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Buzz

Not Just Any Day on the Farm

Family is planning to make victims of brain injuries feel at home

By Lori K. Tate

Marty Foil walks down the tree-lined gravel driveway of Hinds' Feet Farm with contagious excitement. As he points to the barn under construction on the property, he talks about how it will be home to the farm's three horses—Baby, Macy, and Shay Day. He then looks in the other direction, to the spot where the farm's 5,000-square-foot home is going to be built.

Marty isn't talking about a house for him. He's talking about the farm's residential program for people (six, to be exact) who have suffered brain injuries. Hinds' Feet farm is designed to be a place where people with such injuries and their families can find a sense of community. This month, the farm kicks off its day program and for Marty and his family, it's a vision realized, because they know all too well how devastating a brain injury can be.

In 1984, Marty's brother, Phillip, was in a car accident that left him with severe brain injuries. About five years later, after the family absorbed the shock of what happened to Phillip, the Foils began actively working on brain-injury awareness through various organizations. But Martin and Puddin Foil, Marty and Phillip's parents, wanted to do more.

In 2000, the couple bought thirty-six acres in Huntersville to create Hinds' Feet Farm. Puddin named the farm after a verse of scripture in Habakkuk, "God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like hinds' feet, he makes me tread upon my high places."

Marty soon quit his job in the software business to become executive director of the non-profit organization, and the family built a 2,500-square-foot multi-purpose building on the property in 2002. In April Marty hired Will DeGrauw, former program director of SteppingStones, a program of The Krempels Brain Injury Foundation in New Hampshire, to be the farm's day program director. It relies on private and corporate donations, fundraising events, foundation gifts, and more recently money from the county and state.

"The goal is to make as many program options and as many activities

accessible to as broad a range of population as possible. Obviously there are going to be individuals who will not be appropriate because the severity of their injury is so great,” says Marty, adding that volunteers are essential for programming. “One semester, clients may be painting and doing other types of art. The next semester, it may be more musically based. The next semester, it may be drama based.” Therapeutic horse riding will be a regular activity at the farm.

After meeting admission criteria, clients can come as often as they wish Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at a cost of \$75 a day. Depending on the client’s ability to take care of themselves, some caregivers can leave their loved ones at the farm for the day.

“So often folks with either traumatic brain injury or an acquired brain injury become isolated and fragmented, or marginalized, in our society,” explains DeGrauw. “All too often they become depressed, and they become dependent on a system of care that isn’t geared for their type of residual challenges and so what we want to do is create a sense of belonging and welcomingness.”

If you are interested in volunteering at Hinds’ Feet Farm, call 704-992-1424 or visit www.hindsfeetfarm.org.

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