

Our Apologies: The Flash Flood Prevented Happy Trails From Being At The Event In Hudson At The Rejoice Lutheran Church Last Night

(The photos included here were taken in the rain from my phone, so the quality is not the best.)

Last night, Thursday August 8th, Happy Trails was scheduled to be at a community event at the Rejoice Lutheran Church in Hudson, thanks to our good friend, Chris Wisbar.



I was in my truck traveling on New Milford Road about five houses down from Happy Trails when I took this photo. The strip of grass indicates where the neighbor's property ends and where the street begins. Luckily I drive a one-ton truck and made it through the flooded area safely.

Everything was on schedule, and I had spent the entire morning packing up supplies, display items, and running off extra copies of Happy Trails literature to hand out to guests. We got the tables ready, pulled the tents out of the garage, packed up all the logo apparel, made signs for our raffle drawings, and created new display boards. Happy Trails volunteer, Bentley Hudson, addressed a nearly-flat tire on the logo truck and made certain it had enough air for our trip to Hudson.

planned to meet and get everything loaded into the truck, and we did exactly that. We packed up everything neatly into the logo truck, and anything that could go into the open bed of the truck, like clothes racks, tables, and metal easels, was loaded carefully into the truck bed. During this time, the sky began to look a little like rain. We were sure it would just blow over — no big deal. We've dealt with doing events in the rain before.

At 4pm, Happy Trails staff member Ilona Urban and I

I positioned the truck in front of the horse trailer so we could load the animals. It was the

last thing we had to do before we left to meet all the other volunteers at the event itself. we planned to get there about 6pm to set up. As I was maneuvering the truck around to line up with the horse trailer, I noticed that it was about 4:40pm according to the dashboard clock. Plenty of time — we were on schedule.

I could see Ilona waving me to the left as I backed up so that we would be lined up with the trailer, and after getting lined up I hopped out of the truck. I felt sprinkles on my face and arms. “Well, this was good timing,” I told Ilona. “Just in time for us to get the animals loaded and we’ll be off. If the rain could hold off for just about ten more minutes.” But that was not to be.



This is a neighbor's property on Hayes Road, right around the corner from Happy Trails. Their front yard flooded all the way up to their house.



The neighbors property next to Happy Trails (to the North) flooded all the way up to our fence line near the front horse paddock.

I got the trailer hitch set down onto the ball of the truck hitch, but I didn't even get all the pieces-parts hooked up (like the emergency break line, the safety chains, the lock and pins) when the sky simply opened up like a waterfall. Ilona and I ran to the front of the truck and climbed in. “This won't last long,” Ilona said.

So we waited. And waited. And waited. And then waited some more.

During this time, we watched out the window of the truck as the neighbor's yard quickly filled with water and flooded nearly up to the fence line of Happy Trails. It was raining so hard that you couldn't really see out of the front windshield of the truck. The driveway in front of us turned into a river, and the street to the left of the sanctuary property was under water in on time at all.



Vehicles coming through the water that covered New Milford Road near Happy Trails.

We watched the clock as time ticked by. Fifteen minutes had

passed. Then twenty. A half hour. Thirty five minutes. Finally at nearly 5:30pm the rain started to let up enough for us to get out of the truck. It was still raining hard enough to get us soaked, but the torrential downpour has lessened, if only for a few minutes. I ran

out into the rain to get pictures because we couldn't believe what we were seeing.



Another neighbors property on Hayes Road.

We talked about still trying to load the animals and make it to the event, but we received a few calls from friends says that roads were impassible in many areas. We certainly didn't want to get the truck and trailer loaded with animals put in a dangerous situation on flooded roads.

already loaded into the trailer, for trying to put them away in a downpour is never a good or safe proposition (and then you end up with soggy animals that need dried off).

At this point we were thankful that we didn't have animals

Soaking wet, we then met with staff member Ashley Ehmann in the Happy Trails office. During this time she, too, had arrived at the sanctuary to help us load animals. She had

also waited in her car during what we called “our monsoon”.

While Ashley and Ilona went to check on all the animals at Happy Trails since the rain was lessening, (or so we thought) I jumped into my own truck and headed back home to check on all of my animals. As we parted company, the rain got worse a second time.



My pasture at my house stops at the fence line. Just past my fence line, the neighbor's property flooded.

On my one-mile journey to my house, the street that Happy Trails is on, New Milford Road, was flooded in two different sections where the water was high over the pavement. Going in the opposite direction, a low area on north of Happy Trails on New Milford Road was flooded also. I turned the corner onto my road, only to see the yards of some of my neighbors flooded all the way up to their houses. The drainage ditches could not hold the overwhelming amount of water coming down.

Though areas of my own pastures were flooded, my horses and goat were safe, thank goodness. I then headed back to Happy Trails to see if Ilona and Ashley needed help with any of the animals or their shelters. Everyone seemed fine, though the ground everywhere was now completely over-saturated with rain.

We apologize to everyone who may have planned to visit Happy Trails at the Hudson event at Rejoice Lutheran Church. We are sorry for any inconvenience, and we very sincerely apologize to the good folks and our friends at Rejoice Lutheran Church. During the 14 years that I have lived in Ravenna, I have never experienced a flash flood like this. From the news and weather reports, Ravenna was shown on the map along with a small strip of places who experienced the downpour. Many areas surrounding us did not even get rain. Amazing.

Please accept our sincere apologies, and thank you for understanding.