large stand of lodgepole pine welcomed us. Like open-armed friends, they reached toward us with mighty outstretched branches.

It felt like home.

Once we settled in, time generously slowed. Every moment became more precious than the last. In the days that followed, I bonded with my beloved friends. Together,

we explored, hiked, rode, laughed, ate good food, and told stories around campfires. Through all of our adventures, a single moment impacted my life more than the rest. It sparked within my heart a flame of clarity, release and utter joy.

One morning, as we readied our horses to ride, I silently struggled with my inability to do what others seemed to do so easily: saddle a horse. Unexpectedly, my insecurity became a foothold for many old, secret doubts. The sense that I was a burden, a weight to others, crept in. Suddenly, I found myself questioning why I was even on the pack trip to begin with.

My heart broke. *How sad that in a time of reflection and beauty, I was so utterly derailed by a lie that sent me reeling backward to a place of doubt and fear.* My deep, personal struggle with rejection and failure bullied its way forward into my mind. In an awkward attempt to hide my rising emotions, I reached out to gently run my fingers along Lightfoot's soft nose.

The moment my hand touched his expressive Arabian face, my eyes instantly filled with tears. Surprised by the emotional ambush, I quickly withdrew my hand. Staring at Lightfoot, I grappled with what had just happened. Holding back my tears, I curiously reached out to touch his unassuming face once more.

Returning my gaze, his soft brown eyes held nothing but love. Again, my eyes flooded with emotion. At once, the picture became clear. I was a full-grown woman, standing before a small gray gelding,



BETH, JENNA & KELSIE



un-rejected and loved. He didn't know my story, the struggles I had faced or the fears I was pushing down. All he knew was the girl in front of him needed a reminder of something forgotten—something wonderful—something powerful.

Lightfoot became the four-legged example of a greater truth. The Lord knows me, He receives me and He loves me... *just as I am.*

Realization flashed through my soul like a bolt of lightning. This is the impact of Crystal Peaks. This is the symbol of hope it offers for damaged souls to know the love of God. My gelding was a rescued horse with a damaged past of his own. He, too, had known great rejection. The fact that I was so easily received by him gave me hope. Deep within, I experienced something I hadn't felt in a while—a twinge of true healing.

Throughout the rest of that magnificent day, Lightfoot continued to reveal his acceptance of me. I felt safe in his presence, and I grew more comfortable on him and confident in my fledgling skills as a rider.



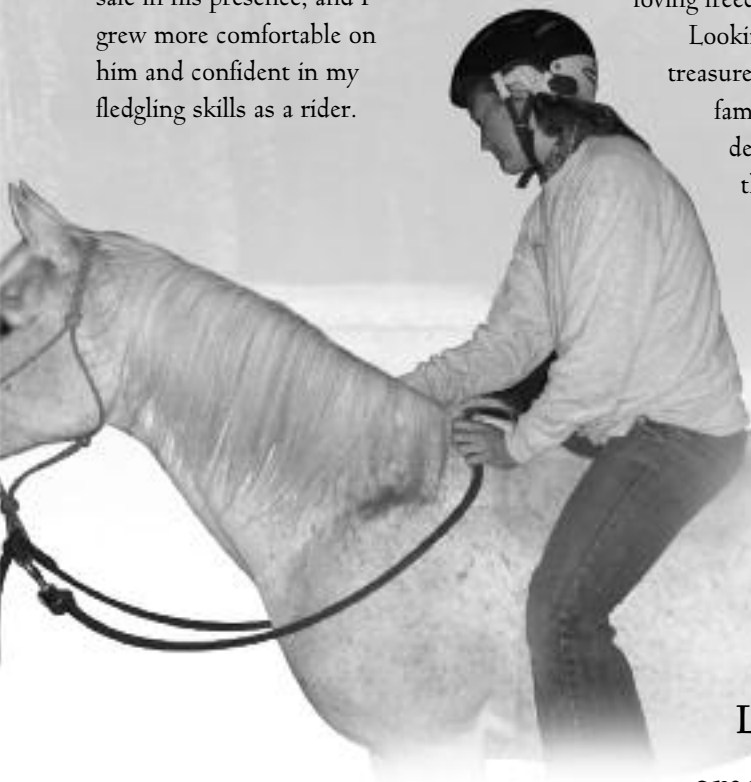
Instinctively, he encouraged me to let go of fears as we cantered across meadows, jumped creeks and hiked steep, narrow trails. Upon my white steed, the unhindered little girl inside my heart threw her hands up to the sky and yelled for joy! On his back I could feel the loving freedom of the Lord.

Looking over my shoulder at that treasured time with my new ranch family and silvery friend, I'm deeply grateful. It's amazing the way God orchestrates our lives. I went on the pack trip believing that Crystal Peaks was special.

But, it wasn't until my awakening with Lightfoot and the Lord that I realized the full impact this ministry has.

Shortly after my wilderness experience, I was invited to consider joining the ranch as a staff member. With no doubt this ranch is where I'm meant to be; I've humbly accepted the offer. For the next season of my life, I feel grateful to be on staff at Crystal Peaks. To join their commitment to serve broken children and horses is the noblest thing I could do.

I anticipate my time at the ranch with great hope, admiration and love. Not so secretly, I also look forward to seeing my Arabian friend each day, my sweet, endearing, Lightfoot. God is so good. He's allowed me to experience the adventure of a lifetime. Through my wilderness journey, He took time to cradle me in His arms, heal me and strengthen me through a simple awakening... with a horse.



Lightfoot became the four-legged example of a greater truth. The Lord knows me, He receives me and He loves me... *just as I am.*

# LOOKING FORWARD

BY TROY MEEDER

In order for us to look forward with clarity, we must begin by looking back.

From the very beginning, the core of Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch has been to create a place

for horses, children and families to find healing, hope and freedom. Over the past 15 years, our foundational principles, the pillars that have given us focus and purpose, have remained the same.

*Rescue the Equine, Mentor the Child, Hope for the Family and Empower the Ministry.*

What began in 1995 as a simple rescue facility for two desperate horses has grown into a pioneering ministry with global influence. Through our Information Clinics, the outreach of Crystal Peaks has gone nationwide and beyond, into seven foreign countries. With this exciting growth comes responsibility and progressive planning.

For years, we've been very aware of the limits of our current nine-acre facility. With much love and determination, we have pushed against our borders until bursting. The size of our property has now become the fulcrum by which we balance our ability to further grow the ministry.

The limitations of our facility have challenged each of the four cornerstones that support the mission of Crystal Peaks. Rescue the Equine has been limited to the maximum of our current 30 horses. With an annual increase in children, we are consistently placing kids on a waiting list for our Mentor the



Child riding program. Some of these little ones wait as long as six weeks for a session. Hope for the Family as well as Empower the Ministry have surged nearly

beyond imagination. Our need to expand these programs has been met with substantial resistance due to facility size.

Although we would never leave our beloved ranch, we have certainly outgrown it. Of all the obstacles to challenge our ministry... this is a good one.

Recently, a latent solution has revealed itself. Just across the street lies a potential answer, a property called Three Peaks Ranch. Once a 1940s dairy farm, it has been transformed over the years into a beautiful horse property. The 63-acre ranch comes with 32 acres of irrigation, a 25-acre hay field, a barn big enough to hold 500 people, an indoor arena for kids to play in, hay storage, a swimming pond, several workshops, and a home. This potential expansion has come up for sale.

Within this new season of looking forward, we ask you to please join us in prayer as we carefully consider the possibility of pursuing this opportunity. Rest assured, friends, that conservative stewardship has been—and always will be—a foundational principle that governs our planning. In no way will we ever risk what God is doing on 9 acres, simply to add 63 more. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Troy Meeder at: [tmeeder@cpyr.org](mailto:tmeeder@cpyr.org)

Again, thank you for keeping us in your prayer.

# 2010 RANCH EVENTS

*If you're planning a family vacation or traveling in Oregon this next year, we'd love to have you stop by and say hello! Here are a few different ways that you and your family can be involved:*

## Tours

Before your visit, please give our office a call at 541-330-0123 for our tour schedule.

## Ranch Fellowship

Our twice-monthly Ranch Fellowships are a beloved combination of sharing a meal, worship and an encouraging message. We cherish these wholesome evenings and would love to invite you and your family to join us as we come together to be refilled, refreshed and restored. Please check our website calendar for dates.

## Information Clinics

May 19-22 & June 2-5

Since 2005, Crystal Peaks has hosted two Information Clinics a year. These events are designed to assist others who are passionate to start a similar ranch or ministry. Each four-day clinic is a comprehensive, step-by-step experience intended to assist participants in creating a strong foundation upon which to build their own ministry.

There is still opportunity to register for our 2010 clinics. For more information and registration, please visit our website.

## Round-up

Round-Up Thursdays are a legendary ranch tradition of hilarious laughter and play. There's no better place to experience summer fun than coming to the ranch on a Thursday afternoon! Bring the entire family (and maybe a change of clothes) to engage in a thematic event of outrageous games that often include water and food.

Starting Thursday, June 24, and running through Thursday, August 26, (with the exceptions of July 29 & August 12). Round-Up begins at 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

## Hoe-Down

Saturday, July 31, 4 - 9 p.m.

Don't miss our annual old-fashioned Hoe-Down. This Wild West event encourages all relatives and kin to arrive at the ranch dressed in their finest hillbilly attire. Come join our clan in an evening of crazy family games, western contra dancing, BBQ, worship, a simple message and ice cream sundaes. We hope to see ya'll in July!

*Yes! I would like to shoulder with Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch to support children, horses and families in need.*

## Please use my donation for:

- ☐ Where it is needed most
- ☐ Rescue the Equine
- ☐ Mentor the Child
- ☐ Hope for the Family
- ☐ Empower the Ministry
- ☐ Potential Property Expansion
- ☐ Endowment Fund

## Payment Method:

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

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

You can also make your donation at [www.crystalpeaksyouthranch.org](http://www.crystalpeaksyouthranch.org) with your credit card or PayPal account.

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## Please make my donation a gift

☐ In honor of:

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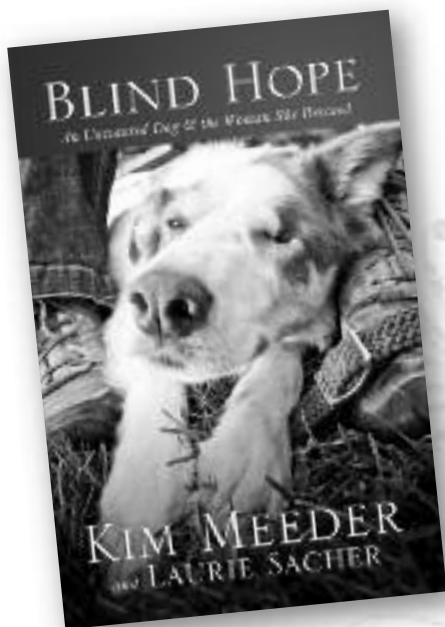
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BOOK #3 is almost here:

# BLIND HOPE

*An unwanted dog & the woman she rescued*

An inspiring true story told through the engaging voice of Kim Meeder, *Blind Hope* reveals poignant life lessons Laurie experienced from her ailing, yet courageous, canine friend. Reaching out to save a dog in need, Laurie, a Crystal Peaks staff member, soon realized that the dog was saving her.

Despite the blindness of her dog—and her own heart—Laurie uncovered what she really needed most: authentic love, unconditional trust, and true acceptance—faults and all.

Laurie and her dog, Mia, both learned to follow the lead of a master they couldn't see. In the process, Laurie discovered the transforming power of God's selfless love even for imperfect and selfish people—and she experienced a greater love than she has ever known.

## How YOU can take THE MESSAGE OF HOPE FURTHER

The release date is scheduled for July 10. You can help take the message of hope further by pre-ordering your books and viewing the promotional video on our website: [www.crystalpeaksyouthranch.org/blindhope](http://www.crystalpeaksyouthranch.org/blindhope). Pre-ordering books for personal use or gifts drives the print run higher, which compels national retailers to carry books they might not previously consider. The end result is that the hope of Jesus Christ is shared on a much broader scale.

Thank you for shouldering with us in this unique opportunity.

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