

# PROJECT HORSES FOR FORCES



## ANNUAL REPORT - 2021



Ruth Nortje, Director  
February, 2022  
[HorsesforForces.weebly.com](http://HorsesforForces.weebly.com)  
FB: horses4forces

## How our Horses served our Forces in 2021

*In 2021, the healing power of our horses provided Community, Joy and Wellness with stimulating Horsemanship and Equine Learning opportunities for 45 individuals*

**Together with the Equine Team, we served 32 Veterans & 13 family members:**

**Twelve Veterans, with 8 of their spouses / children (and for a short time: 1 Airman)**

**Two Full-day Equine Assisted Learning Clinics for Trenton Vet Center Affiliated PTSD groups hosted Veterans & their families from as far as South Jersey enjoyed our Veterans Appreciation Day (June 21)**

**Vet Haven North Veterans enjoyed two days of R&R at the farm with the horses & our Veterans**

**Five Veterans' children enjoyed a sponsored week of Summer Horse Camp**

**Three children of our program's Weekly Participants received scholarships for Riding Lessons**

2021 was a year of much change and not without very significant challenges. We offered 3 sets of 15, 12 and 10 weeks of weekly Horsemanship Sessions to our participants – for a total of 282 individual sessions! As in 2020, we continued our programs mainly “in the family” due to the limitations the pandemic presented. Our participants continued to grow personally as well as in their skills working with and riding their horses. We enjoyed the camaraderie among us all as we rode out the pandemic (figuratively) and the year (literally). We were pleased to be able to offer area Veterans a Veterans Appreciation Family Day where they could visit the farm, enjoy lunch, watch program demonstrations and meet our participants and volunteers, and their children were able to enjoy pony rides. The Veterans Administration and their associated Vet Centers would not allow any of their people to travel to programs until September. Once the restrictions started to loosen up, things really got busy and we enjoyed providing PTSD Clinics and Full-Day Group sessions again.

The property and facility owner, Amy Holzworth, sold the farm and the Drakestown Equestrian Riding School and retired. Five horses we had used for our programs left the farm as result of the change. But great news: the new farm owner and new Equestrian Facility manager, Lizz Visakay, welcomed Project Horses for Forces with open arms! We are so incredibly grateful. Several new horses arrived between October and December, bringing exciting new options for our program participants.

Several of our participants moved out of the area while several were still unable to attend due to pandemic restrictions, family / personal needs or work requirements. Our Volunteer Team reduced significantly in 2020, so we were grateful when new volunteers joined the program in 2021. We said our final goodbyes to two of our beloved horses, Maverick and Maddie, as well as two barn kitties, Boots and her momma, Lola. These friendly horses and cats have been a big part of the scene for all these years and we miss the whinnies, the rubs and meows when we arrive at the barn. New kittens have arrived and we look forward to them integrating into our family! Sadly, the hardest loss came in February 2022, when our own much beloved horse, Ben suddenly died, without any signs of illness. He was 29 and will be sorely missed by one and all. Run free Ben...

**Ruth Nortje, Program Director and Instructor**





## Our Amazing Volunteers

*Our volunteer of the year, Preston Wood (USAF Veteran) served an incredible 200 hours at the farm & our events in 2021. Thank you, Woody - from all of us!*

Together our participants (and some of their family members), program volunteers and several visiting groups – Union Rotarians & Team Re/Max 365 – further renovated the SSgt Mike Moretti Stable Aisle and renovated the old cow barn into our very own Veterans Zone with a rustic new Tack Room in the back, entirely from scratch! A great job well done. In 2021, our program volunteers served over 2000 hours. We are incredibly grateful to our Team of 12 for their selfless service and commitment to our Veterans and their families. We are so thankful for the additional groups who came to help us develop our facilities.



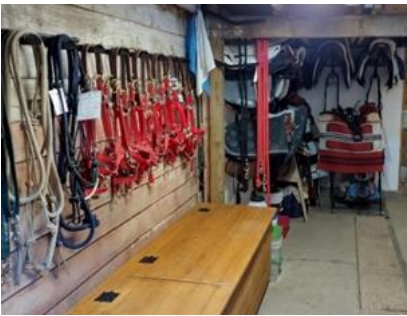
*Woody with Ben & Galler*



*Don & his father smoothed out the cowshed floor*



*Enjoying our own nice roomy Veterans zone!*



*Our own tack room*



*Saddles hung & ready*



*Completed Flag & Logo*



*Union Rotary work day: Logo & Flag on our stable doors, spruced up stalls & a functioning Veterans zone!*



## 2021 Program Volunteer Team



Top: Allen Gondeck (USMC Veteran) – Vice President; Kathy Hart – PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning; Ruth Nortje – Program Director, Path Intl. Riding Instructor; Vivian Paulter – Equine Assistant

Middle: Brian McQuire (USMC Veteran); Meka McQuire (Events & Hospitality); Joe Becker (USA Veteran); Ken Liebler (USA Veteran) & Linda Liebler

Front: ; Diana Romero (USAF Ret.); Olivia Erikson – Equine Assistant; Cindy Zeller – Equine Assistant; Lynn Gannett; Preston Wood (USAF Veteran)

Our special recognition and gratitude to Allen for serving for 5 years as our Vice President – we are deeply indebted to Allen for all his military culture input and contributions to Project Horses for Forces. We wish him only the best as he continues to serve his fellow veterans with the VFW, WWV and Healing Waters Organizations.

## Our Fabulous 2021 Equine Team



Top Row: Lucy (Friesian), MacYver (Belgian Draft), Ben (Thoroughbred Cross), Nicky (Quarter)

Row 2: Sunny (Quarter), Junie (Welsh), Ion (Thoroughbred), Lauro (Appendix)

Row 3: Tilly (Quarter), Wriddle (Hanovarian); Taylor (Thoroughbred), Daisy (Welsh)

Row 4: Sam (Paso Fino), Ivey (Percheron), Emmy (Quarter), Galler (Belgian Warmblood)



## Donors - our amazing Impact Squad

Lance & Deonne Boxer (both US Army Veterans), Pat Grillo (USMC Veteran), John & Debbie McLain, Allen (USMC Ret.) & Janet Gondeck, Corey Briggs (USMC Veteran), Andre & Ruth Nortje, David Culley (Veteran), Betty Anderson, Diane Piermattie (Mike Moretti's widow), Ray (USMC Veteran) & Loretta Quesnel, Arlene Perillo, Morgan Hansen (Veteran), Nancy Grossweiler, Mark Kitchin, Johanna Meeker, Chelsea Kreiner, Don Koger (US Army Veteran); Hunterdon County folks who donated to Hunter Paulter's Collection Project;

our USMC Veteran AJ's Birthday FB Fundraiser donors: Diana Romero (USAF Ret.), Carol Kain (US Navy Ret.), Preston Wood (USAF Veteran), Cassy Lynn, Nancy Andre, Denise Cooke, Imelda Gamboa, Simon Clark, Gina Lonzello, Bryan Ko & Michelle Ferrari;

our USN Veteran Carol's Birthday FB Fundraiser donors: Preston Wood, Debbie Heiser, Karan Kubik, Jay Droppa, Kevin Kahalan, Judy Hodges, Maggie Stefanel & Laura Chichester;  
All who bought Rotary E-Bike Raffle Tickets & AWI R.E.D. T-shirts to support us.

**Anonymous donors - you know who you are: THANK YOU!**

Special mention: our 2 monthly donors – Captain John Page (USAF Veteran) & Rachel McOdrum.  
We would love to see more people step up and support this program on a monthly basis.

## Fundraising Event Sponsors & Program Donors

All our Programs and Offerings are provided at ZERO cost to our Veterans and their families. We are 100% dependent upon our donors for our ability to serve our Nation's MVPs. In 2021 we received donations from businesses and Veterans Organizations who stepped up in the most unbelievable way to support our mission, making our 2021 fundraising year the most successful so far. We are so grateful to the Rotary of Branchburg for organizing 2 events (Family Fun Touch-a-Truck Day and Bike Run) with our Veterans Organization Network (Welcome Home Veterans of NJ, Frontline Arts, Operation Jersey Cares, Veterans Network of NJ and us). A huge shout out to all the businesses and individuals who sponsored us at the events and bought Rotary E-bike Raffle Tickets. We received over \$16,000 in matching funds from an anonymous benefactor! Special mention for several significant Sponsorships received: Lance & Deonne Boxer, Atlantic Health System & Hillmann Consulting. We are also very grateful for South Ridge Community Church's ongoing major support and another big Grant from Overwatch Alliance (Tennessee).

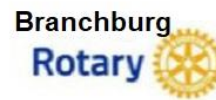
Thank you for standing by us & supporting our Veterans



## In recognition of our 3-star Sponsors (2 additional anonymous donors)



Lance & Deonne  
Boxer



Team McLain  
**RE/MAX**  
365

Post 342 - Chester



North Hunterdon



## We are grateful for our 2-star Sponsors



Hunterdon County Bulldogs



THE NEWCOMERS  
& FRIENDS CLUB  
OF CENTRAL  
HUNTERDON COUNTY







We continued to sell the hugely popular R.E.D. T-shirts donated in 2020 by the American Warrior Initiative & Fairway Independent Mortgage Corporation (Freehold, NJ) at the Rotary Events



Family Fun Day - June 13 - so much for the kids to enjoy - in appreciation of our Veterans



September 12 - Branchburg Rotary Riders Annual Ride & Fly Motorcycle Run



# Horsemanship Programs – Testimonials

**"Monday is Horse Day!** Monday morning. Most people don't look forward to Monday mornings but our group all do. You see, for us, Monday is Horse Day! We arrive at the farm at 10am, greet each other, get our horses from their pasture, thoroughly groom them, including picking their hooves. Then we either do some hand-grazing, groundwork, or round penning. The most important thing we do is connect with our horse.

A horse is so unique in every way. Then have the innate ability to sense our emotions through body language. Everything we do or say is reflected in our body language. Likewise, the horse gives off signals we can understand to actually communicate with the horse. Just the idea we can actually communicate with a 1200-pound animal and have a relationship with them is great fodder for the soul. Round penning is where the real attachment is made. The wonder of sending a horse walking or trotting freely around a round pen, silently making it come to a stop, come into you and then follow you around like a shadow is too much to try to explain. It means the horse has selected to be with you and to trust you as leader. Horses for Forces is just an amazing experience that needs to be seen & felt." **Ray, USMC Vietnam**

**"Thursdays are Safe Days:** My weekly sessions at the farm have become a valuable source of life support. In addition to the support offered by my instructor, my fellow veterans & volunteers in the program, the horses provide empathy & feedback in ways that simply go beyond words.

All of us humans approach the world with bias, and whether we mean to or not, we judge one another. Horses don't do that. All a horse asks, is that you be present. Because of their keen observation skills & instant feedback, they can help you feel safe while you work on processing difficult emotions & experiences." **Don, US Army, OND Kuwait**

"Project Horses for Forces has come to mean many things to me. It has added several new facets to my life beyond my expectations. I have always liked horses, starting my riding lessons at age 5, but I never really bonded with a horse until I was about 14. A neighbor had a horse and I spent more than a few times at their home. Fast forward to now. I have an actual relationship with Nicky. He knows who I am, even if only as "The Carrot Lady" – I talk to him and he listens.

I have seen how PHFF has changed people, some who have never been near a horse before. It's so true that "the outside of a horse is good for the soul of a (wo)man. They can be like an oversized puppy and play at our heart strings. The Project has brought us a connection most of us once had but was missing after we left the military. That sense of community that comes from being in a population that only 1% of the USA citizens knows. Military people speak a different language. Once you leave the service, that language is muted. Here, with the horses, we can feel more at home. I lose track of time on the farm because I am comfortable in the surroundings and with the people. To me, it has become **a place of healing and comfort.** I have no doubt that we all feel that." **Carol Kain (USN Retired)**





## Our own Veterans Families Appreciation Day

On Monday June 21, we hosted members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Vietnam Veterans Association, Military Order of the Purple Heart and Gem Vac Veterans groups, and their families, at the SSgt Mike Moretti Stables in addition to our participating and volunteer Veterans, in appreciation for their service to our country.

They got to enjoy the beauty of the farm, interact with the horses, watch program demonstrations with our program participants, and the kids loved their pony rides. All this was followed by a delicious picnic lunch. A truly special day!



Veterans watching a demonstration



our Volunteer Team for the day



Our Vice President, Allen Gondeck (USMC) welcomes the group



## Our Full-Day Clinics & Group Day Visits

We hosted 2 Full-day Clinics for Trenton Vet Center affiliated PTSD Groups with their own Clinicians for action-filled equine learning activities with the horses - what a joy to meet new Veterans as well as reconnect with past Clinic attendees! As always, much was gained from the experience.

Kathy Hart, our Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning, always provides very stimulating and challenging sessions at these Clinics and there is much to digest and discuss for weeks afterward in their group sessions. This experiential learning is very impactful to everybody involved. We look forward to many more Clinics in the new year as the world opens up again.

Veterans & staff from Vet Haven North, Glen Gardner, visited twice for a relaxing day at the farm, just to soak up the sun, walk the trails, interact with the horses and enjoy great food and camaraderie with our Program and Volunteer Veterans.

We hope to see them on a regular basis in the new year.



Nicky - a great patience teacher



Ion - learning to trust



Ben & Macyver - always friendly



Exercises in trust & partnership



Teamwork - get a horse in the box



Junie - what's not to love?



## Special Events



The Traveling Vietnam Wall visited our area and 2 of our Vietnam Veterans, Tim and Ray, were honored with Quilts of Valor. It was a special ceremony and a very precious time for the Horses for Forces family.

"Wrapped in this quilt, I felt like I received all the hugs I should have received on my return from Vietnam" Ray, USMC



Imagine riding horses this big! Both our weekly groups enjoyed special visits to the Willow Grove Farm in Long Valley to ride the gentle giant Clydesdales together. Our Volunteers got to enjoy a carriage ride along with the riders and everybody loved having lunch by the river and visiting with these magnificent animals.



We were invited to march in the very Patriotic 2021 July 4 Independence Day parade in Washington, NJ







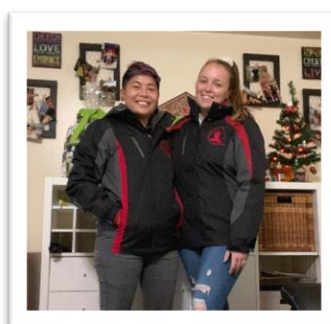
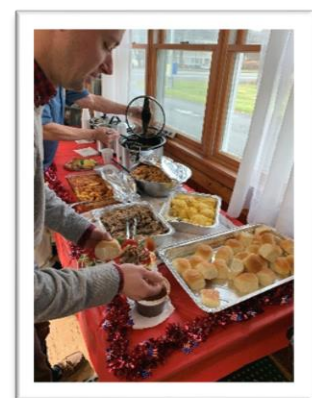
## Our Year-end Celebration



Our Participants and Volunteers enjoyed a delightful year-end celebration in December. We are grateful to the Chester American Legion (one of our annual program supporters) for sponsoring the use of their hall and to Legion members and Horses for Forces Volunteers Brian & Meka, for arranging a scrumptious feast to which many contributed.

We soaked in the words of love, Christmas light and hope shared by Pastor Tuckey of Southridge Community Church and loved the devotionals and delicacies given for everyone by SRCC. We recognized our Volunteer Team and Volunteer of the year – Woody.

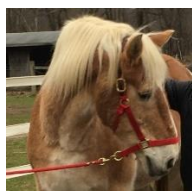
We were so pleased to be able to gift everyone with their own Horses for Forces logo winter jackets! Brandawear Apparel of Whitehouse Station, NJ, did the beautiful embroidery & provided us with a deep discount in support of our Veterans. Bottom photos: some of us showing off our jackets, as well as AJ (USMC Veteran) and Scout (USAF Active Duty) – now stationed in Guam, sporting theirs. We miss them, but we continue to support them and their ongoing service.







21 Weekly  
Participants



PTSD Groups  
9 Veterans



Veterans  
Appreciation  
Day



7 children  
of Veterans



9 Vet Haven  
North Veterans

How is all of this made possible financially?

2021 PROJECT HORSES FOR FORCES, INC. ~~ CASH BASIS				
Statement of Financial Activity				
	2020 Total	Unrestricted	Designated	2021 Total
<b>Revenue</b>				
Non-Profits, Grants & Foundations	\$ 12,700	\$ 7,150.00	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 10,650.00
Individual Support	\$ 11,284	\$ 5,942.60	\$ 3,600.00	\$ 9,542.60
Gift Cards for Veterans (2020 Covid relief)	\$ 1,955		\$ 175.00	\$ 175.00
Fundraising	\$ 194	\$ 43,503.00	\$ 1,590.00	\$ 45,093.00
<b>Total Cash Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 26,132</b>	<b>\$ 56,595.60</b>	<b>\$ 8,865.00</b>	<b>\$ 65,460.60</b>
<b>In-kind Donations - Inventory</b>				
200 T-shirts: sold @ \$20-22 each	\$ 4,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Total Revenue &amp; Inventory</b>	<b>\$ 30,132</b>	<b>\$ 56,595.60</b>	<b>\$ 8,865.00</b>	<b>\$ 65,460.60</b>
<b>Expenses</b>				
Payroll	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Administration	\$ 1,300	\$ 1,396.42	\$ -	\$ 1,396.42
Program Costs	\$ 30,196	\$ 42,880.31	\$ 1,590.00	\$ 44,470.31
Gift Cards Distributed	\$ 1,995	\$ -	\$ 175.00	\$ 175.00
Events & Fundraising	\$ 380	\$ 835.36	\$ -	\$ 835.36
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 33,871</b>	<b>\$ 45,112.09</b>	<b>\$ 1,765.00</b>	<b>\$ 46,877.09</b>
<b>Net Operating Income/(Loss)</b>	<b>\$ (3,739)</b>			<b>\$ 18,583.51</b>
Remaining Designated funds for use in 2022:			\$ 7,100.00	

Please note: an amount of \$11,398 from 2020 Rotary fundraising, was only received (and therefore reported) in 2021

In 2021, we received incredible support from Businesses and Veterans Organizations. They stepped up as Sponsors for our two Branchburg Rotary & Veterans Organizations Network Collaborative Fundraising Events. Additionally, a Private Benefactor made a 100% match to those donations. We are so grateful to these and individual sponsors for an incredible Fundraising year (See P 8). We continued selling the remaining R.E.D. T-Shirts donated by Fairway Independent Mortgage / American Warrior Initiative. Another amazing Grant was received from Overwatch Alliance (TN. Southridge Community Church (Clinton) continued their quarterly support. Several businesses, Veterans organizations, clubs and foundations all provided major donations to support our programs in 2022. Thank you all so much! (See P 8)

In 2021, our fundraising expenses and administrative costs remained at a minimum. This allowed us to use 95% of all funds donated to be used directly for our Veterans Programs' expenses. We continued functioning as an all-volunteer team and will continue to do so for 2022. Our programs are offered at no cost to all participants and therefore our main expenses annually are the program expenses. Those expenses include Fees to Drakestown Equestrian Riding School for the horses used, providing food and beverages on program days, facility usage fees, liability insurance and the cost to Board Ben, one of our favorite horses. Ben was donated to the program when the farm owner sold the farm in 2021. We had already begun covering most of his expenses over the past two years so that we could to keep him in the program, but after August 2021 he was all ours! Sadly, Ben passed away in February 2022 at the wonderful age of 29. He will be greatly missed by all.

# NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

## **DONATIONS & REVENUES: \$65,460**

### **1. PUBLIC SUPPORT – Individuals: \$9,717**

Designated funds: ☐ Gift cards for our Veterans: \$175  
☐ Veterans zone use fee 2022: \$3,600

Undesignated funds: ☐ Direct donations: \$5,499  
☐ Donor-advised funds: United Way & birthday fundraisers (Facebook): \$443

### **2. PUBLIC SUPPORT – FUNDRAISING: \$45,093 (Includes outstanding 2020 funds of \$11,398 received in 2021)**

- ☐ Sales of remaining donated R.E.D. T-shirts: \$1,043
- ☐ Revenue from local events: \$28
- ☐ Revenue from Branchburg Rotary & Veterans Network collaborative events: \$44,022

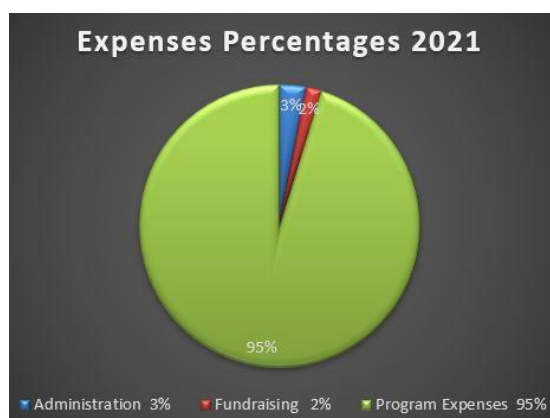
Our special gratitude to the Rotary of Branchburg, our fantastic Event Sponsors and the Amazing Anonymous Benefactor providing a 100% match for all sponsorships received.

- ☐ Cost of all fundraising efforts: \$835

### **3. PUBLIC SUPPORT – GRANTS, FOUNDATIONS & NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS: \$14,150**

Designated funds: ☐ Grant: \$3,500 designated for Weekly Horsemanship programs – Overwatch Alliance, TN

Undesignated funds: ☐ Foundations / Non-profits: \$10,650 – Southridge Community Church, Rolling Thunder; N. Hunterdon Rotary, Atrion Charitable & Fairway Independent Mortgage Foundations



## **EXPENSES:**

### **1. PROGRAM EXPENSES 2021: \$44,645 (includes Gift Cards distributed to Veterans)**

- ☐ Weekly programs, clinics, summer horse camp & riding lessons: \$26,981
- ☐ Ben (Horse) – board, farrier, vet bills & care: \$11,100
- ☐ ADA portable toilet rental: \$1,879 & Veterans zone facility use fees: \$2,040
- ☐ Liability insurance: \$2,470; Gift cards: \$175

### **2. ADMINISTRATION & FUNDRAISING EXPENSES: \$2,232**



## What is our financial standing for 2022?

Financial Balance Sheet				
	12/31/2020	12/31/2021	12/31/2021	2021 Total
<b>Assets</b>		<b>Unrestricted</b>	<b>Designated</b>	
Cash & Bank Account	\$ 22,802.57	\$ 34,827.56	\$ 7,100.00	
Inventory - T-shirts (74 remaining)	\$ 1,480.00		\$ -	
Pledges receivable		\$ 5,000.00		
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$ 24,282.57</b>	<b>\$ 39,827.56</b>	<b>\$ 7,100.00</b>	<b>\$ 46,927.56</b>
<b>Liabilities &amp; Designated Funds</b>				
Payroll	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Accounts payable *	\$ 140.00	\$ 671.00	\$ -	
Designated Funds	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 7,100.00	
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$ 140.00</b>	<b>\$ 671.00</b>	<b>\$ 7,100.00</b>	<b>\$ 7,771.00</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>				
Total Net Assets	\$ 24,282.57	\$ 39,827.56	\$ 7,100.00	
Total Liabilities / Designated funds	\$ -	\$ (671.00)	\$ (7,100.00)	
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 24,142.57</b>	<b>\$ 39,156.56</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 39,156.56</b>
	* ADA Toilet Dec/Jan C/C charge	* Vet Bill - check not yet cashd 12/31		

We are pleased to start the new year with adequate funds to meet all our known financial obligations (insurance, administrative & legal fees, ADA toilet rental & facility use fees), just like previous years.

We started 2021 with \$24,282 in cash and \$140 in liabilities. We concluded the year with \$46,927 in cash and \$7,771 in liabilities of which \$7,100 are funds designated for 2022 Program Expenses and Veterans Zone Fees.

### LIQUIDITY OF ASSETS

#### 100% Cash Assets (Equine tack & garden furniture excluded)

#### Known Expenses for 2022:

- ☐ Portable toilet rental: \$2,300
- ☐ Annual business legal fees & insurance costs: \$3,703
- ☐ Administration: \$500
- ☐ Veterans Zone Use Fee: \$3,600

We start 2022 with adequate funds for all necessary expenses and to cover our program expenses for most of the year! As we look back at 2021, we are grateful to all who made this possible – THANK YOU – from all of us.

