Community Foundation helps those who help others

By Julianne Endres
Watertown Area Community Foundation

Special Olympics, Saddle Up, Joy Ranch ... these organizations all share a common bond of lifting up those with special needs.

“It has been a privilege and an honor for the Watertown Area Community Foundation to partner with these groups over the years,” said Jan DeBerg, WACF executive director. Thousands of dollars in grants have helped support these organizations and the people they serve.

40 Years ... 40 Stories: The Watertown Area Community Foundation celebrates 40 years of “Looking Forward and Giving Back”, in 2019. Join the Foundation as it takes the opportunity this year to not only celebrate, but also to look back with gratitude over the past 40 years.

Special Olympics

Special Olympics support has included grants helping with the purchase of T-shirts and jerseys as well as lunch for the volunteers, coaches and athletes at the regional track and field event held in Watertown. Special Olympic athletes from northeast South Dakota will compete at Allen Mitchell Field Friday, May 3, in the annual meet which means so much to athletes of all ages.

In fact, that is the reason the Special Olympics Endowment Fund was established at the Foundation. Duane and Deb Popham, whose daughter, Chelsea, participates in Special Olympics, established the fund 18 years ago. Though Chelsea is the performer, the whole family treasures the
extraordinary moments
Special Olympics creates.
Terry Etienne, who
passed away in 2017 at
the age of 64, was another
example of why Special
Olympics’ is so important.
His family designated his
memorials to the Special
Olympics Fund.
“The family picked Spe-
cial Olympics because it
was Terry’s love,” said Ter-
ry’s sister, Susan Arneson.
“Special Olympics is so
good about doing things
for people like Terry. They
were there for Terry all
these years. It made his life
a little brighter.”

Saddle Up
Saddle Up has also
brought joy to many
physically and/or men-
tally challenged riders
over the years. Foundation
grants have supported
things like equipment
and most recently helped
with boarding and feeding
costs of the horses.
One volunteer de-
scribed Saddle Up’s
success best: “For many
of the riders, when they
get their cowboy boots on,
they start smiling because
they know it’s time to go to
Saddle Up.”
Riders will be preparing
this summer for the State
Special Olympics Eques-
trian Competition.

Joy Ranch
Joy Ranch, where “All
Are Welcome,” truly cre-
ates an inclusive environ-
ment day in and day out
for its visitors. The Foun-
dation is glad to have had
a part in that. Grants have
supported many things
including a handicap-ac-
cessible buggy and ramp
so the disabled and elderly
can enjoy a ride in a horse-
pulled wagon, assistance
for a Sensory Adventures
Camp and more.
Earlier this year, the
Foundation awarded a
grant which will ensure
the paving of the path
leading from the lakeside
entrance of the retreat
center to the waterfront
and campfire area.
“These are all great ex-
amples of how the Foun-
dation supports people
with disabilities,” said De-
Berg. “It’s not about dol-
ars and cents. It’s about
seeing the excitement and
joy on the faces of those
served by these awesome
organizations!”

Far left: Jenkins residents
enjoy a ride in a handicap-ac-
cessible buggy at Joy Ranch
in 2010 with the help of volun-
tee Bruce Hestad. The buggy
and wheelchair ramp were
supported through a Water-
town Area Community Foun-
dation grant. Left: Friends
Shelby Hasner and Chelsea
Popham congratulate each
other after a successful Spe-
cial Olympics relay in 2006.
A Youth Council grant helped
fund T-shirts and jerseys for
local athletes that year.