



December 2020

Dear ESS Friends,

2020 sure has been quite a year! We will remember the past months as nothing we ever could have imagined and for many, a time of hardship and loss. Last November I was writing a cheery letter and inviting everyone to come to our Holiday Horse Party. Today I am reaching out to those of you who have connected with ESS in past years, hoping that this letter finds you healthy and managing these difficult times with resilience and grace.

ESS has been closed since the first week of March due to the coronavirus restrictions. It was very different, not being able to have our normal activities and programs. It was a quiet year. We missed the kids, the visitors, the events and friendships and get-togethers. We scaled back the volunteer participation also. Did I mention just how very quiet it has been here this year?!

Having no events and no programs meant less work. But actually it was just less activity. There still was all the work of taking care of our herd of horses and donkeys, and keeping up with property maintenance and upkeep. We used the down time to build a second small track on two acres, and now have five horses on that track. In a very short time the value of the track system was evident as the horses moved more and had better body condition and healthier hooves due to the increased exercise. That is wonderful to see.

We did more rescue work, as the need for rescue has been greater this year due to many people losing their jobs or other stresses from the pandemic, along with all the typical situations from which horses need help. Usually we take in one or two rescues a year. In June, we took in four rescues. And last month we took in another. We have assisted other horse owners with finding hay, getting their horses gelded, veterinary care and training.

Our mission at ESS is to improve the lives of both horses and humans. This means bringing a new level of understanding and compassion to the work that we do, especially with horses but also to people who seek out a connection with these beautiful animals. We concentrated a lot this year on continuing to work with our horses and donkeys so that as soon as it is safe to have people out again, we will be ready. We did additional training and conditioning, along with regular practice sessions for our programs.

Sadly, we lost our miniature donkey Bindy, our mascot and therapy donkey, this summer to a severe colic. Bindy had been the inspiration and foundation for our new Read to the Donkeys program that we started last year. I finished the kids' story book that I had written about Bindy, and it is now available for purchase as a paperback and also as a kindle book on Amazon.com.

Santa Fe artist Barbara Meikle did a special painting of Bindy for the cover. Barbara has always been very supportive of our programs, hosting a fund raiser at her gallery every year where she would paint Bindy and one of his mini friends. We missed going to Santa Fe this summer for that event. Barbara made a special donation to start a memorial fund for Bindy, which will be used for the Read program when we are able to offer it again at ESS. The program will be provided free of charge to kids who can benefit from improving their reading skills in a fun setting reading to our

donkeys. All the participants will get a copy of the Bindy book to keep. This program will be a tremendous help, we feel, in the coming months for many children who are experiencing learning challenges due to not being able to attend regular classes. We appreciate Barbara's support for our donkeys and this program, and look forward to doing a special reading event at her gallery next summer.



Hava, our sweet pony



Grace and her daughter, Joy

Since we still cannot have visitors out like usual, we put together a special holiday video greeting from ESS. You can find a link to the video on our web page and also on our facebook page.

Thank you for being a part of all the wonderful work that we do here at Equine Spirit Sanctuary! We are grateful for your support and friendship. We look forward to a better year ahead and pray for all people throughout the world to find healing.

From all of us at Equine Spirit Sanctuary,

Ruth Bourgeois
Exec. Director

PS – Just a few notes about ESS donations

We are very thankful for the donations that we receive from people who care about horses and care about the work that we do here at ESS. This year has been incredibly stressful in so many ways. Despite the setbacks, complications and unexpected challenges, we have been blessed with the support from many long time supporters as well as new donors. While it has not been easy, we know we are very fortunate to have this support than has enabled us to continue to fulfill our mission and to plan for the future.

All of our equines are either rescues or unwanted horses. For some it is truly a place of sanctuary, their last stop in this lifetime before they pass on due to old age or health issues or injuries that cannot be fixed. Others come for rehab after a life of neglect or abuse. Some of these horses are adopted out to new homes. Others become partners in our equine-assisted activities and therapies programs.

All donations go towards the care of our horses, the expenses associated with putting on our programs, and maintaining our property so that we can do these things. This year we almost have accomplished one of our goals, which is to build a large hay shed. All the needed funds were raised, we picked out a building that will suit our needs, put down a deposit, purchased the building plans, and met with zoning staff to process the necessary building permit. We began this process in June. Months later, we are still struggling with getting the permit approved due to complications at the zoning offices due to coronavirus. I guess we couldn't have picked a more difficult time to try to complete this project. But all things considered, we know we have just got to be a bit more patient and understanding as our local support people also need to do whatever it takes to stay safe and healthy.

Of course, not getting the hay shed built meant that we were unable to do our anticipated "fill the hay barn" fund raiser. We're disappointed, but have secured hay for our horses to see us through the coming months. We hope and pray that the drought will also be a thing of the past, along with COVID-19, in the coming year.

Another necessary item that we will need in 2021, when we are able to resume our regular programs, is a new wheelchair ramp. Our old wooden ramp had been rebuilt three times, and this past summer since we were not doing therapeutic riding lessons and the ramp had become too worn out to be really safe, we tore it down. We have a wonderful new ramp picked out, which is on our wish list for next year!



BB and Oreo



"May you all have a beautiful holiday—wherever you are, whoever you are, however you spend it, and whatever emotions arise within you on this day. Blessings to the beasts and children within us all."

--Eat, Pray, Love author Elizabeth Gilbert