

Spark of Hope - Director's Report

Well, what a ride the past 12 months has been. October, 2015 - in a matter of just a few short weeks, we went from talking about looking for a permanent home for Spark of Hope, to actually signing on the dotted line for that place. As anyone who has bought and sold properties will know, this caused a massive ripple effect. Our Wyndham Vale home needed to be sold, bank loans needed to be in place, and all the prep that needs to be done in order to move had to be sorted. In the middle of this we also, with much excitement, had the wedding of our eldest son.

March 2016 saw us move into our lovely Mt Egerton home. The horses moved in the following week and we then embraced the challenges that come with owning a property larger than the suburban block. At the same time, we started to receive enquiries about Spark of Hope and how we might be able to help others. At the end of April, I attended an equine therapy facilitators training course, that enlarged my understanding of the various ways others were using horses in their areas of influence. It also helped to gel in my mind what we would and wouldn't do at Spark of Hope.

With winter came frost, snow and rain. Lots of rain. We ended up having the wettest winter in 30 years, followed by the wettest September since records began (100 years) and double the monthly average of rainfall in October. Essentially we had 5 months of winter! All this rain left our paddocks sodden and gateways almost treacherous. All discussions with interested parties had to be put on hold until the weather improved.

I believe though, that none of this was wasted time. God continued to refine His plans for what we are doing. We successfully applied for charity status with the Australian Government, we have applied for "similar ministry" status with Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch, in the USA (our inspiration and huge guiding force in all that we are doing) - in fact as I write this we have a phone interview with Crystal Peaks scheduled within the next week - and we have, where possible introduced various people to our wonderful fur boys.

It would be all too easy to measure our success purely on the basis of how big we are. The temptation to allow numbers to rule us is great. It would also be so easy to get impatient with how things have progressed. Yet, time and again, God reminds me that this ministry is not about numbers but obedience and that I am to trust Him, that in His time, all things will work out. And so, we continue to prepare and wait and trust, knowing, that as we remain faithful in the little, He will remain faithful to us.

As we come to the end of this year, I would like to thank the board - for their advice, encouragement and belief they have in what we are doing. I also cannot thank Barry enough for his unshakeable support, faith and commitment to what we believe we are called to do. To those of you who have sent encouraging messages, financial gifts and friendship - I also thank you. You have no idea how much this has meant to both myself and Barry.

I recently had an equine therapy professional visit our place to give one of the horses a massage. This person knows what we are wanting to do and has been very supportive. She recently shared a blog I had written, and, in her introduction described Spark of Hope as a place of "growing, learning and healing"...

Growing. Learning. Healing. I pray that all of us will find a place where we can grow, learn and heal in safety.

In His Service,

Anna McGookin