

# MILESTONES

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SECTION I

## Gentle giants of the horse world

*Foundation's roots have seeds in FdL man's adversity*

By Jeanne Huibregtse  
SPECIAL TO THE REPORTER

Clydesdales are an expensive proposition.

Tim Wiskow of Fond du Lac learned that particular lesson quick enough, and he's reminded of it virtually every day.

But he has his sights set on a dream that could take many years to accomplish. A stomach cancer survivor, he has taken the first steps, though, in the existence of the not-for-profit Whisper Hill Clydesdales Special Needs Foundation.

Besides drinking 100 gallons of water, his two horses eat six 60-pound bales of hay and 25 pounds of grain a day.

A pregnant mare needs three sets of shots during her 344-day gestation. Each set of shots costs \$100 to \$125. A farrier comes from Wautoma every eight weeks to cut and trim the horses' hooves at a charge of \$215.

"The horses are a rich man's hobby but I'm a poor man," Wiskow said with a laugh.

He is the assistant manager at Walgreens Drug Store. And horses aren't his hobby; they are the basis of his budding business.

His Clydesdales, Rose and daughter Majestic, made their public debut at the 2003 Fond du Lac Christmas parade.

He hopes he can bring his horses to Walleye Weekend this coming summer.

Wiskow had planned on using any profits he may earn from renting his horse-drawn wagon and carriage for weddings, anniversaries and parties to pay for his dream of one day sharing his horses with people with special needs.

When Wiskow told his friend, Jeff Seymour, about his dream, Seymour advised him to incorporate as a not-for-profit organization and start his business now. Wiskow took Seymour's advice.

With the help of a member of the National Heritage Foundation, he started the not-for-profit Whisper Hill Clydesdales Special Needs Foundation.

"There are so many people that can only dream about going for a ride in a carriage or a horse-drawn wagon," said Wiskow. "Older people don't have an opportunity because they are too frail, or confined to a nursing home. I think about people in nursing homes; people forget about them."

While there are therapeutic riding centers such as Free SPIRIT Riders in Fond du Lac, Wiskow said, "they actually put children (or adults) up on the horse." He added, "But so many people can't have that opportunity because they are too heavy or too weak or feeble. I want to be able to take anybody and everybody for a ride. The wagons are going to be wheelchair and handicapped accessible."

Wiskow has learned that starting a business, even a not-for-profit endeavor, is not cheap. From start to finish, Whisper Hill Clydesdales will be a million dollar venture. Instead of being overwhelmed, it just makes Wiskow more determined.

Although Wiskow has his horses, the full realization of his dream is just beginning.

Wiskow has faith in himself and more importantly, faith in God.

"I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for God," he said.



Tim Wiskow walks two Clydesdales — Rose and her daughter, Majestic Whisper — on his property along Poplar Road, east of Fond du Lac. Wiskow, a survivor of stomach cancer, dreams of creating non-profit Whisper Hill Clydesdales Special Needs Foundation. "I want to try to help somebody; make a difference in a person's life," Wiskow says.



Tim Wiskow gently pats 5-month-old Clydesdale colt, The Storm Whisper.

## FdL man's boyhood dream of raising Clydesdales is slowly becoming reality

By Jeanne Huibregtse  
SPECIAL TO THE REPORTER

Most childhood dreams fade with time, but Tim Wiskow's dream has grown even more vivid, despite adversity and the passage of time.

Wanting a horse is not an unusual dream for a young boy, and Wiskow's parents, Arnette and Darrell, were going to give him one for his fifth birthday. But then his parent's house in the country burned down. The family moved into Fond du Lac, and Wiskow's dream of owning a horse was put on extended hold.

Today, Clydesdales, the gentle giants of the horse world, have become his dream and his goal, and in part, a reality.

Wiskow grew up, went to a Lutheran grade school and high school. He went into retail management. He was growing up but his dream was still with him.

In 1992 a lady ran a stop light and "T-boned me," said Wiskow. "She was doing about 55 miles an hour."

Miraculously, Wiskow escaped from the crash with scrapes and bruises.

Five years later, at the age of 26, Wiskow wasn't quite as lucky when he went to the hospital.

"Basically, I was not feeling good and I had severe heart burn," he said.

Tests were done and even though the incidence of stomach cancer has been decreasing for the past half century in the United States, Wiskow was diagnosed with the life-threatening ailment, the same disease from which his grandmother died at age 52.

When detected early, there is a good chance for a cure, but the prognosis for advanced stomach cancer is not favorable.

Doctors told Wiskow that his cancer was in an advanced stage and that he had only "weeks to live" if drastic measures were not taken immediately.

He underwent chemotherapy and eventually doctors removed a portion of his stomach.

It took six months of recovery before he was able to continue his activities.

A near death experience did not diminish his dream but rather shaped and defined it.

"After this whole situation, it changed me around to where I am today," said Wiskow. "I want to try to help somebody; make a difference in a person's life."

And he wants to do it with horses.

In 1999, Wiskow's dream began to take shape. His parents had built a new home on acreage east of Fond du Lac and at long last, Wiskow had a place to keep a horse.

Not just any horse. A Clydesdale horse. And not just one. Wiskow purchased two fillies from Larson's Famous Clydesdales in Ripon for \$5,000. He planned on building his stock from Rose and Cher.

In 2000 Wiskow obtained a stallion, Wilber. But Wilber, a gentle giant as Clydesdales are often called, was nearly the death of Wiskow.

"It was Easter of 2000," he recalled. "I was living in Fond du Lac and came out here (his parent's farm) to walk the horses. Nobody was home."

Wiskow was supposed to join his parents at a relative's house for Easter Sunday dinner when he was finished with the horses, but Wilber reared up and kicked Wiskow under the jaw. A direct hit a bit higher or lower and Wiskow would have been in serious trouble.

Wiskow went to the house, found a towel to absorb the blood and called his parents to take him to the hospital. His jaw had to be wired shut for six weeks.

"I drank a lot of milkshakes," Wiskow said with a laugh.

Wiskow was finding out that raising Clydesdales is not an easy task. Although Clydesdales are a hearty breed once they have grown, there is a 50 percent mortality rate for Clydesdale foals because half of them are born without antibodies. Two foals died before Majestic was born Jan. 24, 2003. Her birth weight was 125 pounds.

She seemed fine until she was six months old when Wiskow said she became deathly sick. The veterinarian told him to get Majestic to the University of Wisconsin's Department of Veterinary Medicine in Madison.

"I borrowed a truck and trailer from my neighbor, Tracy Shannon, and took Majestic down there," said Wiskow.

A week and \$3,000 later the horse was well enough to return home. Today Majestic is a healthy 1,200-pound 1 year old and has a healthy five-month-old, 700 pound stepbrother.

The dream is slowly but surely showing signs of becoming a reality.

## Become part of Whisper Hill

By Jeanne Huibregtse  
SPECIAL TO THE REPORTER

Tim Wiskow has a plan to build Whisper Hill Clydesdales Special Needs Foundation in stages through grants and the help of area sponsors, companies, businesses and individuals who would like to be part of this dream.

People who want to volunteer or make a tax deductible contribution may contact Wiskow at 920-322-

0636, or e-mail [whisperhill-clydes@yahoo.com](mailto:whisperhill-clydes@yahoo.com).

An immediate concern is insurance. Wiskow has not yet been able to get a company to insure the foundation because of liability issues.

Wiskow's plans for Whisper Hill follow:

- 100 acres of land with wagon trails.
- Handicapped accessible wagon with capacity for four wheelchairs to be de-

livered in May, \$5,500.

- Handicapped accessible wagon with hydraulic lift; capacity for 10 to 12 wheelchairs, \$15,000.

- Horse barn for Clydesdales and smaller animals.

- Large arena for indoor rides in inclement weather.

- Four mares for breeding stock, one stallion, eight geldings to pull wagons.