

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 Special Olympics because it was Terry's love," said Terry'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 mentally 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 described 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 Equestrian Competition.

Joy Ranch

Joy Ranch, where "All Are Welcome," truly creates an inclusive environment day in and day out for its visitors. The Foundation is glad to have had a part in that. Grants have supported many things including a handicap-accessible 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 examples of how the Foundation supports people with disabilities," said DeBerg. "It's not about dollars 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-accessible buggy at Joy Ranch in 2010 with the help of volunteer Bruce Hestad. The buggy and wheelchair ramp were supported through a Watertown Area Community Foundation grant. Left: Friends Shelby Hasner and Chelsea Popham congratulate each other after a successful Special Olympics relay in 2006. A Youth Council grant helped fund T-shirts and jerseys for local athletes that year.