



# AROUND *the* FIRE

SPRING 2012

RESCUE *the Equine* ★ MENTOR *the Child* ★ HOPE *for the Family* ★ EMPOWER *the Ministry*

## A River, Not a Lake

BY KIM MEEDER

A friend of mine recently shared something she learned through a personal Bible study. She related the unique placement of the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. Less than one hundred miles apart, both are located in the arid region of the Jordan Rift Valley and both are far below sea level.

Yet, their similarities end there.

One body of water teams with life and activity, and the other is completely dead. The reason? Both seas have an inflow of fresh water, but only one has an *outflow*. Only one pours back out from the wealth that has been poured within. Only one streams out its abundance in the form of a river. In doing so, the Sea of Galilee flourishes with fish, wildlife and humanity. While the Dead Sea, with no outlet, is toxic, choking out life with an overabundance of salt and minerals.

Life is full of choices. What's happening to the abundance poured into your life?

The truth of Jesus repeated in Acts 20:35 is clear, "It is better to give than receive." Once we've received the life-saving grace of our Lord, we get to choose if we're going to live this life like a river or a lake. One stores, the other pours. One risks inactive toxicity, even death, and one rushes to deliver life, carrying hope to every place it can reach.

Daily, we each get to choose if we'll live like a lake by keeping our gifts: "If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it" (Luke 9:24a). Or, we can choose to live like a river by giving our wealth to those around us in hardship: "But if you give up your life for Me, you will find true life" (Luke 9:24b). Joy really is found in giving what we have to those who need hope. I saw this simple truth in action years ago when I watched a full-grown filly get down on her knees and stretch under a fence to reach a clump of grass. Once she'd retrieved the glorious treat, she rose back to her feet and walked over to her aged, arthritic mother to share her prize with the one she loved.

*"If you give, you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full measure pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over. Whatever measure you use in giving—large or small—it will be used to measure what is given back to you"* (Luke 6:38).

If God's creation so clearly examples this truth, shouldn't we as well? Are we living like a lake or a river? Which are you? Which am I? Are we hoarding the gifts freely poured into our lives, or, are we carrying the hope of Christ to those in need around us?

Offering "Hope for the Family" is one of the missions of Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch. This last year it was our great joy to allow the gifts you poured into this ranch—to flow right on through to the families in our midst who needed help. Because of your selfless generosity and the abundance of God, the floodgates were opened wider than ever and the life-giving hope and provision of Jesus poured out like a river to many.

Thank you, dear family, for sharing with us. Together, like a rush of individual tributaries, you've united through this place. Now, the Lord is releasing this extraordinary confluence as part of His beautiful plan. And from His perspective, I'm pretty sure... it looks just like a river.



# AN UNEXPECTED EMBRACE

BY AMY NAEGLI

Jeff, a leader at Crystal Peaks, caught a glimpse of Keegan and I walking up the driveway toward the ranch. Leaping largely into our view he shouted, "C'mon boy, run, run, hustle!" Keegan giggled with joy as he made his best effort to dig in deep and run up the whole length of the gravel hill to where his mentor stood. A great big bear hug was his reward.

"So what do you want to do Keeg? Do you want to throw the football around, maybe build something, or... what about riding today?" Jeff asked.

Without skipping a beat, Keegan looked up at Jeff with serious blue eyes and said, "I want to ride."

I almost fell over with shock. "What? Did you just say you want to ride?" I asked with eyes the size of silver dollars. This unexpected change of heart was coming from a boy who had repeatedly said that he *never* wanted to ride the horses, even though he'd grown up visiting Grandma and Papi's horse ranch located across the street from CPYR.

Keegan has been around horses all of his life. He's always thought they were nice enough

to let nibble a carrot from his hands or to throw a flake of hay to; but to actually *ride* a horse was too much of a hurdle of fear to overcome.

What a difference a summer at the ranch has made. Correction, what a difference our **Sovereign God** has made.

Keegan and I moved to Bend in June of 2011. Our relocation was not for happy reasons. I was and am extremely grateful for God's provision for us, but was devastated by the necessity of the move. Keegan's dad and I were getting divorced, and with Keegan's autism, no matter how mild, change tends to make his world very topsy-turvy. Not to say that divorce is ever

easy for any child, any man, any woman or any family. It's certainly not the original plan for God's people.

No one wins

when a family is broken, the repercussions are endless.

*But oh, how our God loves us.* Because of Him, I'm learning that when life presents us with heartache we have a choice to either dwell in our pain... or dwell in His healing presence.



I can still remember the overwhelming love I felt when we drove around the final curve on Innes Market Road, before reaching my parents house. Engulfing our vision was a gate decorated with colorful balloons and hand-painted paper plates spelling out, "Welcome Home Amy and Keegan." My sweet family had done this for us. Stopping at the gate—I sat—unable to drive the last one hundred feet to the house. Tears of anguish mixed with extreme gratitude spilled over my cheeks. The full realization that this was our new home consumed me.

After driving over 3,000 miles, one would think that I would've surrendered to this truth long ago. However, I didn't want it to be true. I didn't want my marriage to end. I didn't want to be without my beloved husband, nor my son without his cherished daddy. I felt like I was caught in the wash beneath a raging waterfall, with no rescue in sight.

Now, many months later, my timid, sensitive, insecure, scared-of-his-own-shadow little boy is conquering his fears left and right. He knows his heart is safe. He knows that he belongs and that he is loved without condition at the ranch. I did not anticipate that the Lord would provide a team of such Godly men to embrace my son the way the guys at CPYR have.

These male leaders move and groove at Keegan's pace, allowing him to work through his fears, in God's timing. In the process, they've given him the





foundational “manly-man” stuff that moms just can’t fake. I’ve even overheard one of the guys seamlessly change his approach with Keegan the moment he realized that his usual manner with boys was not best for my son.

Keegan has no favorites because each leader has specific strengths and unique character traits. God has appointed these men, in the absence of my husband, to fill the void by becoming our “Hope for the Family.” My son is experiencing a full spectrum of how creative our God is, as He repurposes our tattered lives into a beautiful patchwork design of His perfect plan.

After his ride that day with Jeff, I spotted Keegan playing wildly with Matthew, his similarly autistic friend. Matthew and his family are blessed additions to this extended family of ours.

I made my way over to the boys and as I

got closer, I looked around. It was the end of the day. There was a giggling remnant of SAGE girls crocheting colorful projects, illuminated by the last rich rays of the sun. I watched as the moms milled around chatting with staff. Several cradled white cups, brimming with hot chocolate, their hearty laughter taking the chill off the early autumn air.

I silently spoke to my Savior, “Jesus, You are so good to me.”

In Psalms 68:5-6, King David is recorded praising God in a song that magnifies the importance of family. What a powerful comfort it is to cling to the promise that our Abba God is a “*Father to the fatherless, a defender of the widow...who places the lonely in families.*” Even though the enemy has tried to make severe brokenness and gut-wrenching pain become the consuming focus of our life,

God has gently turned our eyes away from destruction, toward His superior plan. God has intervened in our situation and brought us home to Central Oregon, to Grandma and Papi’s, to the ranch and to our new extended family.

While going through life’s most painful storms, few expect to feel such a rich indwelling of the Father’s love. Once we are in the midst of the tempest, it’s easy to take our eyes off our Savior’s face and to focus only on the rise and fall of our waves of sorrow. When we cry out to the Anchor of our soul, to the One that keeps us truly safe, we can experience a surprising harbor, a place we can go, a calm in the storm... **His unexpected embrace.**



## AN UNEXPECTED EMBRACE, *Continued*

Today, because of God’s unexpected embrace, I have a new depth of understanding that *nothing* is too big for our God; including the tragedy of divorce, nor the prison of autism. Our King has not changed over time; He is *still* the Lord of redemption, healing and miracles.

When Keegan and I moved to Bend, the school district had to do a brand new round of testing for the state of Oregon to authenticate his autism for appropriate assistance and funding. Going into the meeting, I realized my sleep-deprived and defeated state and was silently praying to God, “*Give me strength to stand for my son and get him what he needs. Lord, I am so tired and I know my tears are close to the surface. Please Jesus, be my Husband today.*”

Once inside the meeting, I noticed along with his usual education team, the principal and the district autism specialist were also present. What started out as a typical special education meeting—by God’s appointment—resulted in a very unusual conclusion.

When the autism specialist started to cover all the reasons that Keegan normally would meet the criteria for autism, she began by declaring, “He doesn’t qualify.” After going through all the points, she turned to look at me squarely, “Amy, I don’t know how else to tell you this other than... **Keegan is no longer autistic!**”

The Lord heard my prayers to keep Keegan safe through this divorce. Not only has God continued to answer *this* prayer, He lovingly speaks truths within my heart that keep crushing the lies of the enemy. Deep within, I hear Him reminding me, “*My daughter, don’t you know how big My love is for you? Let Me show you how great the God you serve really is. Your son is healed.*”

Ephesians 3:18-19 clearly speaks this truth, “And may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love really is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it. Then you will be filled with the fullness of life and the power that comes from God.”





# OFFER HOPE

BY COLLEEN LARSEN

**I**n unique ways, every employee at Crystal Peaks has the opportunity to interact with the children and families who come to the ranch. Most of the leaders get to know the parents through the kids when they come out for riding sessions. I feel blessed to meet them in the reverse order—most often getting to know the parents first.

Part of my job is to develop and oversee relationships with other local non-profits. If these organizations are working with a child or a family and believe they might benefit from spending time at the ranch, I schedule them to come out for a tour. During this time, I introduce them to our horses and share what we do. I value this chance to see a family, to watch their interactions and to learn from both the children and the parents...it is a precious moment for me.

This fall Glen Gives, a local non-profit, contacted the ranch with an extended hand: "Are there families your ranch serves who need help...a 'hand up?'" Glen Gives is comprised of a group of neighbors who've combined their efforts to help other families in distress. One hundred percent of the money they raise each year is disbursed to meet the needs of the families who apply for their help. Glen Gives' desire is to support those who are making a sincere effort to improve their situations but who may benefit from additional assistance because of exceptionally difficult circumstances.

So, when they called us with this question, our immediate answer was "Yes!" My mind began to swim with the faces of families I knew who needed a "hand up." I was eager to see what God would do.

I cherished the process of selecting families, contacting each one about this opportunity and helping them fill out the applications. I was humbled by the honesty and candor of each family as I approached them. I repeatedly heard the question, "Isn't there another family at the ranch who needs this more?" I assured them that we felt like God had brought their specific needs to our attention. We believed that each family would steward any gift well.

After much prayer, God used this opportunity to meet needs for eight ranch families. In December, I

had the honor of handing out each gift from Glen Gives. The support to these families totaled approximately \$4,000!

We at Crystal Peaks are so deeply thankful to everyone at Glen Gives for reaching out to us and for choosing to bless our families. The magnitude of their gift continues to bless us! The families are so grateful too. Below, we've included a thank-you note written by one of the families to Glen Gives. They chose to share this message with us, and we choose to share it with you. It's evident through this mother's words that the Lord has used this organization in unexpected ways... to offer hope.

## *To all at Glen Gives:*

Thank you so much for entrusting your generosity to my family! If there was a way to send a hug through the mail, please know that is my attempt through this letter! What a blessing you are. I'm eager to see how God continues to use your gift to us and how it will combine with our hard work to keep lifting up our family.

Now, I'm so excited as I look ahead to this next business year! I honestly cannot put into words the wonderful feelings of freedom and possibility in being able to place the order for all of the items essential to furthering my small business. I know that as this personal job grows, so does my ability to provide financially for my family. Further, because of your generosity with the food and gas cards, I know that we're going to be okay during the time it takes to make that growth happen. Wow! I really don't have enough words. All I can say is *thank you*—SO MUCH!

In my application letter, I described how my combined financial position and my physical "complications" made me feel as though I was constantly paddling against the current. I believed that having any of our requests fulfilled would help to change the tides. Please know that is exactly what you've done for us! You've given us a huge push in the direction we needed to go in order for me to be able to support my family and once again be self-sufficient. Please know I will continue to work hard. I will keep making every effort to take care of my family and to make this business work! I will always have my physical limitations, but I feel **so encouraged** and am now ready to "paddle away!"

I believe that someday God will bring us to a place where we'll be able to give a similar blessing to someone else. And I know your gift to us is one big way He will get us there. Again, thank you so much for giving us this incredible opportunity!

*~A thankful Mother*



# Beautiful Flood

BY KIM MEEDER

Judy, my friend and assistant, often says, "When you think God is doing something in your life, He's actually doing a hundred things!" I've come to love this simple statement because of the truth it delivers. I think the prophet Isaiah said nearly the same thing many years ago as he relayed the Word of God: "My thoughts are completely different from yours," says the Lord. 'And My ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts higher than your thoughts... It is the same with My word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it'" (Isaiah 55:8-9, 11).

The greater the need, the greater ways God will answer. At the ranch this last winter season, we saw this truth played out in many tangible ways. As the level of need around us grew, so did God's astounding methods of fulfillment.

The ranch is located near the town of Bend. Within this community is a Columbia outlet, a store for high-end outdoor clothing. Shelly, a generous Columbia employee, decided to give the ranch her "Friends and Family Discount." We quickly realized this was one way God was choosing to meet the needs of some families. Although all items in the store are already on sale, Shelly's professional discount reduced marked prices another thirty percent. For every item, this additional help meant ridiculous savings on high quality winter apparel.

Others heard about the discount and donated funds to help families who were stretched financially to purchase winter clothing. With the combination of these gifts, the ranch staff was able to form into "help teams," each taking a family into town to shop for needed items. Piles of clothing worth thousands of dollars were all purchased for a fraction of its worth. So much so, that soon, the local Columbia staff was joining in the fun by making their



own unique donations!

Altrec, another sporting gear company in our area has also greatly blessed ranch families. Jenna is an Altrec employee who is also a great advocate for the ranch's "Hope for the Family" mission (her picture is on the cover of *Bridge Called Hope*). Due largely to her urging, the company made the decision to donate a large portion of

their returned items to Crystal Peaks this year. Several shipments of gear were brought to the ranch, one totaling more than \$100,000 in value. Once the boots and clothing arrived, the staff rushed to lay out all the items, making them ready to find new homes within our ranch families. Many of those who took apparel home to their own children, also ferried gifts to kids in need beyond the ranch borders.

Once again, we were overwhelmed by God's provision when a quick plea went out for extra yarn. We were seeking materials to teach children and their families how to make gifts of caps and scarves to stay warm during the winter months. In a few weeks, enough yarn arrived to fill EIGHT large trash bags!

The flood of good will continued as gift cards were purchased in quantity at local grocery outlets, department stores and gas stations. Each card was to be given to help support a struggling family buy basic necessities during the Christmas season.

The Lord's answer to those who needed help was so complete that the ranch was deluged with gifts that reached far beyond what we've ever done before.

Truly, God's ways are *not* our ways. We think He's doing one thing, and He's really doing a hundred things. I'm slowly learning to let go of my *own* understanding of how our Lord might answer prayer and to simply get out of His way. By doing so, HIS glory flows within our midst. He is God. He is the One who urges the hearts of men forward. He is a rushing river of life, and when our desires line up with HIS... expect a *beautiful flood*.





BY KIM MEEDER

# CPYR STAFF NIP



**A**round Christmas every year, our beloved extended family has been known to send near busloads of M&M's to Crystal Peaks. Once received, this precious "Vitamin M" is to then be shared with the children and families who frequent the ranch. Yet, somehow within the past winter season this vital gift kept... *vanishing*.

Inquiry amongst the staff came up sorely lacking. When questioned about the missing treasure, there was no shortage of what appeared to be **shock and self-searching expressions**, all in apparent hope of finding an answer, or the antithesis: **hyper-focus** on their momentary tasks at hand. Nevertheless, the M&M's continued to disappear. **SCANDULOUS!**





**I**n an effort to solve the mystery, I resorted to the old adage of "Age and treachery will always triumph over youth and beauty." Treachery not withheld, I set up an ingenious device designed by "Vitamin M" X-Special Forces Operatives to capture the truth. The apparatus was a motion-activated M&M dispensing machine! The clever part of my plan was to place the baited trap at the top of the steps leading into the staff office, right where each member must pass. Without their knowledge, a motion sensor wildlife camera was slyly mounted to same wall, with lens trained on the *STAFF NIP!*

Certainly, you'll be as relieved as I am to know the mystery of the disappearing M&M's has finally been solved (you'll no doubt sleep better tonight too!). Here's what our field research captured...



*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)  
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# 2012 INFORMATION CLINIC AND LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

BY RACHEL SHULTZ



In 2005, Crystal Peaks hosted its first Information Clinic, designed to assist others who are passionate about starting a similar ministry. For the last seven years we have hosted two clinics per season and currently shoulder with more than 200 active Similar Ministries. These new ranches are located in 40 U.S states and 9 foreign countries.

God is truly expanding the work of Crystal Peaks through these Similar Ministries who share our desire to love children and their families toward the hope of God through horses. It's exciting to know there are many others the Lord will call out this year in preparation to serve Him in this unique way.

Due to the growth and needs of our Similar Ministries, this year we've chosen to host only one Information Clinic, which will be held **May 23-26**.

We've reserved June 6-9 for our First Annual Leadership Conference. This forum is designed to further support those who have attended past Clinics and are leading a Similar Ministry that is currently serving their community.

If you've never been to a Clinic at CPYR and feel that God is calling you to become a part of serving families through horses, we encourage you to attend our 2012 Information Clinic.

**For more information or to register, please visit our website [www.cpyr.org](http://www.cpyr.org) or enter the following link into your web browser:**  
**<http://www.crystalpeaksyouthranch.org/OurProgram/Information+Clinics/Default.aspx>**