

For Immediate Release:

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Taylorville, Illinois: As a community bank, Peoples Bank & Trust recognizes the value of volunteerism in our communities. To recognize, commend and promote the volunteerism, Peoples Bank & Trust has established a program to recognize outstanding community members for their volunteer efforts of improvement to our community.

Andra Bland Ebert has been chosen as our current Volunteer of the Quarter. Andra is the founder and owner of Heartland Mini Hoofs. The program provides animal assisted activity and therapy visits using miniature horses. With the help of their special animals, Winnie, Bailey and Jasper, Heartland Mini Hoofs provides smiles, laughter and love to nursing homes, hospitals, libraries, schools, Alzheimer's units, senior communities and other special groups.

Andra is a registered nurse, licensed social worker and has a Master's in Gerontology. She said that being in the service of helping others is second nature to her. She became involved with horses through her daughter, Morgan, who has been riding for 15 years. Andra read an article about using mini horses as therapy animals and became interested in the concept. She was fortunate to find and work with Kate Bashor in Kansas City. In the fall of 2014, Andra purchased two horses, Bailey and Jasper, and was off and running with Heartland Mini Hoofs. She purchased a third horse, Winnie, in August 2015. In 2016, the three horses traveled over 11,600 miles to 135 different places to spread their special joy. Andra noted that with the help of her husband Bill, son Brendan and daughter Morgan, along with a great group of volunteers, they are able to continue their mission of spreading special magic to old and new friends.

This year they are beginning a new vital program, "Just Say WHOA to Bullying". This program takes a unique approach to teaching bullying prevention by helping children to recognize and respect the differences in one another. By understanding that everyone has something valuable to offer, children learn acceptance, tolerance, respect and understanding of others. By reaching children at an early age, their respect for one another becomes a lifelong habit.

In honor of Andra's services to the community, Peoples Bank has made a donation to Heartland Mini Hoofs and her name will be placed on a plaque to be displayed at the bank.

Peoples Bank & Trust is an independent Community Bank with ten offices located in Pana, Taylorville, Altamont, Tower Hill, Charleston, Springfield, Morrisonville, Palmyra, Waverly and White Hall. Peoples is a full service bank offering outstanding customer service to consumers, small business, and farmers in Central Illinois. People First Bancshares, Inc., with corporate offices in Pana, Illinois, is the holding company for Peoples Bank & Trust.