

Recovery after fire at Perry Hill Farm

BEDFORD NEWS

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Harriet and Elissa Finks, owners of Perry Hill Farm at 32 Perry Road, are focused on caring for their eight surviving ponies after a three-alarm fire destroyed their 10,000 square foot barn Sept. 6.

The surviving ponies are staying at a friend of the family’s farm so they can each have their space and not be kept in a single paddock.

The two animals remaining on the farm are Miss Colby, the famous 900-pound pig, and a miniature stallion named Puffy. The immediate concern is building a structure to keep these two animals warm throughout the winter.

The Finkses are in need of materials and assistance to complete the structure before winter comes, according to Amy Ats, a Bedford mother who’s daughter took riding lessons there.

There is no way to continue programming at the moment at the farm, which once offered summer camp, riding lessons and birthday parties to thousands of children.

The barn completely burned down, yet the main structure remains with a kitchen and party room. The party room is now home to Puffy and Miss Colby, although Ats said this structure, in time, will be demolished.

Nothing has come to light in the fire investigation.

The Red Cross Emergency Response Vehicle provided a safe place for firefighters, from 10 surrounding towns, to regroup and recharge while fighting the fire, according to a statement released by the American Red Cross.

The 14 horses who did not survive, including Bahia, the horse who made Elissa Finks a three-time world champion, were known by their nicknames: Katie, Itchy, Cisco, Taylor, Layla, Stoney, Sully, Bauble, Bado, Cash, Angie, Happy and Luke.

The horses were buried together Saturday at a farm in Fremont.

Bedford resident Julie Lagasse, who worked for Harriet Finks, set up a donation fund through TD Bank. Money received through the Perry Hill Fire Fund will be used for immediate cleanup and to cover the cost of the horses’ burial.

The Finkses said in an official statement, we “understand insurance is likely to be inadequate to rebuild, our current goal is to ensure the continued care and safety for the surviving animals.” The surviving animals were checked over by a veterinarian and appear to be in good health, they said.

Elissa Fink is coping the best she can, while caring for Puffy and working with the attorney, said Ats.

“We do want to encourage everyone to visit if they would like, especially those who need closure of their own, but I ask that you please be respectful of the property by staying towards the front,” Elissa Finks said in an official statement.

The barn is taped off, so you can’t see much, according to Ats.

“I’m still here and I’d like to know you,” Harriet Finks said in a statement. “Don’t hesitate to stop.”

Harriet and Elissa are looking into putting up a guestbook, so people can stop by the side of the road and put their name and a message, according to Ats.

“My mother, Harriet, and I would like to extend our deepest gratitude for the outpouring of support everyone has shown us,” Elissa Finks said in her statement.

Perry Hill is a tight-knit group with a core of about 10 children, who took riding lessons there and some of whom have been riding there since the day the farm opened, Ats said.

Harriet Finks bought Cricket Hill Farm and renamed it Perry Hill Farm in 2007.

“We have been there every day, even the day of the fire, sitting with the owner and talking, and I think it’s been the best thing for the kids. I was a bit hesitant at first, but the moms and their children came in, bringing pictures and telling stories,” Ats said.

When there is no one at the farm, Harriet Finks thinks of what she could have done differently.

Ats said.

“I asked them flat out yesterday if they were going to rebuild the business and they said once they can focus on what they’re going to do next, we’ll have a better idea.”

Ats’ daughter heard the birthday parties at Perry Hill Farm were incredible, so she had her 9th birthday party there this year. Ats said she was impressed with Harriet, Elissa, the horses, the amount of animals they had, and the famous pig.

Donations to the Perry Hill Fire Fund may be made through any regional TD Bank branch. The tax ID is 80-0847620.

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