

Molly the Pony



For the past two years there has been a photograph of a small pony on my cubicle wall. I placed it there hoping that others would take notice and spread the word about the tragedies and triumphs of Molly the Pony with the prosthetic leg.

The small pony, whose story has inspired me and so many others, has been recognized for her courage and determination to survive whatever comes her way.

When I first learned that the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games will be held in Kentucky in 2010, I immediately thought it would be a great idea if Molly could serve as an official equine ambassador representing disabilities inclusion on an international level. I began spreading the word about Molly the Pony hoping that this suggestion would reach those that could make it happen.

Molly's extraordinary story began during hurricane Katrina when she became stranded in a partially collapsed barn in southern Louisiana. The owners had left plenty of feed and water expecting to return in a few days, but the severity of the storm prevented them from returning. After being trapped for over a week, Molly was finally rescued on Sept. 6. She was taken to Pony Paradise, a small farm owned by Kaye Harris and used as a rescue facility for Hurricane Katrina animal victims.

This could have been the end of the story with Molly living out her days happily ever after at Pony Paradise, but that was not to be the case. One day Molly and the other ponies were attacked by a pit bull terrier. Molly soon recovered from most of her wounds, but her right-front leg did not heal. She would either lose her leg or lose her life. Ms. Kaye, as friends call her, and Molly again were poised to share an unexpected journey. To survive, Molly would have to undergo a rare surgical procedure for horses, amputation of her front leg.

The procedure took place on Jan. 16, 2006, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, a special day for those of us involved in national service and community volunteerism. For us it is a chance for everyone to volunteer one day of their time and expertise to meet the challenges of their community. While most businesses were closed for the holiday, a dedicated medical team and volunteers gathered at Louisiana State University in an attempt to save the life of the little pony who had already touched so many hearts with her will to survive.

Now, Ms. Kaye and Molly have a new mission in life. They travel as much as possible visiting children's hospital, rehabilitation centers, senior centers and other events. They spread hope to those who have lost so much either by disease or circumstance.

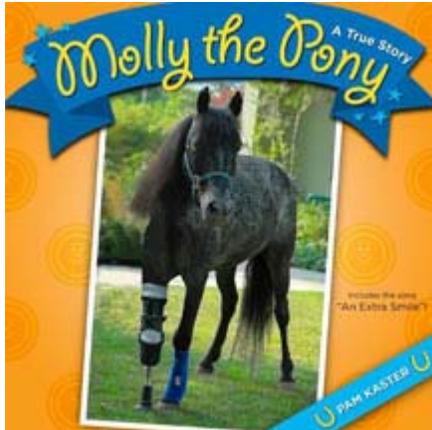


No less important to the survival and success of Molly is her human companion, Ms. Kaye. Without her belief in the rights of all living things to live out their lives as best as possible, Molly's story would have come to an abrupt end a long time ago. The dedication and devotion that Ms. Kaye has shown to Molly and the other animals at Pony Paradise make them a team for life. It takes a lot of personal sacrifice and willingness to risk everything, both emotionally and financially, to care for a loved one with a disability. The same is true for adopting a pony with special needs and extraordinary medical expenses.

In August, Molly and Ms. Kaye visited the Kentucky Horse Park. I heard about their visit just in time to go see them. As we talked, I could not help but notice a small sign on the table with Molly's name and the universal symbol of accessibility, or was it? Upon closer inspection the symbol had been altered. The wheelchair symbol actually had a pony sitting in the wheelchair!



Ms. Kaye and I talked about life's challenges and the special people that devote their lives so others with special needs can attain their goals in life. For many people with severe disabilities, their success is dependent on a parent, a sibling or other loved one who has devoted time and energy to ensure that the individual reaches their maximum potential, just like Ms. Kaye has done for Molly. I know because I am one of those people who could not have realized my dreams without the help of countless individuals throughout my lifetime. Molly did not choose to become a symbol of hope for others. It just happened by a series of circumstances.



And speaking of making dreams come true, I just learned that Molly the Pony and Ms. Kaye will indeed participate in the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games (WEG) in 2010 as part of the Equine Village. Molly will be one of the spectators at the Para-Equestrian (riders with disabilities) Competition! The WEG anticipates there will be in excess of 600,000 spectators, plus exhibitors from 60 countries. That will be a lot of hope and education to spread across the world.

Kids and Ponies - Molly's Foundation was established to accept donations to care for Molly and other retirees or rescued ponies, her mission to work with those who need her inspiration, and to administer educational programs for children using ponies. A book featuring Molly and her journey has also been published. If you would like more information about Molly, her foundation, or about the book, go to www.mollythepony.com.