

HOPE FOR THE FAMILY

AROUND the FIRE

SPRING 2013

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

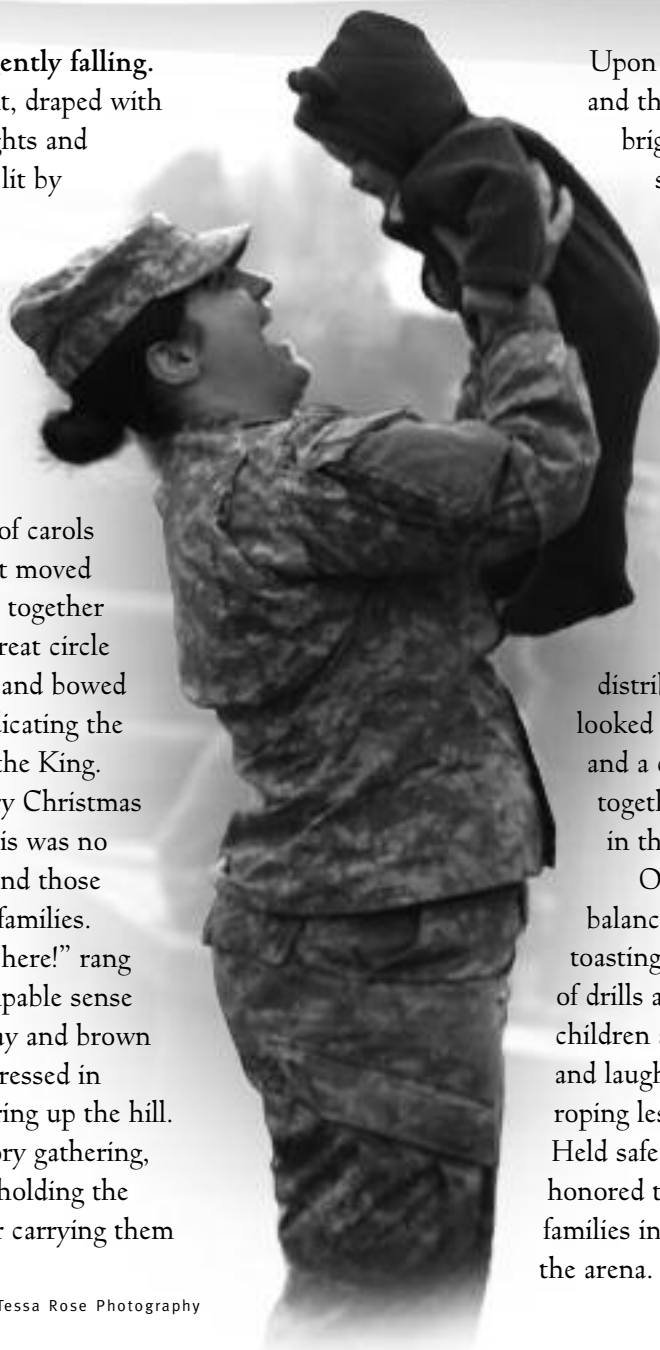
SACRIFICE & HOPE

BY JOSIE GWIN

Crisp snowflakes were gently falling. A warm barn lay in wait, draped with pine garlands, twinkling lights and sparkling tinsel—all softly lit by a crackling fire and flickering candlelight. Wooden tables creaked under the generous weight of food and hot drinks. Cheerfully wrapped gifts tumbled from stacks under the Christmas tree. Soft notes of carols played while hands and feet moved here and there, all working together to finalize every detail. A great circle of volunteers joined hands and bowed in a moment of prayer, dedicating the glory of this day to honor the King. Preparations for an ordinary Christmas gathering? Perhaps, but this was no ordinary Christmas party and those coming were not ordinary families.

“They’re here! They’re here!” rang out. Across the ranch a palpable sense of excitement soared. A gray and brown flood of men and women dressed in military fatigues came pouring up the hill. Attending another obligatory gathering, somber parents were seen holding the hands of their little ones or carrying them in their arms.

Photo: Tessa Rose Photography



Upon seeing the Christmas decorated horses and the glittering lights, the children’s eyes brightened with excitement. As the families squeezed together into the cozy barn, parents’ heads lifted in dawning awareness that this memorable day was created solely for them.

When the barn could hold no more, the commanding officer led all in a moment of prayer. Soon plates were piled high with an abundance of homemade foods. In no time, the cookie decorating tables were filled with little hands spreading frosting and shaking sprinkles on their edible handiwork. Christmas gifts were distributed to eager children as their parents looked on in wonder. Conversations, laughter and a deep sense of community ascended together in a merry dance with the music in the air.

Outside, over a roaring fire, gloved hands balanced sticks topped with marshmallows, toasting golden brown. The boisterous sound of drills and hammers rang out as fathers and children assembled birdhouses together. Cheers and laughter rose from Sandy Pants arena as roping lessons succeeded and occasionally failed. Held safe on her back, a powerful black horse honored the troops by carrying them and their families in countless graceful circles around the arena.

Continued on page 2

FOR OUR MILITARY FAMILIES...

"We always thank God for all of you and pray for you constantly. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." — I Thessalonians 1:2-3, NLT



Continued from the Cover

These *are* no ordinary families.

These are the families that give up so much to keep our country free. Husbands and wives, fathers and mothers routinely travel halfway around the world to serve. They relinquish precious time with their children. Because of their faithfulness, they miss first steps, ballet recitals, baseball games and report cards. Instead of kissing the warm skin of their children's cheeks, they view tiny faces through the barrier of a cold screen. The richness of their child's laughter is compressed through the smallness of a cell phone. They watch from afar as their spouses struggle to keep things together in their absence.

But for one cold day, these courageous military families were together. Purchased by our Savior's birth, genuine hope for the family was celebrated. Each one built memories, wrapped experiences and tucked away hugs and kisses for the long nights to come when they would be apart.

Together they mirror the cost of freedom, so that we too may live under peaceful skies. As these families are called to sacrifice, they reflect our Savior. Jesus Christ paid the ultimate sacrifice to give *each* of us the hope of freedom in Him.

On this single day, the loving heartbeat of our King was shared through the many offerings and hard work of the volunteers who serve at Crystal Peaks. Flowing from the Lord through their open hands, these pieces of hope came together in a beautiful picture framed with His peace and joy.

To read more and view other moving pictures from this event, please visit our new blog. Find the post under our "Hope for the Family" category.



Tessa Rose Photography

GOD WILL HEAL

BY KIM MEEDER

God will strengthen. In Isaiah 41:10 He declares, “Don’t be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.” His capacity to strengthen extends far beyond our ability to fully grasp. He is Jehova Rapha, the God who heals. He does so in His perfect timing and in His perfect way.



Once again, I found myself at Bend Equine Medical Center. While waiting for the paperwork to be processed, I strolled the hospital grounds. That’s when I noticed a splashy colored paint gelding leaning over a paneled corral. He was watching me intently. He stood completely square to my position, ears up and eyes focused. As I stared back at him, he began to bob his head up and down. Everything about his body language declared, “Hey lady, come over here and visit me. I want to know you.” Who could resist such an honest, inquisitive invitation? Especially one offered through a quiet brown eye and a dancing blue eye?

Moving toward him, I smiled, admitting to myself that I was helpless against such undeniable charm. As if extending a hand to shake, his pursed lips reached as far as they could toward me. Contact was made. He wiggled his lip across the back of my hand. To a complete stranger, he offered a kiss of greeting. In moments, I was completely awash in a flood of chestnut and white charm.

Without delay, I learned his story. He was 15 years old and not only a patient at the hospital; he had recently become a resident. His increasing lameness compelled his owner to drive 2 ½ hours from his home to the capable staff at BEMC. His diagnosis was ominous, a severe strain to his left hind suspensory ligament. A full 12 months of “bed rest” would be required for any measure of recovery. His owner, a recently unemployed, single, middle-aged woman, opted for the only course of action she could. Unable to afford his extended care, through tears, she chose to put him down.

The attending doctor, who also noticed his unusual charm, respectfully declined her request. Instead, a consensual choice was made to spare his life by finding him a suitable home where he would have a chance at recovery.

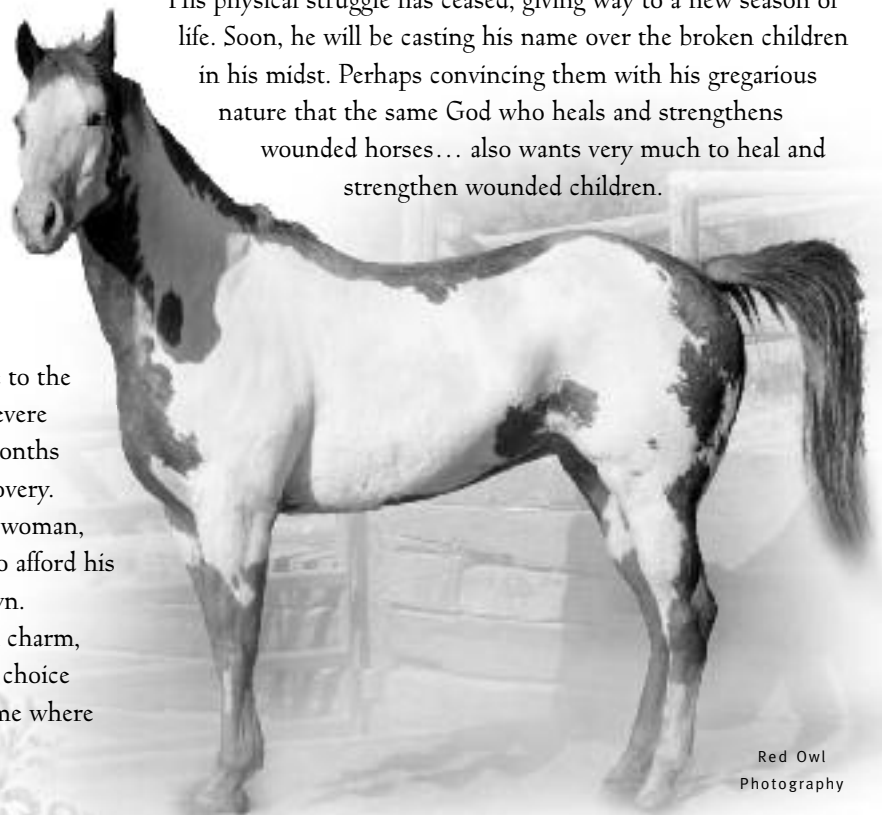
A few days later, he was welcomed into the Crystal Peaks four-legged family.

A random mix of forward and backward steps hallmarked his healing process. But through it all, he chose to maintain a positive and energetic outlook. With gentle exercise slowly being reintroduced, his strength gradually gained momentum and he is once again moving well under saddle.

I watched as Jeff, a ranch leader, led him out of the main arena after a mild workout. Although Jeff wore a bright smile, I couldn’t help but notice that the horse following on a loose line behind him... was beaming!

God will strengthen. When we choose to wholly give our brokenness to Him, in His perfect timing, in His perfect way He will heal. Last year, when Marshall suggested naming him “Ezekiel,” he saw me furrow my brow in question. He explained, “Ezekiel means God will strengthen.” I smiled and nodded in silent agreement. What a perfect title to live under, a bold declaration of faith for a horse once sentenced to die because he was so badly broken.

Today, Ezekiel, or Zeke, has lived up to his namesake. His physical struggle has ceased, giving way to a new season of life. Soon, he will be casting his name over the broken children in his midst. Perhaps convincing them with his gregarious nature that the same God who heals and strengthens wounded horses... also wants very much to heal and strengthen wounded children.



Red Owl
Photography

EVERYONE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

AN INTERVIEW WITH ELLEN

COMPILED BY: KIM MEEDER

Ellen, what do you do for Crystal Peaks?

I've been the Department Head of Finances for almost 2 years. The nature of what I do is to oversee finances in and out of the ranch. In this position I see a great deal of correspondence through cards, letters and e-mails. God has used my love of numbers to help reach broken children. Few of the parents who come to the ranch can give financially. It's all those outside who continue to help keep the ranch free of charge. We're able to combine donations to keep the ranch free for the families that need it the most.

What job goal are you passionate about?

I have the honor of processing all donation transactions for the year. And each of these "transactions" is a real person who loves this ranch and is precious to us.

I've come to care so deeply for this "extended family." I never want to forget the blessing that each of them are to the kids, horses, volunteers and staff who work here. My goal is to take a few extra moments to make sure they *know* that.



How will you help them know that?

One of my goals is to make sure that credit card donors are highly connected to the ranch. I'm trying to get more personal e-mails sent to each one, something that keeps them close to what they help support. It could be as simple as a picture of one of our horses, a staff biography or a crayon drawing from a child.

What do you enjoy most about your job at Crystal Peaks?

Oh my, the people who love this place enough to TAKE ACTION. They connect to the ranch. Each has become a story and a "face" to me. I hear their stories and am deeply moved.

Can you share some of those stories?

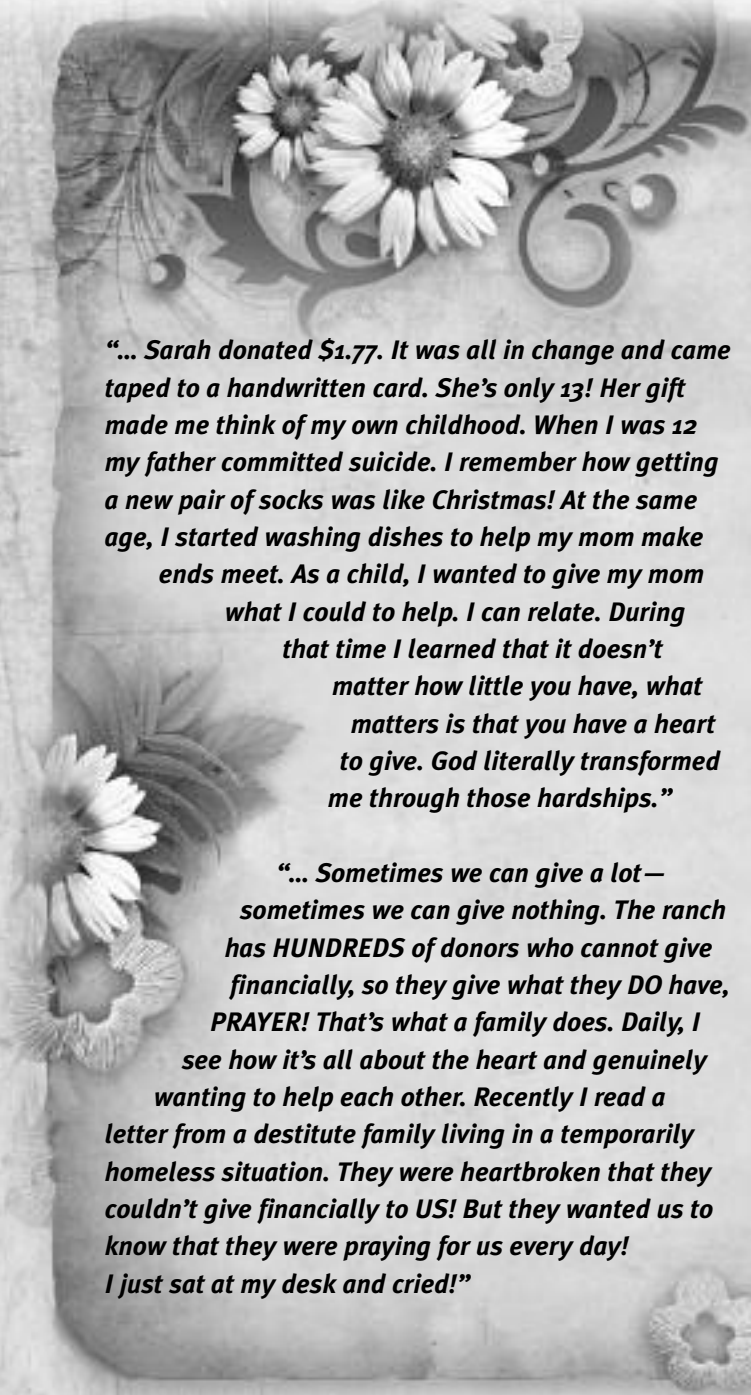
Wow, there are just so many... [Ellen smiles and then her eyes fill with tears]. They're *all* so precious to me. It's hard to narrow down, but there are some stories that are close to my heart...

"... One elderly woman connects to the ranch because her own children were abused."

"... We've received donations in memory of a 14-year-old girl who committed suicide. A note was sent from her brokenhearted mother who hoped to support this ranch so that other children would be reached and helped within their pain. She didn't want others to experience the same devastation. This mother fully understood the reality that life is hard and many are hurting. She connected to what we're doing and chose to help in her own way."

"... RUB-DUB faithfully gives \$10 a week. He gives what he can. His notes are handwritten in pencil by what looks like an elderly hand. All we know about him is that he lives in the Midwest and often asks us to join him in praying for rain. We cannot even send him a thank you because he is totally anonymous. Other than RUB-DUB, we have no idea who he is. His faithful and kind heart move me more than I can say. We just love RUB-DUB."

"... A young girl named Haley made a quilt with her grandmother. Together, they auctioned it off and donated all the proceeds to the ranch—about \$700! I love this because it was not only a gift to us, but also a precious time shared between a girl and her grandmother. Her mom was so excited and proud of her daughter."



“... Sarah donated \$1.77. It was all in change and came taped to a handwritten card. She’s only 13! Her gift made me think of my own childhood. When I was 12 my father committed suicide. I remember how getting a new pair of socks was like Christmas! At the same age, I started washing dishes to help my mom make ends meet. As a child, I wanted to give my mom what I could to help. I can relate. During that time I learned that it doesn’t matter how little you have, what matters is that you have a heart to give. God literally transformed me through those hardships.”

“... Sometimes we can give a lot—sometimes we can give nothing. The ranch has HUNDREDS of donors who cannot give financially, so they give what they DO have, PRAYER! That’s what a family does. Daily, I see how it’s all about the heart and genuinely wanting to help each other. Recently I read a letter from a destitute family living in a temporarily homeless situation. They were heartbroken that they couldn’t give financially to US! But they wanted us to know that they were praying for us every day! I just sat at my desk and cried!”

“... Another elderly woman called and was very apologetic that she was late to send a donation. She shared how her husband had just died! Such grace!”

“... During the summer, a young woman and her mother biked a distance and were sponsored. The money they raised was all donated to the children of the ranch.”

“... Recently, a woman’s mother passed away. Her mom loved horses. In gratitude and admiration of her mother’s sacrifices, she wanted to give to the ranch to honor her mother’s deep love.”

“... Crystal Peaks has known for a while that we need to build a greenhouse that’s big enough to help feed the families who come to the ranch. Last fall, a single donation came in with a letter attached. The letter designated ALL the funds toward building a large greenhouse! Currently, an 1,800 square foot greenhouse is being built and by this summer, their gift will be feeding families in need.”

“... One woman who’s advanced in years gives faithfully every month. Her goal in her final years is to spread the Word. If I could bring a smile on her face everyday I would! I talk to her nearly every other week on the phone. I love this woman! God loves this woman and He’s called me—thousands of miles away—to love her too!”

What have you learned from this extended family?

We each have a heart choice. We each have a choice to choose joy, to turn from the hurts of the past and choose hope. It’s an individual responsibility. From the very young to the elderly, if they choose, EVERYONE can make a difference. EVERYONE can give hope.

If you could speak to our donors, what would you wish them to know?

Because of such kindness, I want to be responsible with each dollar. It’s so important, every ounce of goodwill matters. Each dollar represents a heart that cares. Each is giving a part of their heart when they give their money.

When the donations come in, my team and I pray over each envelope! I thank God for them and I praise Him for putting them in our lives. I pray that God will bless *each* of them and be with them; that He will show Himself to them in a deeper way.

Often, by simply touching an envelope, I’m aware of great sacrifice. That inspires such deep awareness that I’m exactly where I’m supposed to be. The inspiration is that God is at work in every life, taking each out of their muck and giving them hope.

In my position I get to watch “ocean waves of blessing” roll into the ranch, and then roll right back out to bless the families. I want them to know that—*because of them*—I have a great job!

Meet the Gwin Family!

A Chat with Josie

COMPILED BY: KATHERINE TEAGUE

Tell us a bit about your family.

My husband, Scott, and I (Josie) have been married 17 years. We have four awesome kids, Talan (16), McKenna (14), Sadie (11) and Nikki (3). We also have a 20-year-old gal, Sarah, who lives with us and we consider her part of our family. We are up for most any adventure—from road tripping together and discovering new things about God's Creation, to reading around the fire, talking about life and faith around the dinner table, working on building projects and caring for our horses and cows!

What first brought your family out to the ranch?

We first found out about the Ranch nearly 7 years ago as we were leading a similar ministry in Colorado. This past year, God closed the doors of our organization and called us to leave our family and friends in Colorado behind, follow Him to Bend, and shoulder with the Ranch in whatever way needed. As we prayed and took a step at a time in faith, He opened the doors necessary to finalize our move to Bend this past November.

Which aspect of this ministry do you most connect with?

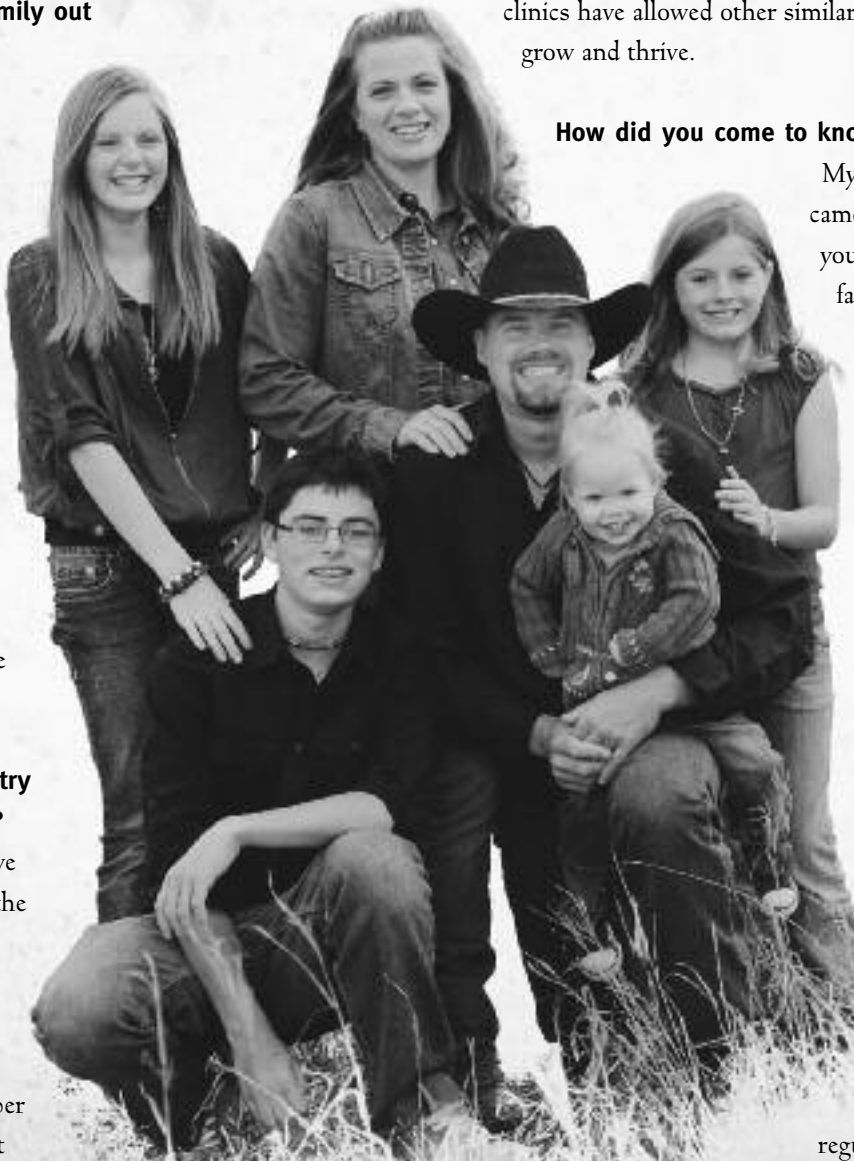
As a family seeking to serve other families, we appreciate the way that the Ranch connects with families as a whole. Whether it's providing ways for families to volunteer together, allowing each member from youngest to oldest to get

involved and contribute, to offering opportunities for families to play, to Fellowships that bring families together around God's Word: the Ranch loves families of all shapes, colors and sizes!

As former directors of a similar ministry, we also truly respect the open handed generosity of the Ranch to other organizations. The Ranch has made the choice to live Matthew 10:8b, "Freely you have received; freely give," and because of this, other children and families throughout our nation and around the world can see and receive the hope we have in Jesus Christ. Encouragement, prayer, and training through information and leadership clinics have allowed other similar ministries to begin, grow and thrive.

How did you come to know the hope of Christ?

My husband and I both came to know Christ as young children raised in families of faith. We are so blessed by this legacy of several generations of faith on both sides of our families! Our children have also come to know the hope of Jesus very young. About a year ago, Scott and I committed to daily time in His Word regardless of our schedule or circumstances. This has transformed our life more than any other thing ever has! While we had spent time in God's Word on a regular basis in the past,



we had never committed to digging deep daily. We both feel as though our hearts have come alive with His living, breathing Truth. It is not drudgery or a discipline; it's a way to heal our souls from the battle that the previous day has brought. Just like sleep refreshes our bodies, time in His Word renews our souls to fight through the battles of daily life again. This past year has brought more transition, loss and change than ever before in our lives; and yet we have walked in the peace that passes all understanding and the strength and contentment of His power in us. Only through Him could this be accomplished!

Part of life includes the reality of pain and suffering. We meet kids and families every day going through tough times. Speak to this, if you would, in light of the hope you hold in Jesus.

This broken, fallen world is not our home! Scripture teaches that we will have pain and suffering in this world, but that He has come to overcome the world (John 16:33). The ONLY way we can have any hope is to realize that through the sacrifice of Jesus, one day, Revelations 21:4, "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." We will walk with Jesus face to face! Some of the most grief-filled times of my entire life have happened in the past two years. The loss of the son of dear friends, the husband of another, heart challenges our children have faced as well as our entire life up heaving and changing. Then there is the groaning and grief of this broken world—starving people, broken orphans, sex trafficked women and children, homeless families, abuse, loss, trauma... There are days that I cling to hope in Jesus moment by moment!

How are you and members of your family influenced by the reality of pain and pressures of society—and how do you confront them?

We're all influenced by these things by the fact that we live in this world day by day! None of us is exempt from pain and temptation—it is only how we respond to them that we must give an answer for. And so often I fail! I fail to remember His grace and mercy that is new every morning and choose to walk in guilt and regret. I react out of irritation or frustration and hurt those I love the most. I allow the Enemy's lies of worthlessness and discouragement to make me self-centered and therefore ineffective. I forget His faithfulness and by being worried and stressed, reflect Him poorly to a watching world. This is why I am in His Word every morning—because that is the ONLY way to confront this life head on. The ONLY way that I can know and walk in the reality of who I am as a child of the King. The ONLY way that He can truly be seen in me. I, on my own, will fail—in Christ, I can do all things and walk any path.

What would you share with someone who may feel bogged down by similar feelings and pressures?

We all fail. We all make mistakes. Not one of our mistakes is lesser or greater than another's. Christ did not say that He would save us when we become perfect or pain free. He sacrificed His life for us while we were yet sinners, while we still walked in darkness. We have One who will never reject us, never fail us, never leave us. He is there if we choose to accept Him.

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

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 with your credit card or PayPal account.

Name _____

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CPYR ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALENDARS

You can still order CPYR's 2013 Calendar! This calendar is our free gift to you. Our prayer is that it will offer hope and encouragement to you, as well as connect our hearts as we share images and quotes captured around the ranch.

Order one for your family and share with friends too! Simply go to www.cpyr.org and click "2013 CPYR Calendar Order Form" under the "Ranch Life" tab.



E-NEWSLETTER ANNOUNCEMENT

CPYR's *Around the Fire* newsletter is now available in an e-newsletter format. It's our heart to make our publications accessible to as many people as possible. We are thrilled to offer you two options for receiving our newsletter!

If you'd like to receive an e-newsletter only, go to www.crystalpeaksyouthranch.org/join-our-mailing-list/ to inform us of the change. If you've never before received our quarterly newsletter and would like to, go to the above link and choose to receive either a paper copy or our e-newsletter version.

We're excited to keep you current with stories of hope and redemption from the Ranch!

WEBSITE & BLOG

Be sure to check our brand new website often! We frequently update it with new stories, blog posts, pictures, video and more. Visit our homepage and find links to meet our staff and our herd, as well as to find all sorts of helpful information about our ministry. It's our joy to keep you up-to-date on all of the activity around the Ranch!

Find us at www.cpyr.org.