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Hello friends and supporters

The new year has hit us with some curve balls but we're well and truly tackling 2021 head on.

As always, the generosity of people has buoyed us up in more ways than one, and we want to thank the following:

- Joan Fernie Charitable Trust for a wonderful grant to help fund our hay
- Hastings District Masonic Trust for funding our farrier expenses
- Selak Constellation Brands for a donation on top of their volunteer work day
- St Matthews Parish for donating the proceeds of their annual pet blessing service
- Extremely generous donations from individuals: Kim Thorp; Gage family; Glenise McGaffin; Wendy Wilks; H Reyngoud; M and L Dalzell;
- Jan and Jerry for donation of hay
- Loren Young, Rebecca Clarke and several other kind people for donation of goods
- First Equine for ongoing donation of products
- Equine Farmalogic for donation of products
- Ellie O'Brien of Finesse Equestrian Training for proceeds from her Atlas Equine Massager

HOY

We were honoured to be selected as the regional sponsored charity for Horse of the Year this year and looked forward to meeting people who hitherto had been names but not faces. We assembled a display for the site generously given to us by HOY and waited with anticipation for the first day. It was not to be because of lockdown and our hearts go out to the organisers who have toiled for a whole year to put on this huge event.

Several of our suppliers had offered goods and services to fundraise for us, so we hope to use some of these to do a mini fundraiser on our Facebook page. Massive thanks to Bronwyn Sanderson of First Equine, Duncan Brown Photography, Simon Hall of Tasti Foods and Ellie O'Brien of Finesse Equestrian Training for coming to the party, also Mr Labels for producing our new brochure free of charge and Sign Central for making two corflute posters free of charge. We hope to be able to use them somewhere in the near future.

Hawke's Bay Foundation evening

Late last year a film crew spent a morning with us making a short film about our work, and this will be shown at a Hawke's Bay Foundation event at the Opera House later this month. The Old Grey Mare will have to dispense with work boots and stuff her bunyon into heels to put her best foot forward with the far more elegant Di Romans, one of our trustees who will also attend. The HBF has lent wonderful support to Leg-Up in recent years and we salute their efforts for organisations like ours.

Lime track

The lime track and resurfaced yards are done!! Work began two days after Christmas and we toiled over New Year to complete it. It was hard work but we had lots of fun, and huge kudos to contractor Steve Kimpton for entering into the spirit of it. Huge thanks as well to all the generous people who chipped in to fund the bulk of the cost. We and the horses are very grateful.

Homefree-riding for Leg-Up Trust

Most of you will know that Larissa Mueller and her horse Sprite have been riding around the coast of New Zealand for several years to raise funds for Leg-Up. They have now rounded East Cape and have set compass for home. What an amazing achievement! She expects to arrive at Clifton in early April and has asked the Old Grey Mare to ride the last few miles with her. If that happens, you can rest assured that the OGM will be staying well in the background as this is Larissa's triumph. Whatever happens, we hope she will arrive to a warm welcome back

in the Bay. Her progress will be recorded on our Facebook page, or you can track her for yourselves here:

<https://aus-share.inreach.garmin.com/homefree>

Staff

Our Isaac departed on a river of our tears for Canada last month after waiting for permission to fly back there. We wish him well. He is a fine, upstanding young man and we were blessed to have him for longer than originally intended. We have a great bunch of young people still with us and were thrilled to give some volunteers employment after faithfully helping us out for a long time. The two oldies are well and truly kept on their toes, and with the OGM now having entered her 80th decade it's just as well there's some young blood around the place.

Vale Benny

Speaking of tears, we were devastated to lose precious Benny last week to congestive heart failure. He arrived here in 2006, a singularly unattractive foal who'd been separated from his mother in the Kaimanawa muster, and he became the OGM's special needs boy. He pined for the ranges and smashed his way around the property – and twice outside it – before finally accepting life as a domestic horse. After several great years of being a well-trained mascot for Leg-Up he developed a chronic lung condition and spent his last years as the OGM's special needs boy again. When Caesar arrived to live with us in 2016, he and Benny became inseparable, and when Caesar died late last year, Benny grieved so much for his companion that he went downhill quite quickly. It was heartrending to witness. Losing him at an age far younger than most horses who live here was a bitter blow and we miss him terribly.

Jester

Our dear friends the Bantons in Northland offered us the loan of their lovely pony Jester last year, but his arrival was delayed by the lockdown. He finally came through our gates in late January and made himself at home with our resident bover boy, Legacy. Jester soon put him in his place and the pair are besties these days. We are indebted to the Bantons, also to Claire McKenna who transported the pony free of charge after a secret campaign among her friends to cover the costs. We are blessed in our friends.

Rehoming Horses...

... is a very touchy subject here, as we commit to giving our horses a lifetime home. Sadly, we have lost a chunk of our extra grazing (the Leg-Up property is only 13.5 acres) and this has resulted in the need to move a couple of horses on, one of which was born here, so it is a bitter pill to swallow. If anyone can give an exceptional home to these horses, please get in touch. One (who may already have a home) is Clyde cross Crackerjack who is rising 14 and a great trekking horse who is sick of the kids. The other is Tom, a charming Thoroughbred rising 16 who has also grown tired of the kids. He could be brought back into work.

Students

We have several new day students as well as some familiar faces still with us. A couple who finished last year but could have done with longer had not their funding run out are struggling a little at school without the respite provided by one day a week at Leg-Up. In past years we have carried children free of charge for as long as two years, but we are not currently in a financial position to do so now. If anyone reading this would like to contribute to sponsoring one of these students for a further term or two at Leg-up, we'd love to hear from you.

Horse Sponsorship

One of our main initiatives at HOY was going to be a horse sponsorship drive, so we'll transfer this to our Facebook page. We are also in the process of revamping our website that has been neglected by us for years, and two staff members are working on it in their spare time (of which there is little, so please be patient), and pics and bios of each horse will be on there before too long. Website address: www.legup.co.nz

Finally...

People who enjoyed our Christmas video may also want to have a smile at the outtakes. Here is the link:

<https://bit.ly/37ZZlJk>

Ros Rowe