

Farmers: An Invitation to Get Away From the Daily Grind

MADISON - Working farm families and individuals have an opportunity to get away from the daily grind this winter, thanks to a coalition of private and public agencies.



The Sowing the Seeds of Hope coalition is sponsoring seven no-cost getaway weekends: four for farm couples; two for farm women; and for the first time, one just for men.

“Participants learn a variety of coping strategies, work on plans for the future and enjoy a break from the demands of farming,” said Kathy Schmitt, community services specialist with the Wisconsin Farm Center.

The Farm Couple Weekend Getaways are limited to nine couples each and are scheduled for:

- Rib Lake, Feb. 11-12, Camp 28 Resort
- Black River Falls, March 11 - 12, Holiday Inn Express

The Farm Women Weekend Getaways are limited to 15 women each and are scheduled for:

- Black River Falls, March 11-12, location to be announced

The Farm Men Weekend Getaway is limited to 20 men:

- Wausau, Feb. 11-12, Stoney Creek Inn

There are no costs while attending the weekend but registration is required, first come first served. Farmers may be eligible for some financial assistance to offset the cost of labor or childcare while away.

To register or for more information, contact Kathy Schmitt, Wisconsin Farm Center at 800-942-2474 or Mary Bub, women’s getaways, at 262-723-4156. Sowing the Seeds of Hope is supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - SAMHSA, with assistance from state partners. ■

Submitted by: Kathy Schmitt, DATCP Spokesperson

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FEATURING:
*Peterson's Set to Reach
the Finish Line*

*Farmers: An Invitation
to Get Away From the
Daily Grind*

*Safety First:
Equine Safety*

*Don't Let Winter Slip
You Up*

ALSO LOOK FOR:
*Partners...
by Melba Brown,
Technical Assistant for
ESW FARM Program*

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Plowing Ahead

Peterson's Set to Reach the Finish Line

Winningways Farms is not the usual Wisconsin farm. Instead of cows, thoroughbred horses wander through the snow-covered pastures. Kathleen Peterson



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and her husband, Jerry, bought their 14-acre Mosinee farm about three years ago. They planned for Peterson’s husband to continue his off-farm job while she worked the farm. Through her childhood experiences on the family farm she gained an interest in thoroughbreds and currently owns 23 “pedigreed and papered” racing thoroughbreds, including a stud that will be ready to advertise for use within several months. Her excitement and love for her work is evident as she talks about the farm and horses.

Peterson’s plans drastically changed when complications resulting from injuries sustained during a ladder collapse at work in December of 2000 started to affect her physically. The resulting accident required dual knee replacements. Five surgeries later arthritis developed in her knees and right hip. As a consequence of the arthritis, she developed back problems that will only be resolved with another dual knee replacement.

The farm work became increasingly difficult to perform because she was

experiencing so much pain. The farm work required more time and effort and as a result Peterson’s husband had to quit his off-farm job to help with the farm. Peterson’s time with the horses dwindled, due to her physical limitation.

One of her doctors suggested that she contact the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). Since her career focus was in agriculture, DVR also referred her to AgrAbility of Wisconsin (AAW) so that her DVR counselor, Nancy Burkholder, could partner with one of the Rural Rehabilitation Specialists of the Easter Seals Wisconsin (ESW) FARM Program.

Two years after contacting DVR Peterson received visits from Burkholder and Holly Allen, a Rural Rehabilitation Specialist with the FARM Program. “They got here just in the nick of time,” Peterson said.

When Allen visited Peterson for the first time, they completed a walk through of the farm to determine what assistive technology and adaptations would allow Peterson to maintain the farm and allow her to



DVR purchased a small skid steer to aid Peterson in cleaning stalls and hauling manure, which was previously performed with a wheelbarrow, pitchfork and shovels.

return to performing the daily tasks without the need of her husband. One of the items that Peterson benefited from was the John

continued on page 2...

continued from page 1...

Deere Gator, since one of her daily tasks involved carrying hay to the pastures for the horses. According to Peterson, the utility vehicle was a godsend for her because the task of hauling feed and maintaining the electric fencing reduced the time and manual labor required. The Gator also reduced walking across manure, snow, and mud to reach the horses. DVR purchased a small skid steer to aid Peterson in cleaning stalls and hauling manure, which was previously performed with a wheelbarrow, pitchfork and shovels. Even though the skid steer reduced the use of the hand tools, the need for these items were not completely eliminated.

“They got here just in the nick of time.”
-- Kathleen Peterson

Accordingly, Allen suggested attaching upper hand handles to the pitchforks and shovels to decrease the stress on her back from bending over.

Given that climbing is difficult for Peterson, the issue of using a ladder to reach the loft to throw hay bales into the barn below is currently being addressed. The existing ladder will be replaced with steps that will be permanently anchored to the wall with a spring door, which will help to retain heat in

the barn during the winter season. The gate will open and close with a pull cord. This system will reduce the complexity of multitasking by climbing and balancing on a ladder at the same time as trying to open and close a door.

The additional assistive technology reduces the time Peterson spends on manual labor, resulting in less physical strain.

According to Peterson, “I have time to spend with the horses themselves because the horses have to be auction ready.”

Peterson plans to maintain the farm by herself so that her husband can once again return to a full time job off the farm, but her ultimate goal can be summed up in just two words: “to win!” A derby winner will allow her to increase horse sales, purchase more pastureland to increase the number of thoroughbred horses, and create a winning derby tradition. AAW is proud to have a small part in seeing this farmer and her horses cross that finish line.■



One of the items that benefited Peterson was the John Deere Gator, since one of her daily tasks involved carrying hay to the pastures for the horses.



Melba Brown, Technical Assistant, ESW FARM Program

Partners...

As a Technical Assistant with the Easter Seals Farm Program, I feel very encouraged that farmers who would ordinarily be forced to give up their farming careers can, with modifications of a task process or equipment, continue to do what they love. My husband and I farmed for over 20 years in Wisconsin, milking cows, cash cropping and running a farrow - finish pig operation. From experience, I know that it is hard work even if you are not challenged physically. This is why it is so important and satisfying to me to be part of this program.

Farmers Hotline gave me a great deal of insight into the issues our farmers are coping with every day both financially and emotionally. Though I was not introduced to farming until I met my husband, I came to admire the independence, creativity, resilience and faith of the farming life. When you love and care for the land, you believe it will provide, and you look forward to the future with hope.

My wish for the future of this program is that we will be able to help every farmer to continue on their farm and contribute in a way that is important to them. I look forward to doing the best I can to make that happen.


Melba Brown

Technical Assistant, Easter Seals Wisconsin FARM Program

While I was a Farm Credit Advisor for the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, I was involved with helping farmers to find solutions to their financial problems. My work with the


Don't Let Winter Slip You Up

Winter can be a hazardous time of the year due to the ice and snow, but for people with difficulty walking, this time of year can be extremely challenging. Due to the demand for safer mobility during the cold season, numerous companies created products to aid in stability on ice and snow. One such product is the Ice Breaker Stair Mat, which allows for effortless ice removal from any stairs. Ice removal is as simple as stepping on the mat and the ice easily breaking apart to be swept away, leaving a clean step.



An ice cane attachment will reduce the possibility of a cane sliding on the ice.

accumulation of snow and ice. Cane users may find this time of year to be especially stressful due to the chance of the cane slipping. However, an ice cane attachment with a five point base of stainless steel that can be locked into place when outside or turned up indoors allows the user confidence on slippery surfaces due to the prongs' gripping ability.



STABILicers™ is a product that easily attaches to shoes with Velcro fasteners and the steel cleats provide nonslip traction on icy surfaces. These are only a few of the products available for protection against slips and falls during the winter season.

If you are interested any of the products above or other available similar assistive technology, please feel free to contact Cally Ehle, Associate Outreach Specialist at (608) 262-9336 or aaw@mailplus.wisc.edu and she will be able to provide you with information on how to obtain these products.■

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SAFETY FIRST

Equine Safety...

‘Bomb proof’? ‘Powder keg’?. Which phrase best describes your horse? Horses possess a variety of temperaments and personalities. A horse's age, level of training, breed, feed, as well as many other factors including the handlers experience level and abilities, can affect the horses demeanor and behavior. Regardless of which term accurately describes your horse, it is important for you to understand what makes your horse ‘tick’ and to practice proper handling techniques to decrease the incidence of risk to you and/or your horse.

The horse's initial response to frightening stimuli is ‘flight’. Many dangerous situations can arise as a result of their natural response. While it is not possible to prepare the horse for every frightening stimuli it may encounter, be alert to the surrounding activities and maintain a calm demeanor can help control the situation. Another natural behavior of the horse is the establishment of a dominance hierarchy or pecking order among a group of two or more horses. Consider pecking order when moving horses into and out of the group. If working alone, remove the dominant horse first to reduce the potential for problems.

Whether you are catching a herd horse in a pasture or a single horse from a confined area, follow a few simple steps to make the process safer and efficient. Use equipment that is strong and in good condition. Organize the halter and lead rope before you are near the horse. Never startle the horse by approaching from directly behind him/her; approach the horse from an angle. Initially, loop the lead rope over the horse's neck to capture the horse, so you can take the time to apply the halter safely without giving the horse an opportunity to escape. Avoid getting fingers tangled or caught in the halter, rings or loops. When returning the horse to the pasture, lead him/her to an open area away from the gate, turn the horse to face the direction you came from, and release the horse by reversing the haltering procedures. (Halters should not be left on the horse in a pasture.) Avoid letting the horse bolt away from you when released, as this action can develop into a dangerous habit.



Leading the horse can be a challenge for the novice or experienced horseman. Control the horse by holding the lead rope six to twelve inches from the halter. In your free hand, drape the excess lead rope back and forth in a figure eight motion; looped in a circular motion will tighten around the fingers if the horse pulls away. Make the horse walk beside you, not trotting ahead of lagging behind. To slow a fast moving horse, circle the horse in a tight circle toward you. When tying the horse, secure the horse to a solid foundation in a large, non-cluttered area with solid footing. Tie the lead rope (not reins) with a quick release knot, wither height with one to two feet of slack. If the lead rope is tied too long or too low, the horse may get a leg caught over it, or if tied too high the horse may get the lead rope wrapped around its neck. Establish a designated ‘space’ boundary for your horse and immediately move him/her over or back a comfortable distance if he/she infringes upon that ‘space’.

Horses can be fun and exciting to work with, but can also be dangerous if not handled properly. By practicing simple safe handling techniques you will help decrease the incidence of harm that may occur to you or your horse. ■

Submitted by: J. Liv Sandberg, UWEX Equine Specialist