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Therapeutic riding program gets Farm Credit gift

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When Kristen Lovell first volunteered to help with a therapeutic riding program, she was just looking for something useful to do in her spare time that would complement her love for horses.

“Once I got into it, I found it very rewarding,” she said. “To see someone who is initially terrified of horses, and then in just a few lessons, they have learned to trust the horse and volunteers and are excited to ride — the transformation is amazing to watch.”

Lovell recently found another way to help others through horses.

The Farm Credit Services’ financial services officer from the Martinsville office presented a \$1,000 check from Farm Credit to People and Animal Learning Services of Bloomington.

“I knew firsthand this is a good program that changes people’s lives,” Lovell said. “When I heard Farm Credit had stewardship funds available to worthy projects in our communities, I approached our regional vice president about helping PALS and she agreed. This is going to help a lot of people.”

Founded in 2000 by executive director Fern Bonchek, PALS is a nonprofit equine assisted program, providing therapeutic riding for individuals with disabilities.

This provides many benefits including strength, flexibility, and muscle relaxation for participants.

The program also serves at-risk youth. These youth are able to bond with the horses and volunteers, as well as learn responsibility by caring for a horse.

PALS is the only therapeutic riding center in Monroe County and surrounding area that is accredited as a Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International Premier Accredited Center.

It is also a member of the Indiana Horse Council and is a United Way Member Agency.

PALS relies extensively on volunteers.

Lovell indicated that the clients are not the only beneficiaries of PALS — the horses are as well.

“The program actually gives horses that have had another ‘career’ an opportunity to be useful again,” she said. “It takes extensive training to get them to the therapy horse level and to be able to handle a wide variety of distractions, either from the environment or the rider.”

Lovell said that the donation, from Farm Credit’s regional stewardship funds, was just part of the ag lending cooperative’s way of supporting the rural communities it serves.

“Contributing to our community is important to Farm Credit, and this is a perfect way to do that” she said.

“PALS is a great local program, and by being part of Indiana’s horse industry, it also has an agricultural connection.”

PALS’ executive director Bonchek said that Farm Credit’s donation would help with the overall expenses of taking care of the horses and running the program, which in turn, allows them to charge reduced fees to more than 65 weekly riders.

“We’re very dependent on support from businesses and individuals to run our program, and we’re very thankful to Farm Credit for their support,” she said.

To learn more about PALS, visit www.palstherapy.org.

About Farm Credit Services

of Mid-America

Farm Credit Services of Mid-America is a \$17.5 billion financial services cooperative serving more than 92,500 farmers, agribusinesses and rural residents in Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana and Tennessee.

The association provides loans for all farm and rural living purposes including real estate, operating equipment and housing and related services such as crop insurance, and vehicle, equipment and building leases.

For more about Farm Credit, call 1-800-444-FARM or see www.e-farmcredit.com.



Courtesy photo Shown above, Kristen Lovell, left, presents Annie Cornett, assistant director of PALS, and Lola, therapeutic riding horse, with a check to support their program.

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