



AROUND *the* FIRE

NEWS FROM CRYSTAL PEAKS YOUTH RANCH

SPRING 2009

HERO'S *Update*

BY KIM MEEDER

God is so amazing. Only He can take what should be the end of us... and have that same hardship be the axis by which our entire life rotates toward greater depth and fulfillment in Him.

We have discovered that Hero's rescue was not the 'happy ending' of his story, but instead, it has become the very *beginning*.

Now we know that 'avalanches' are not only restricted to falling snow! Since the release of the 'Hero Story,' we have

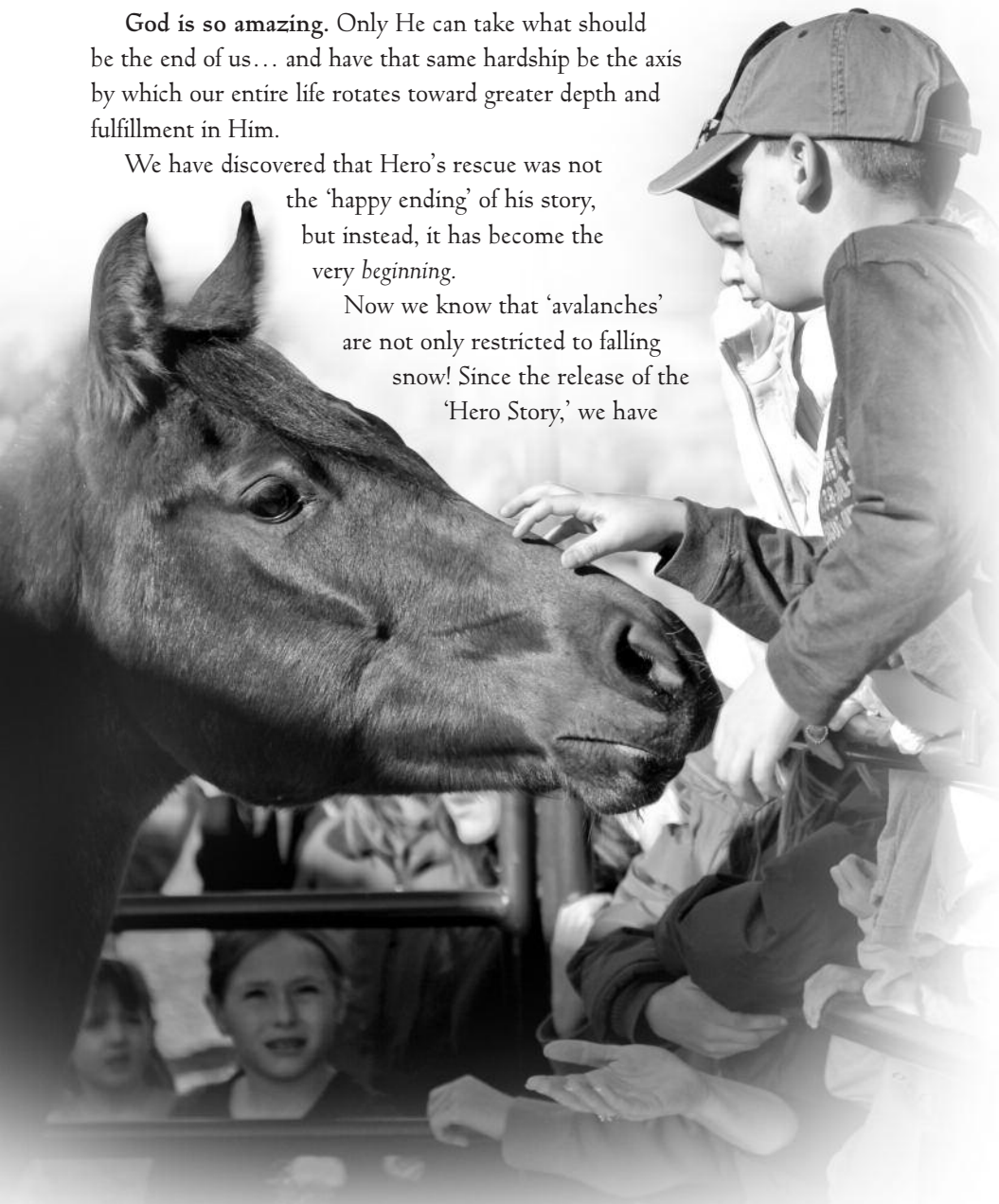
been BURIED under a wave of pure, white compassion. In response to your kindhearted encouragements and inquiries, we wish to give you an update on how our little Hero is progressing. His story of undying hope has reached across the Northwest and beyond.

After four weeks in the intensive care unit at Bend Equine Medical Center, the devoted veterinary team that was caring for Hero determined that his blood volume had finally reached a safe level for them to remove his destroyed left eye. Once Hero was sedated, Dr. Wayne worked on his eye and head, while Dr. Wendy attempted an aggressive skin stretching procedure to help close the wound on his leg.

Our little Hero has since come home to a real hero's welcome. While pulling up the ranch driveway with my sweet boy in tow, I could hardly believe the sight that greeted us! Tears streamed down my cheeks as I drove through a cheering hallway of waving arms all reaching out to welcome us. Over 300 people had gathered from all over the Northwest and Canada to hail this once abandoned horse into his new family. A large contingent of media was also waiting to cover this inspiring story. Hero was finally *home*.

While slowly maneuvering through the applauding crowd, I was so deeply moved by every bright and cheering face.

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Amongst the crush, Hero backed out of the trailer and turned around to survey the scene with his one remaining eye. He was not afraid, he was not nervous. His only expression was one of pure awe. I wondered if he might be contemplating if this is what it feels like to finally enter Heaven. Surrounded by your beloved, many clothed in tears of joy at your long awaited arrival, cheering, clapping and embracing... because you've finally come home.

Within these past months, we have seen a *tremendous* amount of healing take place. As this restorative season continues, we learn more every day that only a small portion of this renewal has actually occurred within our little horse—the majority has taken place within *your* hearts, lives and families. Individuals across the nation have been profoundly moved by this brave horse that just kept choosing to never quit. The mountain of cards, letters, emails and phone calls all

give unique testimony to this fact.

In an effort to help Hero, a small group of children from Paisley School participated in a student-led 'walk-a-thon' and raised over \$1,200 to help buy the expensive bandages his leg wound requires. A young man sent his sincere encouragement - from Holland. A five year old boy opted to forgo his birthday right of receiving presents and chose instead to give his 'birthday money' to Hero.

Held within a brown paper sack, his winsome gift of several bandages and fifteen dollars was delivered. News of Hero's story made headlines in nearly every local newspaper and to our incredulous surprise, even made the front page of *The Oregonian* on Christmas Day! Within the stir of publicity around this kind horse, hundreds have contacted us with their own beautiful story of renewed hope inspired by Hero. One envelope came to

the ranch containing nothing but a Post-It note. The message was simple, but earnest. Without name or identification, it merely said, "I was thinking of ending it all, until I read about Hero. I have decided to change my mind... thank you."

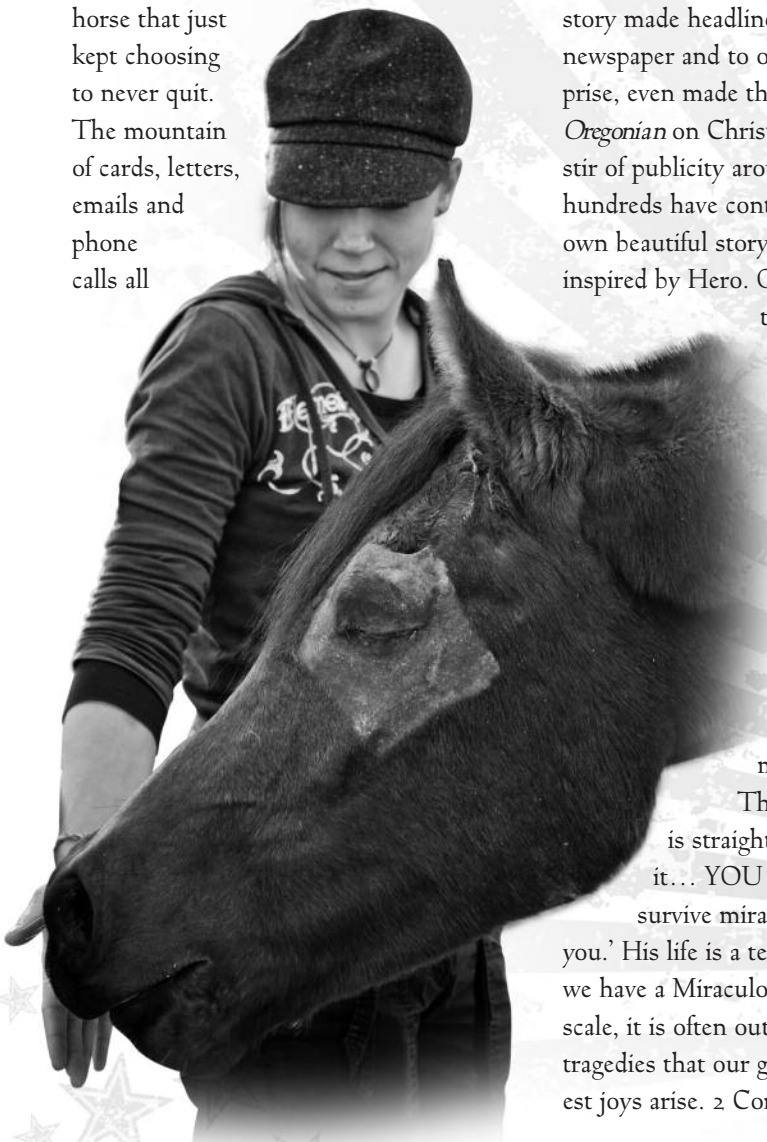
The message of Hero's life is straightforward, 'If I can make it... YOU can make it. If I can survive miraculous odds... so can you.' His life is a testament to the fact that we have a Miraculous Lord. Like a great scale, it is often out of our deepest tragedies that our greatest hope, our greatest joys arise. 2 Corinthians 1: 3-4 gives



testimony to this truth. Our suffering isn't something that happens because God isn't paying attention. On the contrary, our suffering has *great* purpose. The all-encompassing comfort that the Lord gives us in our time of need is powerful enough to not only heal our heart—but also those around us who are suffering in a similar way. God's comfort in our time of distress is so prevailing, that His healing hope not only fills our heart, it overflows to all in need.

Amongst a steady stream of visitors, our sweet boy is settling in very well. His leg wound, though severe, is slowly closing. He is making new friends within our herd and is enjoying life simply as a horse, never again to be confined to a stall or sequestered away from his own kind. At the sound of my voice, he answers with a high pitched call. While changing his large bandage, I have learned to feed him a small amount of grain to quell his curiosity and keep him from licking the back of my coat, chewing on my hair, and stealing my hat. He doesn't seem to know that he should be depressed, sad or full of rage at the injustice he has endured. Hero just never has a bad day. Instead, he is bright. He is joyful. He is incredibly playful. Yet, most of all, he has clearly chosen to simply be... happy.

By his example, he inspires me, along with countless others—to do the same.



Dear Troy, Kim, Staff and Hero at Crystal Peaks,

Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch has become one of the most amazing tools that I have ever been able to use to teach young people about respect, responsibility, encouragement, participation, compassion and teamwork. Middle school students not only need to hear these things for themselves, but to be able to reach out beyond themselves to touch others. This collaborative union we have established will always be a bright and shining star in my teaching career. Thank you for allowing me and my class to learn from the miracles that happen within the lodge pole fences of your ranch. The kids did work very hard to not only apply the knowledge and concept of the word compassion, but they put it into practice, which was a valuable teaching moment received with much joy and pride.

I have but a short story to tell you about a young girl in my class. 'Ali' is new to the school and her peers. I know she wanted to participate in this effort for Hero very much, but even though she walked, I think she knew she could not come up with the money to put in the envelope like her friends were doing. I watched very carefully to make sure she was not put down because she had not put money in the envelope. As any teacher would do, I wanted to see if I could use her as an example of true giving.



On the day of the walk, she completed 10 laps. I told her that if she could get someone to sponsor her for .10 cents a lap, she would have made \$1.10 for Hero. She looked at me like I was crazy in thinking that a \$1.10 was anything significant. I told her that when that \$1.10 was put with what was already raised, it would be the frosting on the cake. Looking skeptical, she shrugged her shoulders and went home knowing full well finding \$1.10 might be a tough thing to do. Everyday when I would ask if anyone had money for Hero, she would reply, "I forgot," or "I will ask my mom." This went on for two weeks. When I made the final call for donations for Hero, and I was ready to tell her I would sponsor her, she said, "Oh, Mrs. Jeffery, I will be right back!" After a few moments, Ali came to me with a crumpled one dollar bill with a dime nestled in the center of it. She was so pleased to have contributed to 'Compassion Month.' It was my great honor to tell her that because of that \$1.10, we could now proudly say Paisley School made OVER \$1200.00 for Hero; \$1201.10 to be exact... the frosting on the cake! As you look at that \$1.10 held by the paper clip, know the hearts and will of these kids.

I know that God is not absent in all of this, because prayer regularly goes up that my class would venture beyond learning how to throw a ball or shoot a basket, but that we, and I mean myself too, would learn what it truly means to be people of integrity.

With High Regards,

Mrs. Judith Jeffery

Paisley School 4th-8th grade Physical Education

THE TRUEST TREASURE

BY ANNE WALTERS

It is an ironic truth that great treasures often arise out of intense flames. While at Crystal Peaks, I never tired of watching the staff recognize worth within every child. Through unwavering commitment, they took every opportunity to bring that value to the surface.

Within this beautiful framework that allows hearts to be free, there is one horse in particular who reminds me of the priceless treasures that can be unearthed through heavy hardship. Like so many other bay horses, she is a simple red with white markings set within her black points. Yet, unique within her is a tremendous heart, enthusiasm, determination and tenderness... the gold within her common appearance. To the naked eye, there wasn't a glimmer of these things when she first arrived at the ranch; her deprived condition masked her true value. Others passed over her withered and damaged exterior, considering her worthless. Fortunately, there were some who were willing to dig deep to unearth the treasure they sensed was there.

I love this horse for all that she represents—struggle... triumph... *redemption*. I love her for all that she does with what she's been

given. Everything good that has been poured into her flows back out from her. She is alert and aware of distress in other horses, she is intuitively tender and kind with small kids and the broken, she is spunky and smart... *she is perfect in her imperfections*.

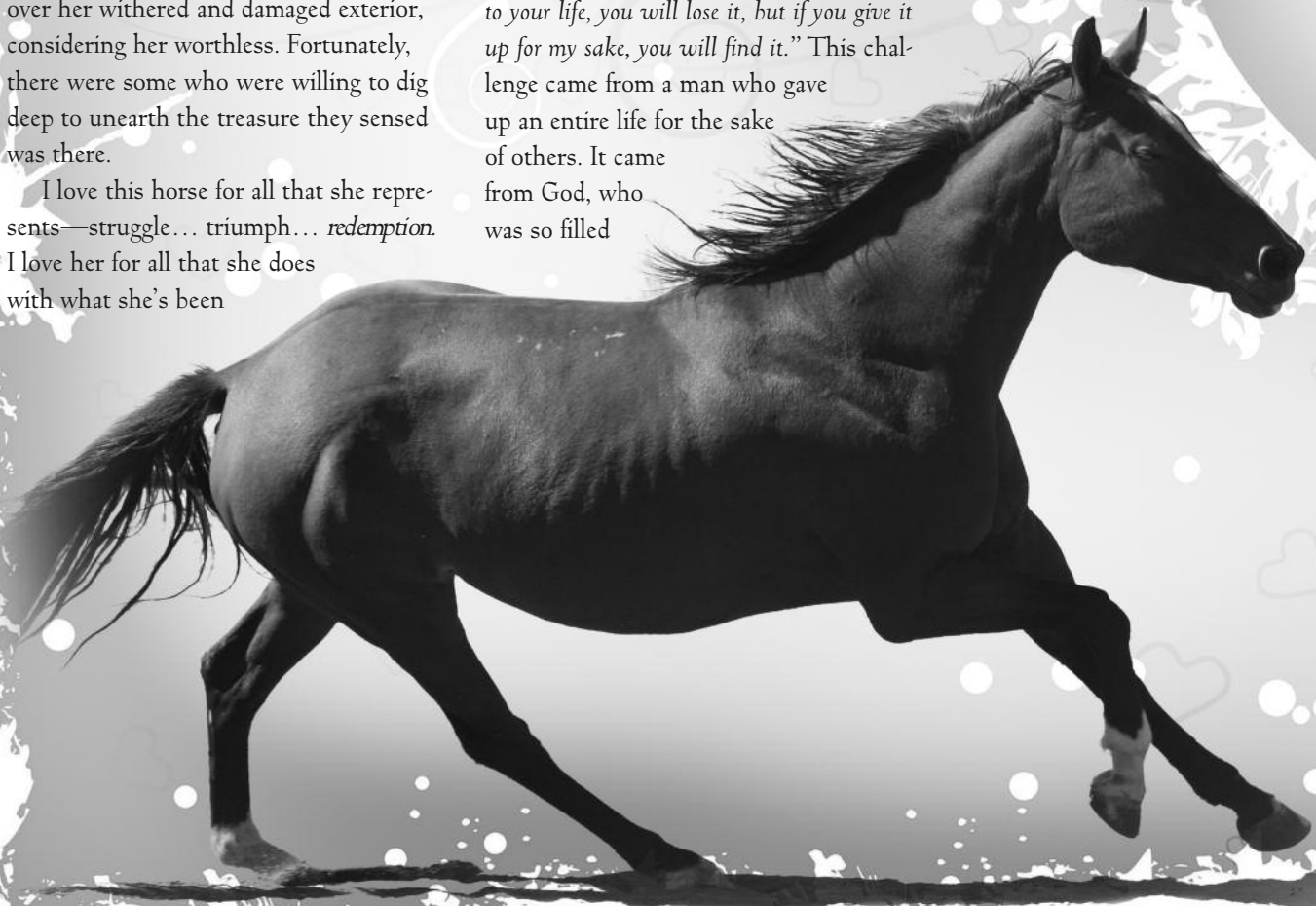
'Phoenix,' as her name indicates, was touched by fire. But rather than causing death, the fire that burned through her former existence birthed an incredible new life. Her presence, her example, brings recollection of periods of fire and subsequent transformation in my own life.

Before my footsteps ever landed at Crystal Peaks, or even left my home in Missouri, I was touched with a fire that redirected my life. It began as a flickering feeling that there must be more to life than what I knew. Later, it became a roaring inferno cast within the words, "*If you cling to your life, you will lose it, but if you give it up for my sake, you will find it.*" This challenge came from a man who gave up an entire life for the sake of others. It came from God, who was so filled

with love and desire for people, that He slipped into human skin to do something for humanity that they couldn't do for themselves.

There are deposits of unfathomable value in each and every person. But within my internal treasure chest, tarnish had been growing. Instead of polishing it away, I let it corrode. I was hiding a destructive secret. By turning a blind eye, my hidden truth was decaying my peace and relationships.

When Phoenix was first rescued, starvation had morphed her coat into a pitiful mess.





It gave off a terrible odor and it clung to her in wooly clumps.

For a while, that rotten hair was her body's effort at survival, but a point came when that rotten mass needed to be sloughed off to make room for the new coat. The two could not cohabitate, as the new came, the old had to be released and removed.

This example that Phoenix's life embodies, helped me realize that I also needed to chose to release my secrets to make room for the truth. Jesus once said, "You shall know the truth and the truth will set you free." In some areas of my life, I had been living so very far from this freedom. In an effort to protect myself by hiding, instead I had opened the door to my own tarnish and destruction.

By choosing to push into new levels of truthfulness, I also pushed the cover of my own 'treasure chest' open.

Viewing treasure of any kind is inspiring, whether it is a vignette of beauty from nature or something crafted by man. It seems to speak to our hearts, drawing us forward through the barriers that defy us. Our personal treasures can have the same effect. When we allow our lid to slip open and give others a genuine glimpse of the treasure within, it can inspire them too. It adds hope to the promise that every treasure—within every heart—once cleansed and exposed, can radiate with glory.

The brilliant gloss of Phoenix's present coat makes it difficult to believe that she ever wore her putrid, wooly past. The only remaining evidence of her former struggles are some compelling white spots along her spine. These spots are the new growth from areas of skin that were frozen from lack of insulation during a frigid winter. The white hair functions perfectly. It has become a permanent reminder of what she's survived, of her triumph, and something else... an outward invitation to be inspired by her story.

Each of us has known suffering. Each of us has scars. It is only when we let the walls that protect our pain collapse;

Christ alone can brush away the years of soot and tarnish to unveil the precious treasures our trials have refined. It is only through Christ that we have a genuine opportunity for freedom and restoration. But it doesn't stop there. If we choose to reveal the gift within, by opening our lives to honesty, others can be inspired by the gold unearthed by our transparency.

It is easy to balk at an invitation for help... but often times the hard thing... truly is the best thing. We each have the daily choice to hide our struggles—or be transformed by them.



In January of 2009, Anne moved to India to work with Freedom Firm, an organization which rescues young girls who have been trafficked into forced prostitution. She will be developing a horse therapy program and working within the aftercare home, helping to offer these girls complete freedom from their captivity through the true love and power of Jesus Christ. *"I choose this journey; to walk through the fire, to give up my life for His sake and gain it in return. I choose to allow my heart to burn with His passion and bleed with His sorrow and to rejoice in the treasures of pure gold that are gained."*

— Anne



BEYOND MY LIMITED SIGHT

BY JULIE LOVE



In this world swirling with aspirations of productivity, outcome and end results, there are times when it seems as if I will never be able to keep up. I fall incredibly short of the perceived expectations that this fast-paced society often places on our

culture. I frequently feel that what I have to offer—is never enough.

While volunteering with a local youth group several years ago, I met Kelsey. Even as a young girl, her desperation to be loved and accepted was so great that she began choosing a world of detrimental choices and deadly consequences. Because of my compassion for her, I set up a day for Kelsey to visit the Ranch and spend time with one of our rescued horses. I was looking forward to a private opportunity that would allow for meaningful conversation to drift between us.

As I watched her quietly walk around the arena on one of our large draft horses, I was able to see her tension and ‘tough’ façade silently slip away. We talked in great length of the decisions that she had been making and how they directly opposed all that she someday wished to become. In the weeks that followed, I witnessed a softening in her demeanor and a new desire to step away from the negative directions she had previously chosen.



All too soon, crashing finances caused Kelsey and her mother to move nearly three hours away. Occasionally, she would contact me through email to let me know how she was doing. It was not difficult to read between the lines that old habits were quickly rushing back into her life. Through her own words, it sounded as if Kelsey was, once again, spiraling back into a very dark place.

I was so discouraged that her earlier transformation during her time at the Ranch seemed to mean nothing to her. It was easy for me to feel as if somehow, I had failed Kelsey. I began to question myself as to whether anything I had done with her had made any difference at all. After a season of wrestling with my own perceived sense of failure, I purposely made the decision to let go of my **need** to see ‘results’ in the lives of those I invest in. What peace I have had when I return my focus to the Lord and simply love those that He chooses to bring across my path.

After not seeing Kelsey or her mother for a few years, they unexpectedly showed up to one of our Ranch Fellowships. Together, they had made the decision to drive several hours each way, just for the opportunity to spend a few hours at the Ranch. Once our welcome hugs subsided, Kelsey shared with me, “I have seen the hand of God in my life since I’ve left this place. When I first stepped away from the support of the Ranch, I slipped back into the poor behaviors that I had before. Yet, I was never able to forget the presence of God that I felt in this place. I became desperate for that hope again and made the decision to make some lasting changes in my life. I have since chosen to be involved in a great youth group. I’ve been going for over a year now. I’m being mentored by the youth pastor and just finished all my school requirements. Julie, I’ve even

graduated from high school."

I was completely amazed! All that I thought was lost between us, the Lord had redeemed beyond my limited sight. God is so good.

Those moments spent with Kelsey during the Fellowship were a precious reminder from God's heart to mine, "You aren't always able to see the full story. Be faithful where I have called you and rest in the knowledge that I hold the whole world in My palm. My timing and plan are beyond anything you are able to envision. When you simply offer Me to others... *I am more than enough.*"

I am learning that in times of weariness and disappointment, I can rest upon the Lord's strength and encouragement given in the book of Hebrews, 'So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees. Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong.' (Hebrews 12:12-13, NLT)



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

Please use my donation for:

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2009 Information Clinics

MAY 20-23, 2009 ☼ JUNE 3-6, 2009

When Crystal Peaks made the decision to begin holding 'Information Clinics' to help support others who have a sincere desire to start a similar ministry, we had no idea of the chain reaction that would follow. Since 2005, something REMARKABLE has happened. Currently, we are aware of at least **101 similar programs**, in 38 states and 8 foreign countries, including New Zealand, England, Spain, Romania, Slovak Republic, India, Costa Rica & 5 providences of Canada that have been established, in part, because of attendance at one of our Information Clinics. Because this has become such a significant part of what the Ranch seeks to foster, we have recently included this branch of ministry in our mission statement, "*Hope for the family, Mentor the child, Rescue the equine and Empower the ministry.*"

There is still opportunity to register for our 2009 clinics. You can find more information on our website at: www.cpyr.org, or by calling our office at (541) 330-0123.

Pray Day

At Crystal Peaks, we have a deep understanding that the source of every good and precious gift we can give those who walk up our hill—comes from Christ alone. Because this is true, it has become our tradition to gather together for a day that is set apart to pray. Each year before the ranch riding season begins, we seek to cover all that we do in prayer, which includes laying our hands on the backs of each horse. This year, our annual 'Pray Day' will be **Thursday, March 26th**. We encourage you to please join us from your home or work-place, in asking our Lord's blessing, covering and guidance over the season to come. For your faithfulness in choosing to shoulder with us in this unique way, we wish to thank you in advance for your loving support.



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