



ETRA THERAPEUTIC RIDING Assoc.

Newsletter • 2017



Inside...

Page 2-3

Featured Riders
Program Report
ETRA Exposure

Page 4

Our Volunteers

Page 5

The Right Match
Pyramid Stables

Page 6

Pledge Ride
In Memorium

Page 7

Sponsors, Benefactors
and Service Clubs
Fundraising Fiscal Report

Back page

Board of Directors

President's Report

2016 was a very good **Fundraising** year and ETRA enjoys on-going financial support from various organizations, service clubs, municipalities and individuals.

Additional contributors to our fundraising; the Pledge Ride, the Parksville Beachfest, (ETRA volunteers and clients helped), the Royal Bank of Canada Volunteer program (painted our equipment sheds), the Sea Breeze Stables Tack Sale and Island Timberlands firewood permit sales.

This support continues to provide a solid base for our current and future operations. ETRA thanks everyone for their help.

Positive feedback from **Clients** and caregivers show that our program is very well received. Our waiting list indicates that there is continued strong interest in joining our program.

As we all know our program can only succeed with the support and participation of our **Volunteers**. What an amazing group of people we have. Thank you to everyone for the contribution of your time, energy and kindness to go that extra mile, to make life better for those in need.

ETRA's **Instructor** Sheila Morrison has shaped our program to achieve the best results for our clients. Her educational volunteer orientation sessions are well received by all. The Board extends its appreciation for her continued support and direction.

The dedication, enthusiasm, flexibility, support, and great sense of humor that I experience with the **ETRA Board** of directors is unprecedented! Every one does their utmost to ensure ETRA is running smoothly and successfully. Thank you each and every one for your desire to see ETRA succeed!

-Gini Eder, ETRA President



**Proud to be the recipient of
United Way Central & Northern
Vancouver Island funding**



**United Way
Central & Northern
Vancouver Island**

Our Featured Riders

ETRA is grateful to our clients, their families and caregivers for sharing their stories.



Meet Sandra

Every child comes to us as a gift from beyond to be cherished and loved completely, totally without reservation. In some cases' children do arrive with issues that will, at times, bring their caregivers to their knees in frustration causing them to seek outside assistance. At other times they bring us to a place of jubilant celebration of wonder and amazement. Children are truly a gift and in all of this, the love they do receive is life giving, causing them to develop into caring and responsible adults. Our daughter Sandra arrived safely but with some concerns in her physical development Throughout her years Sandra has experienced her own frustrations attempting to join in with other children

only to experience further disappointment of being left behind in a world full of competitive momentum. Try as she might she could only sit at the end of the day and watch the world pass her by.

Sandra, at an early age began to develop a world of her own understanding that only she could enter. Her own personal space of peace and solitude.

She has always loved singing with a smile but eventually this would bring her further into a world of personal isolation. She was unable to join in with other children but always made herself available to help or assist in any way she could. We, as her parents, believed she was content until one day we noticed that she would not associate with others as freely. Thus she was walking into further isolation making it difficult for her to understand or become part of a group that supported one another.

At our wits end, trying to understand and find the support that Sandra needed outside the family, we came across a small advertisement in our local news print.

Sandra has always loved horses and has a collection of them that she would play with on numerous occasions creating yet another world that only she could enter. This small advertisement was put forward by ETRA Therapeutic Riding Assoc. We saw this as an opportunity for Sandra to expand in her development while meeting others who needed to see her there as much as she needed to see them.

Sandra has now been riding with ETRA for the past 5 years. When she arrived in the beginning she was shy and withdrawn. But her first introduction to the riding program

was her absolute delight due to her love for horses. They were no longer toys in a box that sat by her bed but real live horses that loved her unconditionally. As she rides on top of these majestic animals a relationship develops into a true friendship.

Through the patient and loving guidance of the volunteers at ETRA Sandra has improved on all levels. When she began with the program she needed the assistance of several helpers, but now, she can ride with self-assurance and minimal supervision while guiding this 1000 lb. majestic creature with only gentle persuasion.

This all came about as a concerted effort of dedicated people who work tirelessly volunteering their time and energy directed towards improving the lives of these children and young adults. Within this magical relationship the horse and rider begin to create a relationship that brings the rider to a sense of personal power and mutual respect and understanding for themselves and others. The success of the program is due to the love and dedication that has been shown consistently by the volunteers who ask for nothing but to give their time and witness the bond between the horse and the rider. To see the confidence build also elevates the child's self-esteem.

The weather never has been a factor for Sandra to ride. Every Wednesday afternoon come rain or shine she is there full of excitement. For Sandra, to sit high upon the back of her friend while being carried creates in her a self confidence that only this special friendship between rider and horse will ever know.

Proud parents – Cori and Mike

In the words of our Volunteers...

Therapeutic riding works – we see benefits and improvements in the clients' well-being as soon as they get on the horse and through the sessions they are with ETRA.

– Tim E.

There is always much love, praise and lots of laughter to be heard by all participating. I share the pure joy and magic that happens between horse and rider.

– Chalise G.

Clients may not be able to communicate with you verbally, you need to look for other ways to connect. I found this to be an amazing experience. Riding each week is a highlight for them and it shows in their smiles.

– Merle D.



Meet Matthew

What can any parent say about an organization made up of the most kind, loving and charitable volunteers who give of their time and hearts so freely. AMAZING!!!

Our son has multiply disabilities some of which are Autism, Moderate Mental Handicap, Epilepsy and Dyspraxia.

Dyspraxia is a neurological disorder that in our son's case greatly affected his fine motor skills. In Matthew's case it became the first disability we discovered. Within days of his birth sucking a bottle was exhausting for

him. In order for Matthew to receive enough nutrients we went to 1 oz. feedings every 2 hours around the clock. And as soon as the doctors deemed possible we added a nutrient supplement like a type of pabulum, but this too had to be given in tiny doses around the clock. At 8 months he was strong enough to eat enough to go for four hours between feedings. By this time we had also noted that Matthew was unable to assist in supporting a bottle during feeding, he would use his lower body to move himself around the floor, but he had next to no upper body support.

We started weekly therapies with him. His Physio and Occupational therapists said, "Have you heard of the Errington Therapeutic Riding Program?" We started to look into it when our next issue, Epilepsy, arose. It took over our lives for a while. It is a devastating thing to witness for the first time. We had one seizure where he stopped breathing, and another day where we had 3 ambulance rides before it was decided he needed to stay in the hospital until they could get the seizures under control.

At around 2 years of age we noticed Matthew had developed a lot of flapping with his hands and perseveration. He often seemed to be off in his own world. And so Autism was diagnosed.

We needed an activity that could support his fine motor development, be safe with his seizure activity and help him with his Autism and anxiety. We heard again, through

other families and the Child Development Center about the ETRA Therapeutic Riding Program. This program is so successful and highly recommended that we waited 2 years before an opening became available.

Matthew was so excited that he would bounce and flap and we worked with him to calm his body so that he would not frighten the horse. Within a couple of sessions he was keeping his body in check as asked. At night after riding he would talk on and on about "horse, good, happy more please." Soon we noticed he knew what day was Wednesday (our day to ride) as he started running into our bedroom early in the morning and flapping and loudly saying "horse, okay, horse yes, yes". Matthew had never spoke or acknowledged the staff and this year he has been speaking to people and at the last session he was even cheering.

There is a kind of magic that happens when the children get on the horses, they connect somehow. Children gain a confidence and a pure joy, they develop good strong core muscles in a safe and enjoyable way.

ETRA volunteers are amazing. They make an effort to connect to each child and to create a program for that child's individual needs. As a parent it is so rewarding to watch your child be joyous and to improve both socially and physically I can't say enough great things about this dedicated group of people.

Thank you – Pauline

ETRA Program Report

2016 has proved to be another successful year for our clients and program. We continue to have forty riding spots on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Classes for the Spring and Fall sessions were completely filled with returning and new clients, coming to us from various locations such as Nanaimo, Port Alberni, and Qualicum Beach.

We continue to hear from clients and caregivers that clients have improved their physical skills and core strength from their riding experiences. Parents and Care givers are also pleased to meet other parents while the riding is taking place.

Welcome packages were given out to clients at the end of the Fall session. Within this welcome package there was a letter which stated the dates and costs of the next session as well as a new policy page which the parents/caregivers will have to read, sign and return to ETRA. There is a high indication that many of the clients will be returning.

A little something new this year in the welcome pack was a fridge magnet with various phone numbers to call if a client is unable to attend. We appreciate being informed as soon as possible if a client is unable to attend. This then frees up the volunteers and the horse associated with the client.

Our wait list is open being added to.

–Patricia Thomson-Turner, Program Coordinator



ETRA Exposure

Telus Optik Local commissioned Melinda Friedman Melinda Friedman, of Spotlight Productions, to film Nanaimo community activities and ETRA was fortunate to be one of them. The production gives information about our program and highlights two of our riders, Jonathan and Luke. Go to etra.ca > news > Telus Optik(video) to view.



Our Volunteers

When you look up the word *volunteer* in various dictionaries, definitions that neatly sum up the characteristics of the team of people that are so vital to ETRA's success are easily found. A volunteer is: 1) a person who freely offers to take part in an enterprise or task, 2) a person who does something, especially helping other people, willingly and without being forced or paid to do it, 3) a person who voluntarily offers himself or herself for a service or undertaking.

ETRA draws volunteers from Lantzville, where Pyramid Stables is located, as well as surrounding communities including Ladysmith, Nanaimo, Gabriola Island, Nanoose Bay, Parksville, Errington, Qualicum Beach and Bowser. Some of the people who are now volunteers heard about the opportunity to help with the therapeutic riding program from friends or neighbours who had joined the volunteer ranks of ETRA before them. Others are motivated to get involved because they know one of the riders or an ETRA board member who was doing their part to spread the word about the program, the riders and the benefits they enjoy because of their participation in it. Advertisements in local newspapers have also proven successful in matching up people who have time, energy and enthusiasm to share with a program in need of their services.

For all that its volunteers give ETRA, ETRA gives back to its volunteers. Volunteers express personal satisfaction with carrying out their duties and responsibilities and each one of them has their own way of explaining the reasons why they got involved and what keeps them coming back. Overall, the opportunity to contribute to an enterprise that helps improve the physical and/or mental well-being of riders with a wide range of disabilities while at the same time giving the rider a sense of achievement and self-worth is worth every minute that ETRA volunteers give freely on behalf of the therapeutic riding program. Thank you, ETRA volunteers, for all you do!

-Cheryl Zurawski, Volunteer



A lot of our volunteers have heard me say how much I hate writing reports. Reports for the Board Meetings, reports for the AGM, reports for the newsletter etc. I have even gone so far as to bribe another volunteer to write my reports for me. In the past I have been inspired by our clients who have given me that special pat on the head or a high five, but this session I have gotten my inspiration from my fellow volunteers. Volunteers who will cancel their plans if I ask them to spare for someone. Volunteers who see what needs to be done and do it. Volunteers who notice the need for a new pony halter and donate it. Volunteers who hear Sheila say she wants the riders to have their hair tied back and bring in elastics. Volunteers who fix ramps, locks and broken handles on toilets. Volunteers like these are the reason I keep coming back.

- Karen Anker, Volunteer Coordinator

The Right Match

How does a Therapeutic riding instructor match horses and riders? Carefully, for safety is always a priority.

Like people, horses come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. For Therapeutic riding we prefer horses of average height, of medium to strong build, with sound backs and legs, neither too wide nor too narrow through the barrel, with an uphill frame, and a ground covering 4 beat walk. A straight moving smooth trot is also desirable.

Ideally these qualities are combined with a temperament that is calm, slow to react to sudden sounds or unusual sights, energetic, sociable with people (i.e., will tolerate sidewalkers), and tractable enough to allow a weak or novice rider to ride independently. Such horses are hard to find: truly they are ideal.

In reality most therapeutic riding centres, if they are lucky, will have one or two horses who approach the ideal, but more likely they will have an assortment of horses who are some combination of tall, short, strong, weak, sound, unsound, quick, slow, willing, sluggish, herd bound, or way too independent.

Of course our clients come in all sorts of shapes and sizes too, and with widely varying levels of strength, types of temperament, and levels of ability.

So, how does one match horses and clients who were not made for each other? We start with the obvious: the conformation of the rider must complement that of the horse. A heavy rider needs a strong backed horse, and possibly a wide one. A tall rider needs a long legged or deep barreled horse who can easily balance under her. A one-sided or

generally weak rider needs a broad backed horse capable of performing upward and downward transitions that are smooth and not alarming. A small, weak in the core child needs a pony, not least because his sidewalkers might need to support his back. For the same reason any rider who needs a thigh hold will require a smaller horse. We cannot guarantee that we will have tall sidewalkers always on duty!

The issue of the tack that is available is something else to be considered with respect to the heights and weights of the clients. One client might need a western saddle, so the horse for her should be used to wearing such tack. Another client might need a horse comfortable being ridden bareback, with a vaulting surcingle.

Once the heights and weights of the clients have been considered, then the temperaments of both horses and riders must be matched. An excitable or anxious rider needs a sedate horse; a timid rider could do well on a more sensitive, forward moving horse. As a rule of thumb, the more vulnerable the rider the more level headed and smooth in his movement the horse needs to be.

Riders who are capable of riding off the lead line need to be paired with horses who are co-operative, but not over-achievers, and are willing to be worked independently of the other horses in the group.

It must also be noted that not only do horses and riders need to be matched, but the horse handler too must, both physically and temperamentally, suit the horse and rider being led. For their handlers some horses



are bullies, some are super lazy, others are sneaky nippers, and of course there are some who are as close to perfection as possible. These latter are the horses who will be paired with novice handlers, while horses who are new to therapeutic or less tractable need experienced, extra confident handlers.

Lastly, once in a while horse handlers and clients do not suit, so some pairing satisfactory to each must be found.

All in all, matching horses and riders is a complicated task, not least because it is open-ended. Some clients grow out of their horses in size and strength and level of ability, others, along with the horses, stiffen and age, and handlers and horses have been known to retire. Hence there is an ongoing need to review and perhaps recombine clients, horses and handlers, always with everyone's safety as the first priority.

. - Sheila Morrison, ETRA Instructor

New at Pyramid Stables and Farm Inc.

It took no time at all for the new bulletin board in the Hats & Belts area to be filled with notices and articles of interest to our volunteers. It is great to have a place to display our items where they are available for all to see.

This year the muster sign and emergency ramp were moved to the lower field. Harby Road can be accessed through the trail at the edge of the field making an emergency evacuation easier and safer for all. A large area of field by the emergency ramp was fenced, providing a place where the horses can be safely put after dismounting the clients.

There were two additions to the ETRA program this year: Lacey, a large white mare, and Cooper, a large pony gelding. Both have fit into the program nicely. Lacey can accommodate larger and taller clients, is very quiet, and has quickly become a favorite with the volunteers. Cooper, a fancy Palomino, always draws attention with his one blue eye. Being a large pony, he is the perfect size for our sidewalkers and growing, young clients.

Thanks to the Royal Bank's employee volunteer program, our sheds received a new coat of paint. It is a great program and we are very appreciative of their efforts and generous monetary donation. - Kathy Calder



27th ANNUAL Pledge Ride

ETRA's 27th anniversary Pledge Ride was a great success with over 40 riders and non-riders contributing to this great program. We managed to raise approximately \$9,000.00. These funds will be dedicated to our riding program for people with disabilities in our communities. Congratulations to the first five pledge-amount winners, Terry Kinch, Jenny Payne, Gary VandenBruck, Tara Rice and Randy Cowan. A special note of thanks to the members of the Silver Spurs Riding Club, Paradise Acres Ranch, Pyramid Stables, Cedar Horse Club, Seabreeze Riding Club and the (Central Vancouver Island Chapter of the Back Country Horseman of BC) all of whom attended in great numbers and contributed mightily to the end result. And none of this would be possible at this venue without Arbutus Meadows Rob Bau and Island Timberlands. Thanks too, to each and every pledge rider and non rider; all of whom were part of the event's success. Last, but certainly not least, our thanks and utmost appreciation to the ETRA volunteers who continue to help make this annual event an outstanding success. If you wish to consider volunteering or for more information on program eligibility please see our website at www.etra.ca



ETRA thanks the following businesses for their generous 2016 Pledge Ride support:

Island Timberlands
Arbutus Meadows Equestrian Centre
Buckerfields Parksville
The Cutting Edge
The Old Country Market Coombs
Parksville/Qualicum Beach News
Quality Foods Parksville
Shar-Kare Parksville
Thrifty Foods Parksville
Tim Hortons Parksville
The Trading Post Feed & Tack
Tigh-Na-Mara
White Spot
Buchart Gardens
Black Goose Inn
Tiger Lily Farm
Riptide Lagoon
Paradise Park
Royal Museum
Alberni Outpost
Coombs Country Campground
Herradura Anadlusians

In Memoriam

In 2016 we had to say 'good bye' to three people who were very strongly and in various ways connected to ETRA.

Little **Cora** who started riding on Buddy in the spring session of 2016 passed away on June 15th. She was such a delight! With her inquisitive and creative approach of riding on this little fellow – her favourite way to sit on Buddy would have been to ride backwards! – brought huge smiles on all the volunteers who had the pleasure and honour to walk with her! We all miss her terribly.

Joe Kinch who was a volunteer for ETRA years ago and supported as president of Silver Spur Riding Club big time our annual Pledge Ride with his great energy and fun spirit of competing with other great horse clubs to raise the highest amount for our program! His awesome sense of humour, big heart, kind manners and tireless support will be greatly missed!

– Gini Eder

Gardner Prescott tirelessly raised funds for ETRA from 2004-2009. He was introduced to ETRA by his wife Helke, who was volunteering as a sidewalker and ponyhandler at the time. He wasn't keen on horses, but cared deeply for the riders and raising funds for the program became a full time job for him. No matter how many times he approached people for donations and how many times he heard a negative answer, he always persevered and in the end managed to raise the money necessary for another year. Gardner visited every service club, every potential private and business donor personally, always accompanied by his two German Shepherd dogs, Tash and Chico. When I took over as Fundraising Coordinator in 2010, Gardner introduced me to all ETRA's donors in the area and I realized how hard it was going to be to follow in his footsteps. He put ETRA on a sound financial footing and we owe him our gratitude.

– Hanna Coulson



Cora



Joe



Gardner

Sponsors, Benefactors and Service Clubs in 2015/16

ETRA gratefully acknowledges the support of the following Sponsors, Benefactors and Service Clubs

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Our sincere apologies if we have missed donors in this issue.

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Fundraising Report for Fiscal Year 2015/16

	FY 2015	FY 2016	Increase/(Decrease)
In house fundraising	\$ 16,187.00	\$ 5,653.00	(10,534.00)
Grants	\$ 12,272.00	\$ 17,105.00	\$ 4,833.00
Service Clubs	\$ 13,000.00	\$ 9,100.00	\$ (3,900.00)
Other	\$ 8,619.00	\$ 12,257.00	\$ 3,638.00
Total	\$ 50,078.00	\$ 44,115.00	\$ (5,963.00)

A big Thank You goes out to everyone involved: board members, volunteers, supporters and sponsors.

**2016/2017 ETRA
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I volunteer because it is such a worthwhile program. I see how hard clients work. I think the volunteers take joy in the client's accomplishments as much as the clients do. I know how horses and riding make me feel. I hope this program gives the clients those same feelings.

– Kathy C. ETRA Volunteer



**ETRA
THERAPEUTIC
RIDING Assoc.**

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