

MERRY CHRISTMAS

AROUND



the

FIRE

Winter 2020

RESCUE the Equine



MENTOR

the Child



HOPE

for the Family



EMPOWER

the Ministry

## LETTING GO OF OUR GOOD FOR HIS BEST

By Stephanie Voth

Every life has seasons where we look back and see the goodness of God. There are also times where we look back and aren't sure what God intended difficult experiences for . . . yet. Even though 2020 turned out drastically different than we'd originally planned, through every turn, it was also a year I felt God moving powerfully within.

As the Program Director at Crystal Peaks, I have the privilege of leading our team to pray over and select interns that come to the Ranch. Our interns shoulder with the staff for a minimum of three months and can stay as long as an entire eight month season. These interns are treated as honorary staff members because they endure rigorous training to lead one-on-one mentor sessions. They're also given opportunities to learn as much as they can about this multi-faceted ministry; including horsemanship, herd care, programming, finance, building, construction, gardening, orchard care and most importantly, how to share the love of Jesus to all who walk up the driveway.

In March, we began preparing our hearts and facilities for the arrival of our interns. This time of year signifies the beginning of a new chapter, where we get to see the Ranch come to life. The grass turns green and the aroma of flowers fill the air. The property itself blooms with expectation of all the Lord has in store. It's an exciting time of getting to know distinct people and experiencing new opportunities to share the Gospel.

*Continued on page 2*



*"Great is our Lord and mighty in power;  
his understanding has no limits."*

Psalm 147:5

*Photo credit: Katie Guerrero*



The Lord brought six interns to the Ranch this year. Each of these chosen women arrived with unique life lessons and experiences. They also came with hopes and dreams for what God would do with their call to this ministry. We welcomed them to our annual Intern Orientation. We lovingly refer to this time as “drinking from a fire hydrant” due to the massive volume of training and information they receive in such a short time.

We had been running hard for the first three days of General Orientation, when I received a call from Troy. His message fell like a stone . . . we had to send home our volunteers, staff, interns . . . *everyone*.

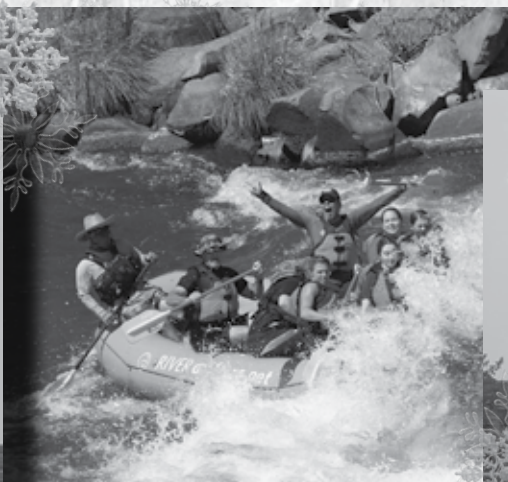
To obey state mandates that limit the spread of Coronavirus, our Board of Directors made the difficult decision to

Over the next three weeks, the Ranch continued to remain closed with staff working remotely from their homes. Our leadership team labored to come up with a new plan to reopen the Ranch for employees, while our beloved interns had to patiently wait off-site. As the Program Director—and the one responsible for these individuals—I felt the seriousness of all the decisions that needed to be made. I pondered, “What if we aren’t able to open the Ranch to visitors?” and “What if the interns moved across the country—and the world—for nothing?”

Through the waiting, each of these young women *chose* to press into God’s original calling on their lives. Their prior questions transformed

After more than a month of strict quarantine, the staff and interns were finally able to gather back at the Ranch. Obeying the social distance mandate of being 6 feet apart, we were still thrilled to connect. Ideas flowed through the following round table discussion of what God laid on our hearts during quarantine.

I felt the sovereignty of the Lord moving in our midst as we continued asking Him to show us the way. Our dialogue revealed how we sensed this ‘pause’ in a typical ministry season could be God urging us to serve in a different capacity. Immediately, we organized a “Drive-Through Horse-ing” event where our local kids and families were able to safely visit Crystal Peaks. By staying in their vehicles and driving a predetermined



*Photo credit: Kim Meeder*

close the gates to the Ranch for the first time in 25 years. In this unprecedented season, we didn’t know when the gates would open again—or if they would at all. We didn’t know what the Lord was preparing, but we trusted Him to show us the way. *“In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.”* (Proverbs 16:9, NIV)

As quickly as we welcomed the interns into the Ranch family—we ushered them back to their host homes—to wait until we could come up with an approved plan to move forward. “Alright, Lord. What do You want this season to be?” I wondered.

Returning to their temporary housing, each intern grappled with weighty questions: “Lord, did You really ask me to come? Did I hear You clearly? What do You want me to do now?”

into something like, “Okay, Lord, I’m certain You asked me here. Now, what?” Following the only One who knows the way, they embodied Kim’s continual exhortation to Pray—Listen—Do.

When He answered, they responded.

Repeatedly, the interns came up with ideas to serve our kids and families while respectfully embracing new social distancing requirements.

Only the Lord knew how this year would turn out. *“Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limits.”* (Psalm 147:5, NIV). From the beginning of time, God knew this season would be unlike any other in Ranch history. He chose this handful of women to come alongside our established team and become exactly what we needed to jump creatively into *His* best plan.

route through the Ranch properties, each car load was tasked to fill out a scavenger hunt list of goofy items they would see on their tour. Around every bend and turn our visitors were greeted by our jubilant, crazy-dressed staff and wildly painted four-legged friends. We saw over 60 families in a single afternoon. Because of our usual rigorous programming schedule, this event wouldn’t have been possible during a “normal” year.

In addition, within this unique season, no one could have foreseen the massive devastation the wildfires would bring to our area. Filling the air with choking smoke—for weeks—raging wildfires tore across the countryside.

Our staff and intern teams provided support to those fighting the fires and the evacuated families.



**“Now, I realize I don’t need more comforts,  
I only need more of Him: His holiness and grace,  
His presence and leadership in my life.”**

Together we delivered more than three tons of hay to help feed displaced livestock and rescued horses. We also made gift baskets full of food, water and homemade zucchini bread, baked fresh from the squash grown in our Ranch garden. These were delivered to first responders, firefighters and police officers across Central Oregon.

We tucked within our homemade goodie baskets over 300 personalized thank-you notes and letters of encouragement which were hand-delivered to fire stations, police departments and the emergency fire camp near the Ranch. This hasty establishment housed hundreds of out-of-state firefighters. These brave men and women came to aid local authorities in containing the rampant destruction created by the fires. It was a powerful opportunity to love them towards the hope of Jesus.

Looking back on this season, we started out as if we were on autopilot, planning to serve in the way Crystal Peaks has for years. Instead, through unprecedented circumstances, God gave us the opportunity to *choose* a renewed sense of dependency on Him . . . for *everything*.

None of these simple acts of love were accomplished because of our strength or human plans. ALL these acts of love were accomplished because of how the Holy Spirit moved *despite* our plans.

We need Him every day, in every decision we face.

This year, each new step into the unknown pushed our team out of our comfort zones. Each new step made us think outside the box. And each new step gave us the opportunity to *choose* to press into the Lord’s desires. By moving one faithful foot in front of the other, God allowed us to deliver His love to the hurting and lost in our midst.

This experience reminded me of John 8:12, where Jesus said, *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”* Our hope is not found in our routines or comfort. Above all else, our hope is found in following Jesus.

As we continue walking out the rest of this unusual year, my prayer is that we would learn to submit each idea to the Lord and choose His *best* plans over our *good* plans.

I’ve heard it said that in the rush

to “get back to normal,” we should use seasons of waiting to consider which parts of “normal” are worth rushing back to. This reflection is an astounding opportunity to release the things in our lives that block us from fully submitting our plans to the Lord.

*“I instruct you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble. Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways.”* (Proverbs 4:11, 18-19, 23, 25-26, NIV)

If we’re honest, many of us have not been “guarding our hearts.” Busyness has become an excuse to not connect with God each morning. For some, comforting routines have inhibited the ability to see their need for Jesus. While still others feel the weight of the world pressing in and are lured into choosing the distraction of social media, television and other mind-numbing methods of entertainment.

Friends, I urge each of us to consider what diversions have been calling our hearts to run away from the freedom to fully follow Christ? Consider what parts of ‘normal’ you once had . . . that have now been stripped away? Is that old ‘normal’ ushering you into His throne room of grace—or—away from it?

In this challenging season, the Lord used six interns and a great deal of prayer to reveal how I had been living life comfortably—instead of living life *fully* submitted to Him.

Now, I realize I don’t need more comforts, I only need more of Him: His holiness and grace, His presence and leadership in my life. No matter the circumstances, this always leads to His best.



*Photo credit: Deirdre Gomez*



# Hold On

BY KIM MEEDER

For years, I’ve signed books with the encouragement to, “Hold on tight to Jesus—He is *always* holding on tight to you.” I had no idea how this simple phrase would become the figurehead of an entire season.

The year 2020 started like many previous others. Several of the staff and I sensed the Lord urging us to fast and pray. We would begin January second and continue until He let us know we were finished. Our mission was to pray over everything He laid on our hearts concerning the new year before us. God’s Word is true; this simple act of loving obedience has profound and powerful results. (2 Chron. 20) In a way that’s difficult to describe, prayer and fasting invites the supernatural authority of Heaven into our natural circumstances, (Matt. 17:21) a very good thing, no matter what we face.

After a while, we sensed our appointed time was coming to a close. Sarah and I made the decision to complete this hallowed assignment in Bandon, our favorite place on the Oregon Coast. On the last morning of our fast we chose to go to the beach so we could worship and pray. We knew it was a king tide with a swell three times larger than normal. The waves would be spectacular. In this awesome place, we wanted to experience His authority, His truth, His presence.

Once we stepped out of the truck, the power of the *sound* coming over the dunes was nearly enough to knock us to our knees. Psalm 96 proclaims how all creation shouts His glory, and we could not wait to join into the magnificent chorus. We climbed the familiar trail up toward the crest of the sand dune. What greeted us was unlike anything we’d ever experienced before.

*Photo credit: Kim Meeder*

**“DON’T BE AFRAID, FOR I AM WITH YOU.  
DON’T BE DISCOURAGED, FOR I AM YOUR GOD.  
I WILL STRENGTHEN YOU AND HELP YOU.  
I WILL HOLD YOU UP  
WITH MY VICTORIOUS RIGHT HAND.”  
ISAIAH 41:10 (NLT)**

The normally high, rounded dune was completely cut in half by the force of the attacking waves. The ferociously high water had eaten much of the way through the sandy mound and the result was shocking. Instead of looking down the regular, gently descending trail to the beach, we stood on top of a sheer cliff of sand. The easy path had been stripped away and all that remained was a twelve-foot vertical wall above the wave swept beach.

The awesome power of the tide had lifted and carried huge logs up against the newly formed ledge. With each mighty surge, the logs acted like crushing battering rams against what seemed to be a helpless wall of sand. The tide was so high that it rushed up the entire beach—while carrying devastating debris—and crashed more than three feet up the former dune. When the waves thundered in, there was no beach, only a violent watery churn of crushing rubble.

Mesmerized, Sarah took a few silent steps toward a new point that had formed. We stood in speechless awe. When the water roared back out to sea, it pulled with it the giant logs, leaving gouged paths of opposing destruction. We watched in slack-jawed wonder as this timeless cycle repeated itself.

The tide surged in and crushed against the wall. Then it rumbled back out, taking all that was not anchored. Nothing on the beach was safe. Everything was subject to the continuous assault of the waves.

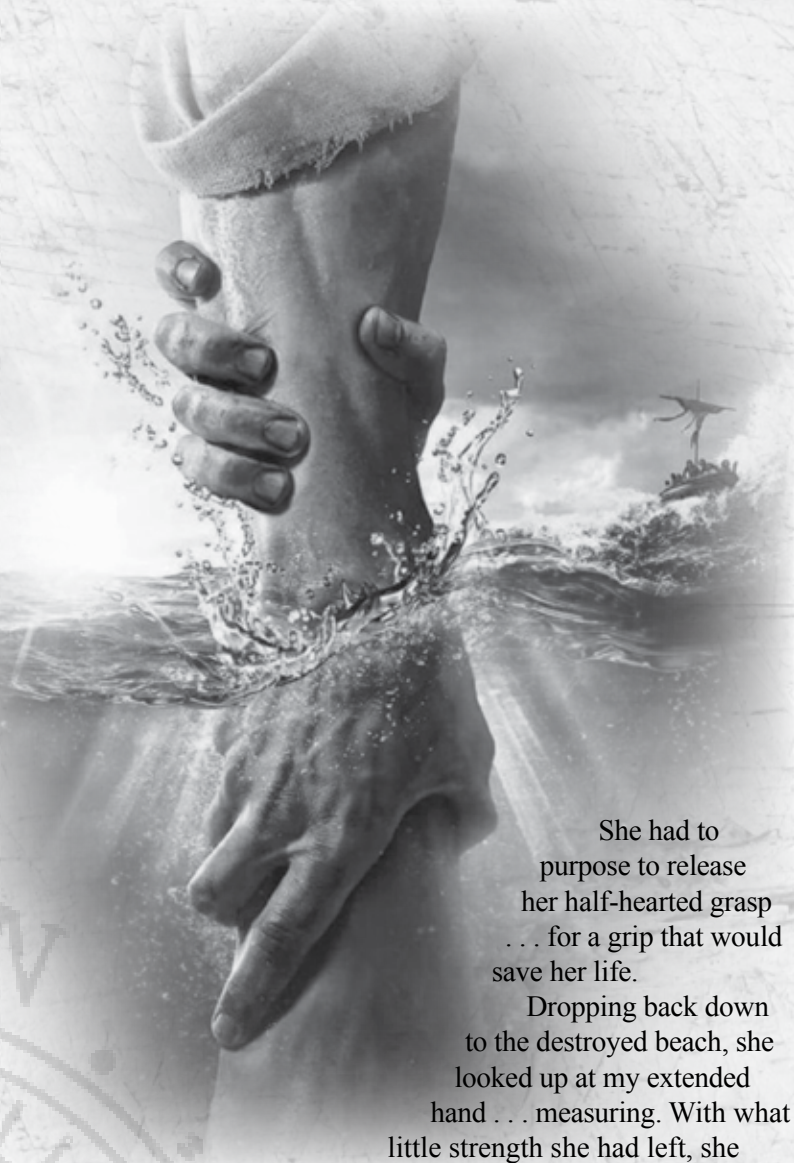
Yet, in-between sets, the ravaged beach emerged. And with it came a terrible beauty, an eerie lull, a false lure, a fake calm. Without seeing the horrific crush, it would be easy to assume this was a “peaceful and safe” place.

Hearing a stifled cry, I turned to see Sarah’s arms jolt up as the sand beneath her feet gave way. She rode the slow-motion avalanche until it became so vertical that she jumped the remaining drop and landed mostly on her feet. In her trademark “no big deal fashion” she looked up at me and laughed, “Well, I didn’t expect *that* to happen.” She walked several steps to look for a less steep slope to climb. I followed her path from the top of the wall, but it was too high for me to reach her. The sandy wall was wet and incapable of supporting her minimal weight. Every incline she tried to scramble up . . . simply crumbled beneath her.

I heard it before I saw it. Another massive wave was rushing up the beach. My fatigued brain couldn’t even form the words—all I could do was point! Sarah turned and looked. Her whimsical expression vanished under the weight of what was coming. Falling to my knees and reaching for her, I yelled, “JUMP!” She did and caught only my fingertips with one hand. With her other hand she reached up, clawing for a hold on the sandy wall. With her arm and legs thrashing to gain purchase, she knocked sand down on top of her head. In her flailing, she turned completely backward and saw the wave roil up beneath her. Massive logs milled and bumped like menacing mortars below her dangling feet.

Her four fingers . . . that was *all* that connected us.

After what felt like ten eternities, the water retreated. Our hasty grip was not enough for complete safety to be secured. Sarah had to choose to let go—to gain a meaningful hold.



She had to purpose to release her half-hearted grasp . . . for a grip that would save her life.

Dropping back down to the destroyed beach, she looked up at my extended hand . . . measuring. With what little strength she had left, she

jumped. This time, our hands locked tightly around the others’ wrists. Her new hold was determined, purposeful, powerful. This grip worked because it included ALL her focus—heart, soul, mind and strength. Sarah held on with an intensity that expressed she *knew* her life depended on it.

Because her new grip was firmly whole-hearted, she was easily pulled up into full refuge.

The fast and pray was finished. We wanted to experience our God’s authority, truth and presence. We did. In that moment, the lesson was so clear that even our sluggish brains could easily apply His straight arrow of truth.

In every life, the crushing waves will come. And when they do . . . we each have a choice to make. We can choose to watch the black tide approach and cry, blame, complain right up until we’re demolished by the unstoppable roil of our circumstances. We can even choose a half-hearted grip—that results in half-hearted freedom. And “half freedom” isn’t freedom at all. We can avalanche more sand on our heads by attempting to “fix” our threatening conditions by flailing with our own strength, logic, experience and emotions. Within this place, many will die in this “terrible beauty, this eerie lull, this false lure, this fake calm.” Fake peace results in fake freedom, which results in spiritual death.

Or, when the terrible waves come, we can choose to *stop flailing*. Each one of us can look up, focus our heart, soul, mind and strength—and GRIP TIGHTLY—to the only One who can save us.

Someone who truly wants their life to be saved—will truly take a life-saving grip.

*“Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. From eternity to eternity I am God. No one can snatch anyone out of my hand. No one can undo what I have done.”* (Isa. 43:1b-3a, 13, NLT)

Friend, no one can hold on tightly for you—but you. Within these challenging times, only you can choose a wholehearted, double fisted, life-saving grip on Jesus’ love—for you.

James 4:8 is true; when we draw near to God, He draws near to us. When we leap toward His continually offered hand of hope—and hold on—NO ONE can undo what *He* has done within us.

It’s easy to determine if we’ve genuinely chosen Him over the threatening waves. How? Because no matter what roils below . . . within our heart . . . *there’s only peace* . . . for we know Who holds us securely.

*“For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end.”* (Isa. 9:6-7a, NLT)

Beloved, this fact remains for all eternity—Jesus Christ came to this world to bring *you* life.

There is no terrible wave in 2020—or any other year on earth—that can change anything that has already happened in Heaven. And the reality of this powerful and precious season we call “Christmas” has not changed. No black wave yesterday, today or tomorrow, can alter the almighty authority of Jesus’ redeeming love for all mankind. Because of this immovable truth, we can hold on tight to the hand of Jesus—grasping with all our heart, soul, mind and strength—His enduring hope, His insurmountable love, His unshakable peace and His indomitable joy.

Amidst this challenging year of crushing waves . . . the choice remains . . . and it is yours alone.

*“Don’t be afraid, for I am with you. Don’t be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.”* (Isaiah 41:10, NLT)

Within this special season of giving and receiving, will you choose to embrace the greatest gift of all? Will you reach for Jesus’ enduring hand of hope that is extended to you? May today be the moment you, “Hold on tight to Jesus—He is *always* holding on tight to you.”



# Walking In His Peace

BY TROY MEEDER

Christmas is a season of celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. He is Emmanuel—*God with us*—born into this world to unite mankind with the love of God. Jesus delivered the values of Heaven to earth and made a way for us, like Adam, to walk again with our Heavenly Father.

This past year, much has challenged our focus to walk in the peace found at the side of our spiritual Dad. Fear gripped millions as Coronavirus spread. Kindness within many cities succumbed to violence. And with restrictions on gathering, those who believe in Christ were unable to fellowship together.

Yet, undeterred from its course, creation has forged on into winter. And woven within its frozen, white cape is carried the sacred herald, the message of Christmas.

Despite the storms around us, the unrelenting love of God continues to reach us through the quiet stillness of the manger. Jesus came to earth because of love—and the outpouring of all that He is cannot be stopped by any darkness we encounter (John 1:5). Evil has no power over *anything* Jesus did—is doing—or will do. The peace of our Lord reigns supreme.

*"All glory to him who alone is God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord. All glory, majesty, power, and authority are his before all time, and in the present, and beyond all time!"* (Jude 25, NLT)

No matter what blackness presses in, His passion for *you* can never be quenched. Through every perfect step, Jesus came to show us the way to the Father. He lived a flawless life and laid that life down as a sacrifice for all mankind, then He rose from the tomb and broke the power of sin for eternity. Now, He sits at the right hand of His Father—where He still has *all glory, majesty, power and authority* before—during—and beyond all time.

*"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."* (Luke 2:14, KJV)

Jesus came to bring glory to God and peace to men. For this reason, a virus is not in control. Violence is not in control. The rules of men are not in control. JESUS is in control—

and He came to bring *peace*—and His unbreakable peace is released through those who choose to walk in it. And *this . . .* is what we celebrate.

As we anticipate a new year and the 26<sup>th</sup> season of Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch, we choose to lean deeper into the peaceful power of His loving presence. When we step into His place of rest in the storm, we can clearly hear His voice for this ministry.

Kim and I are profoundly grateful to you for shouldering with us in this unique journey. Through all the unforeseen challenges of this past year, in part because of your kindness, the Ranch has maintained the livelihood and care of every employee, both two-legged and four-legged. Because of our faithful extended family, we press on in health and provision. Know that your prayers and continual, tangible support have sustained us.

Encouraged by God's peace and His enduring love through each of you, we look forward to what lies ahead. And since we know HE is in control—and He came to bring *peace*—we choose to walk with our God and celebrate all that He has in store.

May His presence rest upon you.

*Merry Christmas.*

*Troy and Kim*







# Hope Rising is almost here!

Kim's first manuscript, *Hope Rising*, was dedicated to Beth Everest, her beloved grandmother. During the writing process, Kim would sit on the edge of "Mimi's" bed and read each chapter to the one who provided her first horse. Few know that the day *Hope Rising* was released—was the same day Beth left this life and embraced the arms of Jesus. Because she was blind, it was always her wish that this simple book would be made into an audio version—read by her granddaughter—so all could hear what the love of Jesus can do in any heart who seeks Him.

January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021 will become that day. After seventeen years, *Hope Rising* will be released in a new Audio Book.



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

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 97703.

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Please make my donation a gift

☐ In honor of:

☐ In memory of:

☐ Please send gift acknowledgement to:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail \_\_\_\_\_





Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch  
19344 Innes Market Road  
Bend, OR 97703  
(541) 330-0123  
[www.crystalpeaksyouthranch.org](http://www.crystalpeaksyouthranch.org)

NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
BEND, OR  
PERMIT NO. 3

## CPYR 2021 CALENDARS ARE NOW AVAILABLE

Dear extended Ranch family, it's our joy to share the essence of what Jesus does here at Crystal Peaks. Captured within this poignant calendar are "God breathed" moments within the lives of our kids, volunteers and staff. Each month features a Ranch photograph paired with children's quotes and encouraging Bible verses.

As our gift to you, we'd like to offer each household one free calendar. We pray the Lord will use it to bless and hearten all who see it. To order a calendar, please go to our website at: [www.cpyr.org](http://www.cpyr.org) and click "Ranch Life," on our home page. Or, mail your request to: Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch, 19344 Innes Market Road, Bend, Oregon 97703.

If you wish, additional calendars can also be ordered. Donations are greatly appreciated to help offset the \$8 production cost. All international orders outside the US/Canada will be required to pay a \$5 shipping fee.

Many thanks to each of you—near and abroad—for shouldering with us in this ministry of hope.

