

What's been happening at Little Bits in 2021



We jumped into 2021 with barely a whisper as Covid was still very much a part of our reality.

The January orientation was cancelled in part due to the very cold weather and only a few volunteers having applied. As the number of Covid cases kept rising, the government implemented restrictions on gatherings and sport/recreation. As a result of these restrictions, the winter 2021 session was cancelled.

The focus then went into the spring session. As group activities were limited to small numbers, the spring session was held with family and cohorts acting as volunteers for the riders with everyone masked for safety as well. A training

session programmed 2 days a week with a few dedicated volunteers assisting in the barn readying the horses for the ride. The families and cohorts did an amazing job in their newfound positions as leaders and side-walkers. A huge thank you for all your efforts!

As more people got vaccinated and Covid numbers were on the decline, the summer session was able to proceed with everyone masked. Again, with the help of our truly amazing volunteers, the summer session was a success.

After the summer session, the Delta variant of Covid began to raise its ugly head and we were again facing an uncertain future, however we were able to host a very successful fall orientation for the new volunteers.

The fall session began as planned and everyone needed to show proof of vaccination for everyone over 18 years of age and again, everyone must be masked. It will be interesting to meet each other when masks are not required.

The newer horses we have used in our program are Maui, Peanut, Stubbs, Winter, Avery, Birdie and Rapunzel and pieces about each of them are included in this newsletter.

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What's been happening at Little Bits in 2021 (continued)

We would like to send a HUGE thank you to all our volunteers that have stayed with us through these trying times. We have such a diverse base of volunteers at Little Bits, and everyone pitches in differently. Some in the program are leaders or side-walkers. Some help in the barn area ensuring that horses are ready for their riders. Others join our board and help us keep on track. There are fundraisers and events that require volunteers to assist so that we can raise money to help sustain the program.

Over the years new volunteers have joined while others have stepped down. Some we have lost and we continue to remember them. Others move away, starting new lives. We have volunteers in their teens and others who are retired. All volunteers are special, and all make a difference.

The Little Bits Staff thanks you for all of you so much for the great job you do.

Remembering

We remember those that have walked into the light

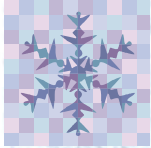
Lisa Ortman Larson, a Little Bits rider

“Sandy” Sandra Harrod , a volunteer with Little Bits for over 30 years

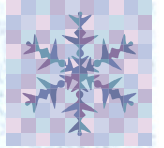
Daunte William Sullivan, a Little Bits rider



Riding Calendar for 2022



Winter 2022 Riding Session



Orientation: Wednesday, January 12 (6:00 to 9:00 pm)

Sign in: 6:00-6:30 Introductory Talk: 6:30-7:00

Break into 3 groups for hands-on experience Finish 9:00

Sundays: January 16 to March 20 (10:00 am to 3:00 pm)

Wednesdays: January 19 to March 23 (4:00 to 9:00 pm)

Spring 2022 Riding Session

Sundays: April 10 to June 26 (10:00 am to 6:00 pm)

No classes: April 17 (Easter) & May 22 (May long weekend)

Monday mornings: April 11 to June 27 (times to be determined)

No classes: April 18 (Easter) & May 23 (May long weekend)

Tuesdays AM: April 19 to June 21 (9:00 to 1:00 pm)

Tuesdays PM: April 19 to June 21 (4:00 pm to 9:00 pm)

Wednesdays: April 20 to June 22 (3:00 pm to 9:00 pm)



2022 Appreciation BBQ for Winter & Spring Volunteers

Date/Time to be announced

Summer 2022 - One week of Riding

Monday, July 26 to Friday, July 30
(10:00 am to 3:00 pm)



Riding Calendar for 2022 (continued)



Fall 2022 Riding Session

Orientation: Wednesday, August 31 (6:00 to 9:00 pm)

Sign in: 6:00-6:30 Introductory Talk: 6:30-7:00

Break into 3 groups for hands-on experience Finish 9:00

Sundays: Sept. 11 to Nov. 20 (10:00 am to 6:00 pm)

No classes: October 9 (Thanksgiving)

Monday mornings: Sept. 12 to Nov. 21 (times to be determined)

No classes: October 10 (Thanksgiving)

Tuesdays AM: Sept. 13 to Nov. 15 (9:00 am to 1:00 pm)

Tuesdays PM: Sept. 13 to Nov. 15 (4:00 to 9:00 pm)

Wednesdays: Sept. 14 to Nov. 16 (3:00 to 9:00 pm)



2022 Appreciation Party for Summer & Fall Volunteers

Date/Time to be announced

If you would like to help our riders, please go to:

<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/9502>

and donate online.

WELCA



Purchase your calendar and automatically be entered to **win a free riding lesson** for you and a friend!

*Learn more at
www.welca.ca*



Get ready for 2022 with the familiar horse faces at WELCA by purchasing a calendar!



Not only does your contribution by purchasing a calendar go directly to the care of the wonderful horses who participate in both WELCA & LBTRA programs, each calendar purchase automatically enters you in for a chance to win a FREE horse riding lesson for you and a friend! Riders must be over the age of 4 to participate in the horse riding lesson.

These calendars can make a great stocking stuffer. Early bird pricing is available in person or online now for just \$25.00 until December 1, 2021! After December 1, each calendar will be \$30.00.

Visit <https://www.welca.ca/shop>
to get your 2022 WELCA Calendar today!

2022 CALENDAR

New Additions

by Marielle



Avery is a beautiful Quarter Horse chestnut mare that is privately owned and has been fully leased to WELCA for lesson use. Born in 2006, this 15 year old mare has the training and energy to help new riders learn how wonderful horse riding is. Avery arrived at Whitemud in the summer of 2020 with Chrissy and Everest and has been integrated into the WELCA learn to ride program as she prefers not to canter. She has an English background and will test her riders' abilities by making them learn how to ride and ask for aids correctly. Avery started with Little Bits in the spring and is a happy addition to our horse family. She is sweet natured, smart and loves to have conversations with her leader. You can find Avery with Chrissy and Everest in a back paddock where they all live together.

Birdie is a 20-year-old Leopard Appaloosa mare that was born in 2001 and was a lesson horse at various barns. Her owners decided to move Birdie to Whitemud in the fall of 2020 because of the fantastic care Lollypop had received. Birdie is an experienced horse that has jumped and is experienced under both the English and Western saddle. Birdie has been used in the WELCA program as a beginner lesson horse in the learn-to-ride program and participates in the more advanced classes where she teaches her riders how to sit a canter properly. In the fall, Birdie joined the Little Bits program where she has started to delight her riders with her friendly attitude, her engaging stride and unusual looks. Birdie listens very well to her riders and will soon have a huge fan base to call her own. We look forward to Birdie continuing to be part of our horse pack.





This pint size horse is called **Peanut** and this name suits him perfectly. Peanut, who is a buckskin gelding, was born in 2010 which makes him 11 years old. He is a Welsh/WH cross and belonged to a family that did eventing with him. Peanut arrived at Whitemud in Oct 2020 where he was put into classes in the WELCA program and then into the summer camps. Peanut joined the Little Bits program in September 2021 and has been doing very well with his riders and the volunteers that work with him. Once he gains a rider's trust, they relax and show how well they can perform with him. Peanut does love every horse he meets, but once he

moved in with Domingo (a black and white gelding) they got along so well you can often find them eating side-by-side in their pen.

There's a new horse in town and his name is **Hawaiian Holiday** (otherwise known as **Maui**). Born in 2007, this stunning chestnut gelding is 15hh, has a white star on his forehead and is 14 years old. Maui was donated to Little Bits and arrived at Whitemud in October 2020 from a family in the Rocky Mountain House area. Maui has had a very interesting career from being a beginner's horse for actors learning how to ride to being ridden in movies with other animals like bears, wolves and camels. His calm nature and alert attitude help his riders learn to be aware of their surroundings. Due to his extensive training and patience, Maui was introduced into the WELCA program with more advanced riders and was then introduced into the Little Bits program with a select few riders that are independent but would be challenged by Maui's sensitive nature. Maui can be ridden both English and Western and neck-reins like a dream. Maui is a little demanding with his leaders for attention but is a wonderful horse to work with and be around.





Stubbs, a darling Morgan, is approximately 17 years old (possibly born around 2004) and was purchased from the Tofield auction in the fall of 2020. Stubbs started working with a trainer and when his pen mate Max was purchased by WELCA, Stubbs was donated as well. Stubbs has settled well and is very interested in activities around him. Stubbs was relearning what is required as a horse for beginners after his arrival and has built such confidence with love and patience from WELCA staff and in lessons. We started to use Stubbs in September in a few lessons and have seen how well he behaves under saddle for his riders, and we have been very pleased

with his ability to win his riders' trust. The leaders are more challenged as Stubbs likes to rub his head on them which is a very bad habit, one we are still currently working on. If you see Stubbs in the field, he is very easy to spot with the tops of his ears missing, probably from frostbite. Don't worry, it does not hurt him. We all love Stubbs and his spunky attitude.

You hear the name and think of a princess living in a tower with long flowing hair. In **Rapunzel's** case, this is partially true. As a frequent winner in the hunter ring, she proved herself a horse princess with flowing locks of white and golden hair living in a paddock. Rapunzel is an adorable palomino Connemara mare that was born in 2002 making her 19 this year. Arriving in the summer of 2021, Rapunzel started her introduction into the WELCA program shortly after her arrival in the regular classes and has been doing small poles and jumps as well. Rapunzel started her new career as a Little Bits horse in the fall of 2021 and has an instant fan club that loves to both ride her and work with her. She is a hard worker and does her best for her riders in all her classes. You can find Rapunzel living with Secret where they are still working out their differences in lady-like fashion.





In March 2021, a new horse arrived in town and her name is **Winter**. Born in 2007, this beautiful grey mare is a Paint and Percheron Cross standing at 15.1 hh and is 14 years old. Little Bits purchased Winter from her previous owner in Wetaskiwin County when she showed that speed was not in her repertoire for barrel racing. Once Winter arrived at Whitemud, our instructors were able to work with Winter and learn what she knows. Winter prefers a longer loose rein and has shown that nothing really bothers her. She is a very sensitive mare that prefers a soft voice and responds to the lightest touch. Winter started in the WELCA camps and was used regularly but because she is very

sensitive, a long squeeze is asking her to go faster. We are working on this. Winter was used in the Little Bits summer camp and is being ridden in the fall session and now has a fast following of admirers, with both her riders and volunteers that work with her. Winter lives with some geldings in the Forest pen as her gentle nature makes her a target from other mares. We hope to have Winter around for a long, long time.

My time at Little Bits ... so far *by Megan*

I'm Megan, I am currently in high school and just started volunteering with Little Bits earlier this Fall. Although I am brand new to Little Bits and have only been volunteering here for a couple months, it has already been such an amazing experience. I initially began volunteering with Little Bits as a way to gain experience with horses, however it quickly became much more than that to me. It has become a sense of community and an incredible way to spend a few hours each weekend. I always look forward to spending my Sunday afternoons around not just the horses, but all the incredible people that form this amazing community.

From day one I was told that the riders are truly the best part of the Little Bits community, and that is absolutely true! The riders are so incredibly cheerful and excited to get to ride. It's such an incredible feeling to see the riders grow and progress throughout the weeks. All the staff and other volunteers are incredibly friendly and always willing to lend a helping hand. I could not imagine myself volunteering and helping out anywhere better than Little Bits Therapeutic Riding Association!



Some thoughts about the benefits of riding

by Marina



I've been fortunate to work with horses throughout most of my life, including competing in show jumping with my own horses and being a Pony Club member and instructing beginner equestrians. I am so thankful to Little Bits for giving me the opportunity to translate this experience into something even more meaningful by helping to make this sport infinitely more accessible to members of our community. Horses have taught me so many virtues, including perseverance, patience, and resilience, and I truly believe that they have so much to teach everyone!

Volunteering for 3½ years with Little Bits has deepened my appreciation for the therapeutic benefits of horseback riding in improving mental acuity, building strength and

balance. As someone with a scientific background, Little Bits inspired me to explore the objectively measurable therapeutic effects of horseback riding. I was amazed to find many studies that show significant improvement of physical and cognitive symptoms in people with cerebral palsy, autism spectrum disorder and other disabilities, in comparison to those who engaged in other physical activities!

Riding horses has always been fulfilling for me both mentally and physically. I feel so happy to see this same effect within scientific literature and in personally observing our riders, as their connection with their horse and their volunteers continues to grow. I love developing meaningful relationships with my riders as we navigate



challenges together, and seeing their smiles as they learn and improve their skills over multiple sessions together. Thank you, Little Bits, for this rewarding role and for giving me a new family that I appreciate so much, especially during the difficult times of this pandemic!

Pattie's Happy Place

I'm Pattie and I've been a volunteer for Little Bits for two months! In this short time, I have come to love the staff, the children that we serve and my fellow volunteers. Plus, I have learned a lot about serving our beautiful lesson horses who give more love than they receive. Little Bits has officially become my "happy place" and it will continue to be so for years to come! I am so grateful for this opportunity!

