

*Jasmine the goat, gets some well deserved attention after working with a student during the team building "Lava Pit" activity. **Bob Maraist/World View Productions***

# All the Pretty Little Horses

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Kali packs the personality of a full-size horse into a doubly small package: she's a miniature horse born with dwarfism, resulting in a short neck and stubby legs. But she's the ringleader at Main Stay Therapeutic Farm in Richmond, Illinois. When a group of children with emotional or developmental disabilities come to visit, Kali is the one who rounds up the sheep and goats into a welcoming posse to greet them.

## Summer at the Farm

"Animals don't judge," says Carla Kaizen, the animal-assisted activities manager at Main Stay. And animals don't talk, so they are the perfect catalyst for children struggling with social acceptance, anxiety, confidence, depression, and other issues, as well as those to whom words come slowly. Main Stay serves about 200 children and adults annually, with a staff of four and about 100 volunteers. Its Summer at the Farm program helps small groups of children with specific issues gain confidence and compassion through working with the farm's animals and by gardening. Subaru supports Summer at the Farm with a Foundation grant that helps make the important program possible.



Students work together with Jasmine the goat, to complete the cooperative task during the team building “Lava Pit” activity. Bob Maraist/World View Productions

## Little Triumphs – Together

Its 22 horses claim the spotlight, but it is often the smaller animals, like Kali, that make the greatest difference, says Kaizen. One teen girl was trying to pull free from depression. Her story, it turned out, was similar to that of a miniature horse that had been brought to Main Stay after being rejected by its home herd. “This girl was captivated by this horse, and they had little triumphs together all summer as they started to trust each other,” recalls Kaizen. “At the end of the summer, I asked each kid to choose an animal as a role model they could keep in mind for the coming school year. She said that if this horse could become part of a new herd, she could find a way to fit in at school. She did go back to school, and she was a completely different kid.”

- Go online to see video highlights of the “Summer on the Farm” program at Main Stay. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KRr-aqDxtg>
- Visit the Main Stay website to discover how you can help: <http://www.mainstayfarm.org/>