



LITTLE BITS

THERAPEUTIC RIDING ASSOCIATION
for persons with disabilities

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www.littlebits.ca

November 2014



In late August, Little Bits was contacted by Mirella Nardi, who works for Alberta Blue Cross. Their employee group, *Hearts of Blue*, found the Little Bits wish list on our website. She said that *Hearts of Blue* would like to purchase the items on the list. In early September, we met at Greenhawk Saddlery on 99 St. in south Edmonton; we picked out items including new saddle pads, safety stirrups, stirrup leathers, as well as several helmets and a special pad for the horses' (Coke and Blu) backs. The total was over the intended \$700.00 donation amount; Mirella would not let us put back even one helmet! After loading all of the goods, we hugged and Mirella left with tears in her eyes ... she was so happy for *Hearts of Blue* to make such a generous donation of equipment to LBTRA.



Little Bits Receives 2014 Laurel Award

The 20th Annual Duncan & Craig LLP Laurel Awards honoured not-for-profit organizations that further their objectives through exceptional creativity and innovation. LBTRA won the Staff Choice Award for 2014 and received \$1000 at a beautiful luncheon at the Westin Hotel. There to receive the award were Linda Rault and the chair of LBTRA's Board of Directors, Jodee Pierce.

Daisy Day August 16, 2014

On a very hot day in August, the red LBTRA vests made our daisy corsage sellers really visible in a clean look and classy bright color at Northlands Park's 85th Canadian Derby, a.k.a. *Dash for the Daisies*. Some of the sellers used the aprons as well and others just used the pockets in the vests to collect their money. The parents were hesitant about wearing the vests on such a hot day; however, they all did in the spirit of Little Bits!

Rex Carey (Honorary Director) had to use another supplier for the daisies this year and as a result we ended up with some pink daisies which turned out to be a HUGE hit. Rex and Orawan were once again instrumental in making this event as successful as it is. Thanks to them for ordering supplies, making the corsages, coming and working hard at the event by loading supplies into the building, selling, counting/rolling/reconciling money, and taking the leftover supplies home.

Total amount deposited for 2014 was: \$5434.40 with a \$500.00 honorarium coming from Northlands.

Para-Equestrian Coast to Coast Video Competition



**Julia on Jay
with her 1st place ribbon!**

We now have three riders who successfully competed in the Coast to Coast Video Dressage Competition with Para-Equestrian Canada. Congratulations to Julia (1st place), Chantelle (2nd place) and Michael (3rd place)!

Para-Equestrian sport provides riders with a physical disability the opportunity to compete against other riders with similar abilities. Riders are given a "Grade" based on their functional ability and are judged on their riding skill against other athletes of the same Grade.

Video competitions provide riders of all levels and abilities with the opportunity to experience competition conditions in the comfort of their home stable and on a familiar horse. Riders are judged by Para-Equestrian judges against other similar riders from across Canada and are eligible to place and win great prizes. They were awarded ribbons and a prize and can feel very proud of their accomplishments. The volunteers who assisted them also have a great sense of satisfaction in assisting their riders, and their coach Sonja did a wonderful job of training these riders for their successful tests.

The next deadline for the Video Competitions is November 15, 2014 and LBTRA will have several more competitors entered.

Thanks to our fabulous videographer Marielle for taping and submitting the tests to ensure they meet the required standard as set out by Para-Equestrian Canada. It takes a team!

50/50 Raffle Ticket Sale

At the July 1st, 2014 Edmonton Predators baseball game, LBTRA sold 50/50 raffle tickets to the fans and spectators. Thanks to the efforts of parents David and Orla Nicholas who organized and ran this event, this is the second year we have been able to participate. It was a beautiful evening, finished off by a fantastic fireworks display and new lighting on the High Level Bridge.

Best of all, we were able to retain half of the ticket sales and deposited \$2060 for the evening.



Joy Verner

Instructor Profile



It was with great pleasure that I said “yes” when asked this past June if I would consider pursuing CanTRA certification as a CTRII and joining the Little Bits team of instructors this fall. The journey that brought me to this place started many years ago. Along the way I’ve learned so much and have enjoyed every moment of it.

Horses have been a great “love” in my life since I was very young. I still remember the first time I rode all on my own with no one leading me. Over the years, I have had the opportunity to ride and work with many different breeds and temperaments of horses at various stables,

camps, trail riding operations, and private facilities. For years I rode western, but had a yearning from the time I was 6 or 7 to learn to jump. My husband made this dream come true when he gave me “jumping lessons” at WELCA 18 years ago as a Christmas gift. Since then, dressage and jumping have been my focus whenever I’ve had the time to take lessons.

I wasn’t exposed to working with individuals with disabilities until I was in college and at that point in time I didn’t even consider it as a possible career choice. However, I quickly changed my mind when I took up a friend’s job offer to be a junior high educational assistant back in 1999. It was during the next 4 years of working as an EA that I began volunteering with Little Bits. I was first drawn to the program because I wanted to work with the horses (grooming, tacking up, and leading), but as I developed relationships with various riders and volunteers it was the social and therapeutic aspects of the program that kept me coming.

In 2001, I started working towards my CTRAI certification through CanTRA along with Melissa and Kathryn. Unfortunately, due to my husband’s career, I had to move away from Edmonton before I was able to complete the whole process. For the next 7 years, Little Bits remained on my mind and in my heart as my husband advanced his career and we started a family. Our family moved back to the Edmonton area in 2007, and I eagerly anticipated the day that our daughter would be in school and I could return to volunteering with Little Bits. In the spring of 2009 I was able to return. Now, instead of the horses drawing me to the program, it was the riders and my desire to see them progress and enjoy the thrill of riding.

It has been a privilege to get to know and work with the Tuesday morning riders and volunteers for the past 5 years. There have been moments of awe, happiness, and pride in what individual riders have accomplished that have brought tears to my eyes and will be forever etched in my memory. Relationships that have been made are dear to my heart. Now I have been given the opportunity to get to know more of the Little Bits community by teaching the Tuesday pm riders this fall. Thank you to all the staff, instructors, volunteers, riders, and parents who have been patient with me and assisted me in my new role this fall! You are greatly appreciated!

A Volunteer Profile of Sonja Mueller

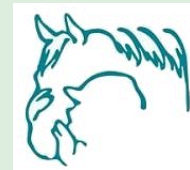
by Catherine Seale

I first met Sonja when I started to teach Tuesday morning's classes for Little Bits again. Her two wonderful children are enrolled in a German program; she comes to volunteer with Greer and Jordan on Tuesday mornings and then picks her children up from school.

She is great with the horses and is a very flexible volunteer who is willing to help out any way that she can. She also does not like to leave until everything is cleaned up at the end of the day.

Sonja had an uncle that owned a horse farm, and she would help at his farm often while growing up. This taught her a lot about the behaviour of horses and how to handle them safely. Sonja has been very generous with her time, coming out to my farm to help me with my many Icelandic horses and setting up an arena for future riding.

One of Sonja's hobbies is quilting, and she has created some amazing quilts. Her interesting choice of pets includes a new corn snake, Bubble Gum. She also has lots of Guinea pigs, many large fish, amphibians and a cat. Sonja is a generous, loyal volunteer that we are so lucky to have as part of our Little Bits team. Thanks so much, Sonja!



**Thank you PAULINE for donating your hours
by volunteering with
Little Bits Therapeutic Riding Association.**



**Thank you
Royal Bank of Canada
for supporting this employee program.**

The Prince Pony

by Sonja and Marielle

There was a little black pony named Prince that once was used by Little Bits riders and lived at Whitemud stable. Prince was a great favorite with the little riders and the volunteers that walked with them. One day Prince just decided that he wanted to retire, so arrangements were made and Prince headed off to his new home with Sonja.



Prince moved out to Sonja's farm and became fast friends with Fancy (another pony) and you never saw the two apart. They would eat together, sleep together and wander around the farm together. It was nice to see Prince finally having a best friend.

One day, Fancy decided that she needed more freedom and went to gallop the open skies, leaving Prince once again friendless. There was much searching and finally a friend was found and his name was Eddie the donkey. They soon became fast friends and though Eddie lived with another pony, his heart was with Prince.

Now Prince was an aged pony (no one was really sure how old he was), and as an older pony he didn't have many teeth left, so his choices of grazing had to extend to areas that the other horses were not allowed to go. This allowed Prince the best grass to choose from. The only downside to this was that sometimes you would find Prince grazing at the side of the road where Sonja lived.

Prince was very well cared for and not only would get regular groomings and feet trimmed, but was fed well, too. Sonja even had special cubes shipped from Ontario so that he would not get too much sugar in his diet. Prince once even climbed the stairs to the deck leading to Sonja's back door because he felt his meal was taking a little too long to prepare.

Prince lived with Sonja for four wonderful years. He would be taken for walks with Eddie and adored by anyone who visited. Prince would even leave plenty of presents for us to pick up. We adored this pony.

The time came one day when Prince's body decided that it wanted to have an eternal rest. The only problem was that Prince's spirit just didn't want to leave yet. Eddie was brought over to say good-bye to Prince and with one last sigh, Prince lay down and joined Fancy to gallop the skies.

Gallop-on, Prince ... gallop-on.

