This Issue is Dedicated to the Peace, Healing and Progress Taking Place at Happy Trails After the Feb. 14th Fire

We will forever cherish our four friends who survived.

We send our love to the four friends we lost.
Dear Friends of Happy Trails,

You would think that at 50 years old I would have learned at this point in my life to expect the unexpected.

Unfortunately, I was not prepared for the call that I received early in the evening on Friday, February 14th, or the news coming over the phone that hit me like a ton of bricks. It was definitely a Valentine’s Day that I will never forget when a fire was discovered in the goat/sheep barn at the sanctuary. The details of this tragedy unfold throughout this special edition newsletter which is dedicated to sharing the story, expressing our gratitude, remembering the animals who were saved as well as those who were lost, and acknowledging the peace and healing taking place after such a devastating event.

On behalf of our staff, our volunteers, and our board of directors, I cannot say enough how thankful we are at the outpouring of support we have received during this difficult and challenging time. For every phone call, every card or note of encouragement, every donation, every offer to help, please know that we appreciate each and every one of you.

With kindness and compassion for all animals,

Annette Fisher
Executive Director

Great quote by Oprah Winfrey. Happy Trails is surrounded by people who want to see us succeed. We are surrounded by the most caring supporters, the most dedicated volunteers, and the most compassionate staff. We are truly blessed!

“Surround yourself with only people who are going to lift you higher.”

Oprah Winfrey

Just in case you were wondering, in my photo of the director at the top of the center column, I am the one on the right. Beautiful Jolie is the pink piggy on the left.

A lot of supporters have already been inquiring about seasonal tours at Happy Trails. Normally hands-on, educational tours are offered from the beginning of May through the end of October. Visitors have the opportunity to interact with the rescued animals, to hear their stories, and to learn about ways to spread kindness and compassion for animals. This year tours may not begin until June, depending on the amount of construction and renovation completed by then. In addition to the challenges caused by the fire, the winter weather has not cooperated with regards to construction that was scheduled for the covered arena. When Happy Trails does open for educational tours, there will be a lot of new things to see at the sanctuary as we begin to rebuild and re-structure the facilities after the recent fire. Thanks for your patience as we do our best to keep on schedule. We know many of you are excited to visit this Spring, and we, in turn, are looking forward to welcoming you. When tour season officially opens, we will post it on the website and in the next newsletter editions.

“Heart the greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.”

- Nelson Mandella

“When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it.”

- Henry Ford
The Tragic Fire of Feb. 14th

On Friday evening February 14th, Valentine’s Day, a fire erupted in the Happy Trails goat and sheep barn. Staff member, Ashley Kloes, had just started her evening shift of feeding, watering and caring for the animals when she noticed smoke coming out of this barn. She immediately called 911 and proceeded to get Natasha and Odessa, our two permanent resident goats, out of the burning building by calling to them.

Myles, one of the barn cats, also heard her voice and ran out the open side door to safety. The fire, heat and smoke were already too intense to go into the building, and sadly there was no way to reach the other two goats, the pot belly pig and the rooster on the other side of the barn.

While waiting for the fire department to arrive, Ashley and Happy Trails neighbor George Ritchie, caught Natasha and Odessa, the surviving goats, who were now loose in the side yard near the burning building. Holding them by the horns, they led them to safety and placed them in a stall in the horse barn.

Our hearts broke as we watched the fire burn out of control while waiting for the fire fighters. I had never witnessed a burning building or experienced a fire of this magnitude up close. The fire appeared to have a life of it’s own, and large suspended circles of flames were rolling out from underneath the front overhang of the building. Fire fighters quickly arrived at the scene and began to battle the fire, which was constantly being fed by about 30 to 40 bales of hay that was stored in the barn.

There was such a feeling of helplessness knowing there wasn’t anything we could do to save the other animals. Just then another barn cat slinked out of the open front door of the barn and collapsed against the side of the building. It was Lola! We didn’t even know she was in the barn. She didn’t look very well as she lay against the outside of the barn, but the large wall of rolling flames under the overhang prevented us from going to her. Thankfully after she got her breath she ran away from the building. A short while later we were able to capture and examine her, and she appeared to be fine though somewhat shaken. A visit to the vet the following morning confirmed that she was not injured and did not have any burns, singed hair, or hurt paws. She needed a few days to rest from the smoke inhalation, but other than that she thankfully escaped the fire.

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Venus and Serena were newer members at Happy Trails. These lovely lady goats had tested positive for CAE, a debilitating goat disease that can be transferred from one goat to another. For this reason they were kept separate from the other permanent resident goats and had their own private area of the barn and their own yard. They were not up for adoption quite yet because their court case was still pending. Rico Suave, a small pig male piggy, was a newer resident at Happy Trails also. He had been discovered as a stray pig in the Copley area. After being at Happy Trails for several weeks and no-one stepping forward to claim the pig, this intact male was taken to the vet and neutered, vaccinated, dewormed and had his hooves trimmed. Rico was in the goat/sheep barn in an isolated recovery stall so that he could heal and recover by himself while the neuter took effect before he could be placed with the other families of pot bellies. To be honest, we all looked to see who had good pictures of the sweet little guy. Unfortunately because he was always so busy humping everything from the hay bales to his food bowl, we did not have any really great photos of this precious little man. We were hoping to get better pictures after the neuter surgery kicked in and he would become more laid back. Jason the rooster seemed to have some emotional issues that he was dealing with after he survived being a part of the evil world of cockfighting. He did not do great living in the rooster barn with all other hens and roosters. He would pace frantically and wear his feathers off his chest. He seemed to be more at peace being the only chicken in the area, thus resulting in his relocation to the goat/sheep barn, where he seemed to enjoy the company of his goat and pig friends. To our friends we’ve lost: Thank you for having touched our lives, for being our teachers, our companions, and our friends. We now send you love as you continue your journey and move into the world of the spirit. We will miss you and remember you always, but we will also rededicate ourselves in your memory to continuing to rescue other animals like you, who are waiting to be removed from situations of abuse and neglect, animals who deserve to be treated with kindness, compassion, respect, understanding, dignity and love. Someday we hope to meet you again when it’s our time to cross, and you will be there to lead the way to a place where animal abuse no longer exists. Until then, know that you are loved by many.
We are extremely grateful for the animal’s lives that were saved. Natasha and Odessa the goats are two of only a handful of permanent residents at Happy Trails. Acting as ambassadors, these gorgeous girls have brought great joy to many people, including nursing home residents, school children, and community residents by appearing at public events. Natasha was brought to Happy Trails after she was found on the side of the road in Summit County when she was only a day and a half old. Odessa survived a horrific situation of neglect at a livestock farm in Medina County, and had to have her left eye surgically removed at Ohio State University in Columbus.

Myles the cat and his feline gal pal, Lola, own the sanctuary as barn cats often do, and can be seen wondering around the property at any given time. These two beautiful black and white cats keep an eye on everything and supervise the volunteers and staff as they go about their day. They originally came from a local shelter who had deemed them feral and they were scheduled to be euthanized. We are so grateful that Natasha and Odessa have the opportunity to touch more lives and reach more people with their message of kindness and compassion for all animals. And we are equally grateful that Lola and Myles will still be able to meet and greet visitors and welcome them to the sanctuary. We hope that you will make sure to hug all four of the surviving animals when you visit Happy Trails during tour season and let them know that you, too, are happy they survived.
SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We have been absolutely overwhelmed with the support of people not only from Ohio but from other states as well who heard the news of the fire. We are continuing to do our very best to return phone calls, emails, texts and messages. This may take us a bit of time, so we appreciate your patience. We are so blessed to be surrounded by so many caring and loving people who want to see the sanctuary recover so that we in turn can provide peace and healing for more farm animals and horses who are victims of abuse and neglect.

• To our fellow animal-rescue workers at other humane agencies — we are amazed at how many humane societies and rescue groups that Happy Trails serves are reaching out to us, hosting fundraisers, and offering their help in any way. We are beyond grateful to know that the services we provide others are appreciated and acknowledged.

• To everyone who is sending in donations toward the reconstruction and renovation — know that we will be good stewards of these funds and that they will be used wisely and carefully. We thank you for this support and address how the funds are being used on page 10.

• Ashley Kloes is the Happy Trails Animal Care Giver staff member who discovered the fire when she began her evening care shift. Because of her quick thinking and immediate call to 911, the fire departments got there in time to contain the fire to the one building and prevent it from spreading to other nearby barns, thus saving many more lives. She saved the lives of two icons at Happy Trails, Natasha and Odessa the goats, who are known by many for their work as representatives of Happy Trails. Everyone is grateful to have these two precious souls still with us. And we are very grateful to Ashley for getting the doors opened that saved Myles and Lola, our beloved barn cats.

• The Portage County Sheriff’s Department helped direct traffic safely, and at the end of the evening, the county sent a salt truck to make sure that the road in front of the sanctuary was not icy. Many thanks to all these folks.

• I’d like to recognize our combined team of staff members, volunteers and board members who dropped everything to come out to the sanctuary simply to be there with each other and to lend their support: Staff members Ashley Ehmann, Ilona Urban, and Laurie Jackson; Board Members Kerry Jackson, Walt Shields, and Kevin Bragg; and volunteers Cindy Dilley, Jason Wolboldt, Bentley Hudson, Dave Robinson, George Richie and Barb Bakaletz. Friday was also Laurie’s birthday. Because Laurie and Kerry are such caring and thoughtful people, they immediately abandoned their night-out plans and arrived, dressed-up, at Happy Trails to be there with all of us.

• Thanks to the media who have reached out to us, visited Happy Trails in the several days following the story, and covered the situation with great respect: At this time we have worked with Channel 8 Fox News; Channel 19 News; Channel 27/33 News; Ray Horner Morning Show at WAKR news radio; Mary Ann Graff and Doug James, morning show hosts of K105FM; Donna Miller at the Cleveland Plain Dealer; and Kathy Antoniotti at the Akron Beacon Journal.

• Simple things meant a lot Friday evening. Thanks to neighbors, Dottie and Bob Kosinski, who let our staff and volunteers park in their driveway since parking was not allowed on the street.

• To Sarah Aitken for meeting our crew at Hummel Pet Services in Copley at 11:00 at night to accept the bodies of our animal friends whose lives were lost. That is definitely going above and beyond and we are grateful.

• To Mary Jane Brigger, Reiki Master and healer, for working together with the group of people who were at the fire and helping us address the raw emotional experience of the event. And for leading us in a beautiful ceremony of peace, healing and letting go at the site of the burned building itself. This was another step in bringing closure for many people.

More stories of amazing donations and people getting involved to help the sanctuary will continue in the next regularly edition newsletter. Please know how much we appreciate each and every one of you and your support during this most difficult of times. Many thanks.
How can we help?
That seems to have been the overall theme of the questions that have been coming in. With how complicated life can become after a fire, the simplest answer would be to help us fill the seats for the upcoming March 22nd fundraiser that was already being planned before the fire occurred. This fundraiser will now be more important than ever, with additional funds being needed to address fire safety, facility upgrades and handle repairs. The event is called “A Night of Hope and Inspiration”, which is something I think we all need right now. Details of this very special fundraiser can be found on the website at happytrailsfarm.org, where you can purchase a ticket on-line, or you can call the sanctuary at 330-296-5914 and purchase tickets over the phone. By attending our event, you will be showing your support and will be in the company of some amazing people that evening. Please consider joining us. See more information on page 10.

Thank you Hummel Pet Services for being there for us and for donating cremation services for the animals who died in the fire.
By the end of the evening, five fire trucks were on the scene to help battle the blaze. **We are very grateful to the amazing fire fighters from Ravenna Township, the City of Ravenna, Edinburg, Rootstown and Randolph fire departments.** These brave guys cut holes in the roof of the building and climbed up ladders on the side of the building to make openings in the walls.

One by one, Happy Trails staff and many volunteers received the call of the devastating news. Though each of them asked if they should come to the sanctuary, everyone was given the same answer: “You are welcome to come to the sanctuary if you feel drawn to be here, but there is really nothing anyone can do. The damage is done and the fire fighters are doing their job.”

Time seemed to stand still for me personally, and the entire evening seemed surreal. It felt like only minutes had gone by since I made those calls to our staff and volunteers, but every time I turned around, another friendly, worried face would appear through the smoky haze illuminated by the bright flashing fire truck lights. **One by one, the entire team appeared, comforting each other and helping one another mourn the loss of the lives of the precious animals who could not be saved.** Anywhere you walked on the property was another caring soul. These are the type of people who didn’t even need to ask, “What can we do?” They are so connected to each other that they instinctively knew the right things to say and how to bring peace and healing to the scene.

Before the fire was even completely extinguished, the healing process had begun.

By the time the fire fighters were satisfied that everything was once again safe, it was very late in the evening. We sloshed through hundreds, if not thousands, of gallons of water which was now running across the ground and mixing with the snow. With the bitter temperatures, it was only going to be a matter of time before the entire area turned into a skating rink.

At this point several hours had passed since the fire began. **Within this very short time period lives were lost, lives were saved, and lives were touched in a big way.**

We then stood in the warm glow of the fire truck lights staring vacantly at the mist of vapor hanging around the now completely destroyed building. The Happy Trails team gathered and the question needed addressed: **What do we do tonight for the animals who lost their lives?** A late-night call placed to a great friend, Sarah Aitken with Hummel Pet Services, enabled us to take the animals who perished in the fire to the crematory immediately.

**Everyone worked together.** Our group slowly went into the soaked, steaming building, and volunteers very respectfully took blankets and covered the bodies of the two goats, **Serena** and **Venus**; the pot belly pig,
Rico Suave; and Jason the rooster. With the team nearby, Happy Trails Board Members Kerry Jackson and Kevin Bragg carefully picked up the covered goats one at a time and gently placed them in wheelbarrows to get them through the rubble inside the barn. Rico the pig was fairly small, and Kevin tucked the blanket in close around the little guy and carefully held him in his arms as he carried him outside. Jason the rooster, too, was carefully blanketed and held respectfully as a volunteer removed him from his cage and carried him out the door. Once outside the barn, volunteer Bentley Hudson was waiting with the skidsteer to help transport the animals past the fire trucks to the front of the sanctuary. There they were moved into the Happy Trails logo truck for transport. Walt and Kevin made the late-night drive with the animals to Hummel Pet Services located in Copley, helping to provide a sense of closure for everyone.

During all the commotion, the other animals at the sanctuary were still waiting to be fed. Staff members and volunteers worked together to make sure everyone else had food, water and dry bedding before being able to complete what had become a terribly long, stressful and heart-wrenching night.

THE DAY AFTER

The following day everyone dealt with grief in various ways. Our regular Saturday work crew arrived at the sanctuary to clean shelters as usual, though this time with heavy hearts. In the middle of the day, a special thing that happened brightened everyone’s spirits and reminded us all what Happy Trails is all about. Two young bull calves named Nelson (on left) and Gunther who had come into our program from two separate rescues, had been suffering from severe malnutrition. They had been kept in different areas for quarantine purposes to help prevent them from spreading upper respiratory disease and pneumonia-like symptoms to each other. Earlier that week, both calves were strong enough and healthy enough to be castrated (neutered). On Saturday, they were able to meet each other for the first time, with a crowd of volunteers standing by cheer them on and to witness this next step in their recovery — finally getting to become buddies! Not long after they met, the two boys became fast friends, never leaving each other’s side. (Check out the video on this wonderful meeting on our website at www.happytrailsfarm.org)

Tears of sadness now mixed with tears of joy as everyone’s heart went out to these two adorable steers who were each so excited about their new found companionship with each other. It was indeed part of the healing process.

CURRENT FIRE SAFETY/CAUSE OF THE FIRE

We’d like to share the fact that Happy Trails does indeed keep fire extinguishers that are maintained by a professional extinguisher company and updated properly in each barn. This has always been our policy. The electrical wiring in many of our shelters is installed to commercial specifications and is above and beyond anything required for agricultural barns. Unfortunately when we discovered the fire in the goat/sheep barn, it had already progressed far beyond the usefulness of any fire extinguisher.

Though the fire departments are unable to pinpoint a specific cause of the fire, there are a variety of speculations. Possible guesses included a mouse, rodent or other wildlife chewing through wiring, or a heat lamp bulb being knocked down by a jumping rodent or a cat.

“Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.”
– Arthur Ashe
A gathering of people who promote kindness and compassion for animals can be especially powerful when they come together to welcome peace and healing into their lives, into their communities, and to celebrate the good that is being done.

Though the upcoming Happy Trails fundraiser was in the planning stages long before the devastating fire took place at the sanctuary, it was almost as though the theme and the event was planned specifically because of the tragedy that took place. It seemed that a time of healing was already being planned for the catastrophe that was about to happen.

I personally believe that this fundraiser is now going to be more important than ever for everyone involved with Happy Trails; our supporters, staff and volunteers. Everyone was affected in some way by the fire. Each person in their own way dealt with the sadness and grief of knowing that four precious animals’ lives were lost.

This special evening will allow all of us to come together as a group, to support one another, to support the animal rescue services of the sanctuary, and to support the rebuilding and improvements being implemented. Gathering together to welcome peace and healing into our lives and into Happy Trails as we move forward will allow us to hold sacred the past while blessing the future.

**Guest Speakers**
These individuals will be sharing personal, heart-warming stories of the impact that rescued animals from Happy Trails have had upon their lives and the lives of others:

- **Thirty Umrigar**  
  Author, Journalist, and Professor at Case Western Reserve University

- **Rachel Whitehawk-Day**  
  Founder/Executive Director, Whitehawk Ranch, Inc.

- **Holly Butterfield**  
  Team Leader: Conditional Release Unit with Recovery Resources

- **Hope Brustein**  
  Executive Director of Geauga Humane Society’s Rescue Village

- **Willis Miller**  
  Representing Happy Trails Amish Horse Retirement Program

- **Ilona Urban**  
  Retired Akron Public Schools Teacher, Happy Trails Volunteer

- **Terri Flanagan**  
  Proud Adoptive Mom of Rescued Farm Animals

- **Kerry Jackson**  
  Vice President Happy Trails Board of Directors; Law Enforcement Officer for The University of Akron

- **Annette Fisher**  
  Founder/Executive Director of Happy Trails Farm Animal Sanctuary

**Fundraiser Raffles**

- **Chinese Raffle**! Some REALLY great prizes are waiting for you to drop your ticket in their bag.

- **“Stuffing the Barn”** Each time you purchase a bale of hay, you “stuff the barn”. With each purchase you receive a chance to win prizes.

- The **Lottery Forrest** will be lottery trees loaded with tickets for a chance to make your dreams come true!

- The **Wine Pull**. $20 will get you your choice of a mystery wine to take home!

- The **50/50 Raffle**

- **Mystery Grab Bag**! For $5 per bag, you’re always a winner!

**Great Vegan Food**

**Heavy Hors D’oeuvres**
A special animal-friendly menu created exclusively for this event by the good folks at Todaro’s Party Center will feature heavy vegan hors d’oeuvres. Scrumptious vegan desserts are donated by supporting restaurants.

**Charge cards will be accepted at this event!**

**Tickets $55**  
Call Happy Trails office at 330-296-5914 to purchase tickets or go to happytrailsfarm.org

Enjoy the Uplifting Music of Violinist, Mary Beth Ions!
Not only will Happy Trails survive the devasting fire, but together we will grow, rebuild, upgrade and improve. Together we will thrive.

I believe that things do indeed happen for a reason, though in the midst of hurt and confusion we don’t understand, and often don’t want to understand, that reason.

It often takes time to heal. While our hearts are with the animals who have passed on, we have the reality of not only rebuilding after the fire and improving safety in other areas, we also have the reality of continuing to care for the over 200+ rescued animals who currently reside at the sanctuary. And more continue to come in as we assess our space and resources.

Just two weeks after the fire, we helped with the rescue of three emaciated horses from the Mahoning County area. Our staff and volunteers went into rescue mode. The horses were transported to Happy Trails, immediately assessed by a veterinarian, health issues were addressed, proper nutrition and a care plan was put into place, and the new horses received a great deal of love and attention. But who was helping who here? Yes, the horses were receiving care from our crew, but by allowing our staff and volunteers to focus on the rescue work they are trained to do, the horses were actually helping all of us recover from the fire and move forward.

Regardless of our own needs due to the fire, Happy Trails is continuing to extend our hand to help any humane society or law enforcement agency that requests our assistance. We will not let this fire deter us from continuing to serve and support those who rely on Happy Trails.

Together, we will not let the severity of the fire overwhelm us. We will use it to make us stronger, to grow, to build, to improve, to upgrade.

Together we will thrive.

Thank you for your generosity and support. We are grateful for the opportunity to work together with you to serve and protect those who have no voice.

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**DONATION INFORMATION**

I am enclosing.....

- $10  - $25  - $50  - $75  - $125  - $_________

Please accept this donation:

- To be used where needed most
- For fire safety and recovery projects
- The Covered Arena Campaign

Name ___________________________ Address ________________________________
City/State/Zip __________________ Home Phone ____________________________
Cell Phone ______________________ Email _________________________________

☐ Check enclosed
☐ Please charge my ___ VISA  ___Mastercard  ___American Express

Card Number
Exp. Date ______________________ CSC (3 digits on back)

Name On Card (Please print)

Signature

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**OTHER WAYS TO DONATE**

- **Donate on-line via PayPal at www.happytrailsfarm.org**
- **Call in your charge card information to Happy Trails at 330-296-5914.**

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**Return to Happy Trails Farm Animal Sanctuary**

5623 New Milford Rd.  Ravenna, Oh 44266

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**Want to become a monthly donor?**

Simply fill out the donation form above and include this coupon!

☐ Please charge my credit card each month in the amount of $_________

☐ Please send me pre-addressed envelopes so I can send in a monthly check.

“People who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.”
- Apple Computers

(Left) Stephanie Collage, staff member, cares for Nelson, a lovable little calf.
Happy Trails Farm Animal Sanctuary Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that rescues, rehabilitates, and provides an adoption program for abused, abandoned, and neglected farm animals such as horses, ponies, potbellies pigs, farm pigs, chickens, ducks, turkeys, sheep, goats, and cows. Happy Trails serves the entire state of Ohio and any other state requesting our help, and works in cooperation with county humane societies, animal protective leagues, and local and state law enforcement officers. Animals in our program must have been removed from a situation of abuse, neglect or abandonment by law officials, and cruelty charges must be filed against the person(s) responsible for the crime.