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Hello friends and supporters

As the strangest year in the lives of us all draws to a close, we have been reflecting on reasons to be thankful, and in the case of Leg-Up, we are certainly thankful for the great people who support us, cheer us on when we're winning, encourage us when we're not, and comfort us when we're mourning loss. As always, in this newsletter we have many to thank for support with donations, goods, time and expertise:

- First Light Foundation for a grant to cover our accounting costs
- Generous donations from WA and K Forrest; G and C Small; S Wellwood; LM Fowler; Golding Three Trust; and as always those who sponsor us every month. We are so grateful
- Long time supporter Bill Irwin is a most generous man who not only gives \$100 a month but has a sixth sense when it comes to the chips being down, as was the case in September when he quietly deposited a large donation in our bank account. Many children have you to thank for their improved lives, Bill.
- Many kind people who donated horse gear, books and other items
- Ben McFarlane from Bayer for his welcome donation of drench for the horses
- Te Ao Marama Roopu Trust which recently wound up and passed on to us their remaining funds. What a humbling gesture!
- Hastings Pioneer Lions Club ran a raffle and raised \$1450 for us, amazing us as well as themselves.
- First Equine keeps our pink-skinned cremello Tinka comfortable with ongoing gifts of their fantastic product, Right on the Nose, refusing payment. Tinka is as grateful as we are, Bronwyn.
- Hippo Health sent us at heavily reduced cost a product called Fireworks Angel to help our horses through the scourge of Guy Fawkes. We will be putting it in our troughs shortly when New Year's Eve again has us on high alert.
- The Frankum family who recently purchased Montana Horse Arena organised a twilight show jumping series to raise funds for Leg-Up and presented us with \$500 this week. Anyone who has ever organised a horse show will know how much effort this takes, so we were humbled by their gesture. Welcome to our neighbourhood Frankum family.
- Tootsies, choppers et al: huge thanks to dentist Gary Winchcombe who visits regularly to attend to our horses, Susan Rogerson who trims our five donkeys' feet and Chris York who keeps our horses comfortable with his osteopathic ministrations. Mention should also be made of Tim Bruce who travels from Waikato to trim our barefoot horses at a greatly reduced charge. What would we do without people like these?
- Ellie O'Brien of Finesse Equestrian Training has developed the Atlas Equine Massager to benefit horse with problems in the poll area and they are just coming onto the market. Ellie has generously arranged to donate a percentage of all sales to Leg-Up and we wish her every success in her venture as well as expressing our gratitude for her magnificent gesture.

The Great Hay Crisis

Towards the end of winter a curve ball came our way and we found ourselves with an empty barn when our horses were still in need of hay to make up for the lack of grass following the drought. We put out a call to anyone willing to sell us hay, and to our astonishment, people came from all over with trailer loads of the precious stuff they were no doubt rationing for their own horses. We were sold hay at a reduced price, given donations to buy hay and were given hay by so many, friends and strangers alike, that our crisis became a huge blessing. In a year when almost everyone was under stress for all sorts of reasons, kindness and generosity came to the fore and filled our hearts as well as the barn. We are forever in your debt.

Heroes come in all sizes

One of our young students, Jack Taylor has an oversized giving heart, and spent months collecting cans to sell and raise money for Leg-Up. He presented us with the princely sum of \$321.50 last week and we were blown away. That's an awful lot of cans! Jack, you give us great hope for your generation.

Homefree - riding for the Leg-Up Trust

Our intrepid friend Larissa Mueller and her horse Sprite are on the move again and have left Northland after several months riding its beautiful coastline. Having got safely through Auckland, she now has Coromandel in her sights. Her goal is to raise \$20,000 for Leg-Up by riding the coastline of New Zealand and she has achieved over half that amount already, not least from the generosity of Northlanders. It's a wonderful region with equally wonderful people. If anyone reading this lives on the Coromandel Peninsula, please look out for her and offer her refuge if she needs it. We'd be so grateful as her wellbeing is always on our minds.

The St Matthew's pet service

Two of our donkeys, Nibbles and Nudge, clowns both, made their annual appearance at the St Matthew's pet blessing service and behaved impeccably. Following a minor indiscretion from them last year, we turned up armed with tarps to put on the carpet but, discovered that tarps were already laid in place! Once bitten – but in a spirit of forgiveness Alister Hendery invited them back, with precautionary measures taken... St Matthew's Parish generously donated proceeds from the service to Leg-Up; we had so much fun with all the other animals that the donation was the icing on the cake.

Hawke's Bay Foundation video

A few weeks ago we spent a morning (thanks for the 5 a.m. start, guys) being filmed for a video presentation by the HB Foundation which is organising a big event to be held in March to showcase their wonderful concept that benefits charities in the Bay. Dan, Andrew, and Caroline from Indelible Creative Studio. Kim Thorp of Kim Thorp Consultancy fame and Jules Nowell-Usticke, trustee of HB Foundation all donated their skills and time to make the video, one of three to feature at the event, and their patience with us was admirable. Nibbles and Nudge 'helped' them set up their gear and rummaged through the van full of expensive equipment (told you these donkeys are clowns). Dan and Andrew didn't turn a hair! Nor did they turn a hair as humans and horses alike were in the wrong place at the wrong time, and to their credit they were still smiling at the end.

Our Christmas fundraiser

Our good friend Duncan Brown has again delivered with his great talent and has produced some beautiful photos to grace a calendar, coffee mugs, Christmas cards and tote bags. Sadly, he was let down by the printers of the calendar and has had to request another batch up to his impeccable standard, and this means the calendars may not arrive in time for Christmas. However, the intrepid Duncan is issuing vouchers to all affected parties so intended recipients of the calendars as gifts can be given these to advise of a forthcoming gift worth waiting for. We and Duncan apologise for this situation beyond our control and hope nobody is too inconvenienced. Other items are unaffected and have arrived for distribution.

Update on Chocolate Pudding's lime track fundraiser

The response to Chocky's fundraiser was immense and some people will be wondering about the outcome. There has been a delay in putting the track down as the contractor doing the job suffered a medical event just before he was due to start, and he is still recovering. We have elected to wait for him to resume work rather than hire somebody else as he's going to need the income when he's back up and running. We plan to be his labourers when the time comes. It'll be fun – for us if not for him...

Kaimanawa Ranges Trip

This year we embarked on our annual trip to the Kaimanawa ranges with four kids in tow instead of the usual two. They were all from St Matthew's and were a credit to their school. It is the trip of a lifetime for some of our children and the boys loved every minute of it. We saw a lot of horses, caught up with good friends and for the very first time met our wonderful benefactor Grada Dixon who pays for the trip and accommodation. It was such a highlight to meet her and be able to thank her in person for all the children (and Leg-Up staff) she has blessed over the years.

Sad farewells

Recently we had to face the fact that dear old Caesar's time had come, and we laid him to rest on a sunny morning that quickly clouded over in our hearts as we witnessed the deep grief of his soulmate Benny. We knew he would miss Caesar but were totally unprepared for Kaimanawa Benny's palpable sorrow. He moped for days and lost weight, and we almost despaired, but he is slowly recovering and now tolerates Tinka as a companion. It has been a sobering time for us all.

On a happier note, Kaimanawa Roxy, who has made it clear to us for a long time that she loathes kids, has gone to live in a gloriously kid-free horsey paradise with dear friends Elder and Marilyn Jenks who are the longest serving and deeply committed champions of Kaimanawa horses. The old sourpuss can hardly believe her luck!! Roxy, we will miss you more than you will ever miss us!

Students

This year we have been inundated with young people in need of help and we've had our hands full as we often swim against the tide of modern practice in dealing with anxiety, unsociable behaviour and other issues. We stand firm on our standards of manners, boundaries and finding contentment without materialism, but this is not always welcomed or understood by today's world which has put kids on a pedestal and given them power they can't handle. However, we see kids blossoming slowly as they emerge from the weight of entitlement and find other ways of engaging with their elders and peers. We would do well to heed the words of Old testament prophet Jeremiah: 'Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.'

A prime example of this can be seen in the success of one of our boys who doesn't fit into the education system but has aspirations to be a farmer. Enter retired farmer Murray Cranswick who agreed to join our team as a mentor for the keen-as-mustard lad. Under Murray's strict guidance and example this boy is flourishing and has a sense of purpose for his future. Together they have mended fences, moved livestock, attended stock sales, made hay and done other work around Willow Farm. We wish there were Murrays in the lives of all our young. The ancient paths work...

Finally...

Staff and animals at Leg-Up have made a Christmas video which staffer Isaac is frantically putting together so it can be released in the next few days. It will be on our Leg-Up Trust Facebook page and also on youtube (search Ros Rowe). It will be called something like Leg-Up Christmas video 2020. We had fun making it and hope you'll all forgive our homespun approach.

We wish you all a wonderful festive season and hope next year will present fewer challenges than 2020.

We thank you all again for being our friends; Leg-Up would be the poorer in every sense of the word without you. Stay safe and remember those who find this season difficult for all sorts of reasons.

Ros Rowe