



update

FALL 2014



“This place is magic.”

Teaching kids about themselves, with horses

15 year-old Nick wore his hoodie over his head, hiding his face. His arms were crossed. “This is BS,” he told his therapist. He would not, could not, talk about his experiences. The level of trauma he had endured was too much, and there wasn’t an adult he could trust.

Nick’s therapist, Lisa Lederer, realized that she would not be able to reach Nick in the office setting, asking him to speak about things he found unspeakable. She needed another way.

Her answer: Peace Ranch.

Peace Ranch is a place for experiential learning and therapy with rescued horses, where a licensed therapist collaborates with an equine specialist to provide a short-term program for growth and healing. People of all ages, but especially children, realize through the stories of the horses’ rescues that they have a connection—that as the horses are now well and cared for, they can hope for and want the same for themselves. It is an intense and effective program.

“The first time we visited, Nick took a tour of the grounds,” recalls Child and Family Services’ Behavioral Health Supervisor Lisa Lederer. “He didn’t have the same reaction he did to being in our office. By the end he had asked a few questions about the horses, and had chosen one that he wanted to work with.”

On their next visit, Nick walked toward the stallion he had chosen. As he made his way across the grounds, a different horse became excited by Nick’s appearance. He lifted his head toward Nick and whinnied, as though he was talking to him. The horse had chosen Nick! Nick named him Beethoven.

By the end of Nick’s visits it was clear he had made progress. Nick walked Beethoven around Peace Ranch with his eyes up and focused ahead. If you take your eyes off the goal or stop, the horse will stop, too. They want to eat the grass. Then it’s very difficult to get them to move again.

“It’s a confidence-builder, to maintain your focus and compel this big, beautiful creature to do what you want it to,” says Lisa. “Watching Nick reach that point inspired me in my own life and leadership work.”

A second local program that pairs horses with healing and growth is at Reigning Liberty Ranch.

Reigning Liberty is the home of Horses for Heroes, supporting local veterans with a place to gather, work, and access community resources for their healing and reintegration. Child and Family Services is in its second year of partnering with the Ranch to provide equine-assisted learning to groups of children aged 8-16.

In the process of working with the animals, in the garden, and in the stable or arena, children learn about empathy, focus, regulating their emotions, communicating, and teamwork. Three children from the first program were so impacted by their participation that they are volunteering their time as mentors to this year’s group.

(Continued on page 2)



Kids grow best in families! Be a foster parent. To learn how, call 231 946 8975.

good work

(continued)

“This place is magic.”

One young participant, Danielle, went from almost completely nonverbal communication to talking and interacting with peers and adults. She smiles more, interacts more, and is generally a happier person. Another, Jane, has shown impeccable responsibility and a greater sense of community. Dylan has been able to find a sense of belonging that he has been missing—a place where he is accepted.

The most visceral impact is the connection between the children and veterans. The adults were initially reluctant to share the Ranch with kids. This was their safe place, after the trauma that many of them have endured. But they found commonality with the kids, and working side by side in the garden, in the stables with the horses, or in the chicken coop, they could talk and interact and learn to trust each other. “They inspire in each other a sense of resiliency,” says Wraparound Facilitator Laura Field. “The time they spend together is really healing for both adults and kids.”

While Peace Ranch is a short-term, individual experience, Reigning Liberty’s is more open-ended; people are welcome to volunteer and participate as long as they wish.

“So much of this work with kids is about feeling, not thinking or processing or talking,” says Lisa Lederer. “Sometimes, when you’re stuck, the thing to do is to move. Horses help people become unstuck.”



Nick, his brothers and adoptive father, Judge Michael Cooper, and his social workers at his adoption finalization hearing in September. When Nick asked his dad, Calvin, to accompany him to Peace Ranch, Calvin said “Anything for you, Nick.”



Janis Haine helps a youngster make a hobby horse at Horse Shows By the Bay. Children and families also enjoyed games, face painting, and pony rides. Horse Shows By the Bay donated \$2500 from gate proceeds on Family Day this year!

HELP US LEVERAGE YOUR SUPPORT

Does your employer or service organization have a matching gift program?

Many do! Your Human Resources office can tell you if your employer will match your donations to nonprofit organizations. There may also be opportunities for nonprofits to apply for grants to your place of work or your service club.

We would be grateful if you would share this kind of information with us, or initiate the process on our behalf. Help us spread the word about the good work being done here for children and families!



"If you find it in your heart to care for somebody else, you will have succeeded."

Maya Angelou



From the CEO

Sharpening our Focus to Help Children Thrive

We at Child and Family Services/Third Level recently immersed ourselves in the work to reset our mission, our vision, and our strategic direction. To inform this effort, regional experts joined our team for a very high level discussion of the landscape of human services over the next few years. I want to express my gratitude to Wexford County Family Court Judge Kenneth Tacoma, Mecosta/Osceola DHS Director Luther Lovell, Northern Michigan Regional Entity for Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse CEO Dave Schneider, Rotary Charities Executive Director Marsha Smith, and Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation Executive Director Phil Ellis for their thoughtful comments and discussion with our planning group. Their valuable perspective was a great springboard into the strategic planning day that followed. The CFS/Third Level integration took a giant step forward as we harmonized our mission and vision and looked to our future. Our revised mission:

"We strive to ensure the safety and well-being of children, youth, adults, and families in times of crisis, challenge, and life transition."

CFS also continues to work to address trauma among our children. We know the many symptoms of trauma for people of all ages: withdrawal, depression, trouble sleeping, mood swings, antisocial behaviors, hypervigilance. Trauma impacts the way children function and it is imperative to understand what they have experienced in order to help them heal from it. We are now in the second year of our partnership with Michigan State University to develop and expand our knowledge and use of evidence-based practices to compassionately treat children with trauma.

As we go to press, we are pleased to bring the founders of Western Michigan University's Children's Trauma Assessment Center (CTAC), Jim Henry and Connie Black-Pond, to Traverse City for a day-long training for our foster and adoptive parents, staff, and community partners. This workshop, Trauma Informed Care and Secondary Traumatic Stress, will help build our capacity for trauma informed parenting and treatment practices. CTAC will also provide three days of trauma assessment training to a team of professionals in occupational therapy, school social work, speech pathology, and other specialties to help develop this comprehensive assessment for children and youth. Partners include Traverse City Area Public Schools, Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District, Children's Advocacy Center, and DHS.

My sincere thanks to our talented and committed staff members and Board of Directors for the work they do daily, and to all of you for your connection to that work. It wouldn't be possible without you.

Jim Scherrer



The CFS/Third Level Strategic Planning team

Mark Your Calendar!

Join us to show your support ...

Saturday, November 8, 2014

Shop Your Community Day

Support your favorite (hint, hint!) charity with 15% of sales at participating stores donated to local nonprofit organizations

Monday, November 17

Paper Angels Annual Christmas Giving Program Begins

Thanks to WTCM-FM for the promotional and moral support!

Saturday, November 22, 2014

National Adoption Day

Check with your nearest Family Court for heartwarming adoption finalization hearings - a day that makes all the work worthwhile!

Saturday, December 13, 2014

Paper Angels Drop Off Day

Bring your gifts to children and families in our care to one of our offices and share holiday cheer with us!

and looking ahead....

Friday, February 13, 2015

The DreamRoom Classic

5th annual celebrity showroom design competition benefiting CFS/Third Level, featuring furniture, food, music, and fun!



Ocean and Taven pick out their backpacks donated by Sunrise Rotary of Traverse City and school supplies generously provided by Huntington Bank, Cherryland Cooperative, Family of Faith Church, and individual donors.



For his birthday, Aidan Daly, 11, asked his friends to buy gifts for children in foster care, rather than for himself. Thank you for your big heart, Aidan!

giving

thank you for all you do!

A Culture of Giving

It's part of the fabric of what we do!

You may have noticed that since our last newsletter, we've posted donor listings on our website. This decision reflects the positive growth in our organization as long-time friends of Third Level have joined Child and Family Services' loyal supporters. With the longevity of both organizations, we have a strong base of support that continues to grow as more and more people learn about our extensive array of programs and services.

Fortunately, our Community recognizes the value of giving—of serving together. We simply could not do this work without YOU!

Our challenge continues to be finding the resources needed to meet our mission. Everything from quality counseling (long enough in duration to help children and adults heal and grow) to summer activities for kids that have been sexually abused cost more than contracts cover. Restoring and strengthening the human spirit, helping people heal from past traumas and current crisis, requires a great deal of hard work—and the financial resources, too.

We could fill these pages with success stories—about our clients thriving after being labeled with SEV (Severe Emotional Disturbance) and other acronyms from past horrific abuses, or those who found their “forever family” (CFS completed 77 adoptions last year alone). Your partnership and generosity matters and no act of kindness is too small. Whether you can provide voice lessons for one child, or support the newest



“I've been working for money since I was 10 years old. Now I'm 84, and I just want to give it away.”

Big-hearted volunteer Mona Nelson

evidence-based behavioral therapies to help people heal, please contact Linda Sommerville at 231 946 8975 x 1025 about how you can make that difference.



The Community Outreach Advisory Group at Traverse City West Senior High organized Homeward Bound, a 5K run to benefit Pete's Place. Students raised over \$7,000 to help the shelter provide services to homeless youth. Thank you, TC West!



Employees of Real Estate One offices in northern Michigan donate their time and money to Third Level. Dennis Pearsall and DeeDee Burch deliver a check for \$5,000 from the Real Estate One Foundation.



Real Estate One employees spruce up the Third Level grounds this spring.



Regional Rite Aid employees chose Child and Family Services/Third Level as their charity for the inaugural KidCents program with a check for \$10,000. Visit <https://kidcents.riteaid.com/charities>, select Child & Family Services (make sure you use the ampersand), and Rite Aid will automatically round up your purchases for the next year to benefit our youth programs. Rite Aid will also match every \$500 from customers up to an additional \$5000. Please sign up, and share with your friends!

OUR MISSION

We strive to ensure the safety and well-being of children, youth, adults, and families in times of crisis, challenge, and life transition.

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Thanks to
Bill Marsh
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newsletter.

Many thanks . . .



Our first ever Appreciation Dinner for our northern friends, families, and employees was held in May at Bliss Gardens and Community Kitchen in Cross Village. Our hosts, Mary and Craig Rapin, provided a gorgeous setting, farm tour, children's activities, and more for this locally-sourced meal. And we can't forget the square dancing, by Jan Fowler and the Peacemeal String Band. Many thanks to Mary and Craig, and all the volunteers who made this evening such a success.



Lois Matteson has been quietly providing duffle bags to children and youth in foster care for more than a decade. She has made it her mission, and that of her church, United Methodist Church of Manton, to assure that our kids have a nice way to transport their belongings between placements or appointments. We are grateful to you, Lois, and to United Methodist Church of Manton members!



More kudos to our wonderful volunteers who braved chilly rain to help with the 24th annual Tee Up FORE Kids at The Kingsley Club, and for the balmy and sunnier Third Level Classic a week earlier at Manitou Passage. Together, the two outings raised nearly \$50,000 for our counseling and crisis programs.



Pecol Green has been part of the CFS family since she was a teenage volunteer. She's worked hard to raise her son, Rhys, who's almost 10, and earn her Bachelor's Degree at NMC and Ferris State and her Master's Degree at Grand Valley State. She'll soon begin her career in Long Beach, Washington, at Willowapa Behavioral Health as a school social worker. We'll miss you, Pecol--happy trails!

Donna Hornberger (l) and Ruth Bay co-hosted a beautiful brunch amid the summer gardens surrounding Ruth's Old Mission home. Deemed "Brunch for Bags," the get-together raised more than \$2500 for the duffle bag project for children and youth in care at CFS/Third Level. Thank you, Ruth and Donna, and all the fine women who supported this effort!



from our kids



Brittany Burton

This essay is from Brittany Burton, a young woman for whom writing and journaling helped her through hard times growing up. Her gift and her determination gained her a scholarship to attend Interlochen Arts Academy, but she needed additional assistance for a portion of her expenses. In partnership with the Area Agency on Aging, Kinship Caregiver funding was made available to Brittany's guardian, her aunt Linda, to help Brittany on her journey. She shared this with us in appreciation of the help she received.

An archway has two side, both building up toward the sky and each alone, just an unstable pillar. In life, every person is made of the two pillars which eventually come together as one. One pillar is built off of hardship and pain and strength, while the other is made of care and happiness and support.

Where many kids my age complained about failing a test they didn't study for or got upset about not getting that extra twenty dollars they needed for a new skateboard, all I thought was "I don't have access to such things myself." This means that any and all support given to me matters.

A lot of people think that community support only comes from big organizations and only in the form of physical items, but that's not how I see it. I view each little action as part of the archway of my life, the stones and spackle that build me up toward that keystone at the very top. From every question concerning my day to money toward my school tuition, it all means something to me. Without that support from those in my community, I would be unable to do more than simply reach toward the top.

I view my ability to get where I want to in life as only being limited by myself. Every person around me who helps push me higher helps to break that limit. If I build myself tall I might fall, but if others keep me strong it's assurance I'll be just fine.

Recently, it has been Child and Family Services and the Area Agency on Aging who have been the support I've needed. So I have two simple words that express all I possibly can. Thank you.



More Horsing Around: On a trip to Meijer Gardens, Colby gets up close and personal with Nina Akamu's The American Horse, inspired by Leonardo Davinci



*Inspiring Quotes
from Katie, age 10*



1. Dream big 
2. Dream it wish it do it 
3. Be your own kind of beautiful 
4. Become who you are 
5. Being awesome has it's advantages



Third Level

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help and hope

A Day in Crisis

Third Level's Crisis Team Always on Alert at 231.922.4800

On any given day in the Third Level Crisis Center, you might hear things like this:

- “You’ve been through so much.”
- “You sound like you’re a good mom.”
- “That’s a pretty big betrayal.”
- “Here’s where you can get that information.”

Counselors help address the concerns of people in our region and their reactions to events around us. Many times, these are regional events like big snowstorms, statewide changes in the social safety net, or local tragedies.

Other times, national events trigger a need for local people to reach out for help. In August, crisis workers at Third Level experienced the impact of the suicide of actor and comedian Robin Williams. Why would someone who is loved by so many, so talented, so blessed with fame and fortune, kill himself?

People were shocked into the realization that suicide can happen to anyone.

Many contacted the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number that was frequently posted by the media in the days

following the news of Mr. Williams’ death. Third Level is part of this national network of crisis centers, and experienced its highest call volume ever during that week— 146 versus the usual 90-100 calls.

Some called worried about loved ones. Some asked about suicide warning signs. Some called to get help for their own suicidal thoughts and feelings. Whatever the reason, our Third Level crisis workers were there, lending a listening ear, providing safety in emergent crisis, accepting people as they are, facilitating expression of feelings, exploring all choices, helping find resources, and working with people as they create a path through their crisis or transition.

Third Level remains at the ready for the next event, be it national, statewide, regional, local, or specific to one person or family. That’s what we do.

Support Third Level's crisis work by learning more—
www.thirdlevel.org.

