



LITTLE BITS
THERAPEUTIC RIDING ASSOCIATION
for persons with disabilities

info@littlebits.ca

www.littlebits.ca

May 2012

Notice of Annual General Meeting

**Wednesday, May 30, 2012
7:00 to 8:00 p.m.
Whitemud Equine Centre
(Classroom in main building)**

*The agenda will be available at
the meeting. Coffee/tea and
dessert will be served.
All members are welcome.*

LBTRA Riding Program 2012

Our staff members were very excited and enthusiastic to start the 2012 spring session. We were anxious to see all of the riders and meet the new riders, horses, and volunteers joining Little Bits!

The Volunteer Training night was very successful as we had 50 new recruits attend. After the Volunteer Training session, we tried out 4 new horses and found them to be suitable for our program. The new horses are Doc, Lady, Luke and Mandy. We have the best selection of horses (26) we have ever had from WELCA.

We also had 4 past riders and 4 new riders start the spring session with us. Of those 8 riders, 2 came from St. Albert (one rider who had originally ridden with us), two riders returned from having spinal surgery, and the others were placed from the waiting list. Our schedule is full with 115 riders and we still have names on our waiting list.



New Volunteer Recruits - Spring 2012 Session

WELCA – Ready for Renewal & Expansion



For the past 12 years, the Whitemud Equine Learning Centre Association (WELCA) has worked to develop and effectively deliver equine-related programs for a wide cross-section of Albertans who would not otherwise have access to such opportunities.

The facility, including all the buildings, is owned by the City of Edmonton and leased to WELCA. WELCA is responsible for facility maintenance. We have pretty well reached the limit of our capabilities for bandaging and patching the existing buildings, and demand for our programs continues to grow.

In 2010, WELCA created a business case for replacing the arena, stable, and office areas at an estimated cost of \$16 million. The City of Edmonton has committed \$4 million to cover 25% of the project cost, and WELCA will be requesting similar contributions from the Provincial and Federal Governments. The remaining 25% will come from fundraising efforts within the community.

Linda has attended three meetings for the new WELCA Design and Construction Committee, as the representative from LBTRA. We have identified all requirements for spaces for every program and started developing different floor plans for the new facility. IBI Consultants are overseeing these meetings.

There is a common perception that horses are only for rich people, and it is true that some activities involving horses are hugely expensive. But there are many people with a strong love for horses and limited resources. WELCA offers equine-related opportunities for all Edmonton area residents.

Our programs benefit high-risk youth, aboriginal youth, war veterans, the elderly, and the facility has been the home of Little Bits Therapeutic Riding Association for 36 years.

- 30% of WELCA riders have special needs
- 95% of our clients do not own a horse

WELCA partners with NAIT and other institutions for hands-on learning and research. Schools access our herd for recreation and education programs and for volunteer and work experience. Although the facility is based within the city, it serves equine enthusiasts from surrounding rural areas. Many of WELCA's strongest supporters live outside the city, and WELCA hosts events that attract participants from across the province and beyond.

The new facility means WELCA will be able to continue offering valuable equine related programs and better deal with the current unsatisfied demand for such programs.

Little Bits will benefit from a fully-accessible facility that is available for year-round programming. As our most important community partner, Little Bits Therapeutic Riding Association will have pride of place with dedicated space for volunteers, clients and staff as well as your own tack room, storage and amenities.

We greatly appreciate the support that WELCA receives from the clients, staff, volunteers and board of Little Bits, and we hope to continue that partnership in a new facility for at least another 36 years!

Rider profile: *John Jackson*

by Petra Schulz, Volunteer Coordinator

"I never thought I could do this"

John started riding with Little Bits in the fall of 2003, joining us as an adult rider. He hails from the English Lake District, as one can tell from the distinctive accent John has preserved, although he has been in Canada since 1974. John had polio as a child, and as a result experiences some physical limitations, including a weakness in his legs.

When he was asked what riding means to him, he said that he had long dreamt of riding but added "I never thought I could do this." At first John checked out some stables in the Strathcona County area, where he lives, but could not find one that could accommodate him until someone recommended Little Bits. Unfortunately there was a one-year waiting list until a space became available, but since that time John has been riding with one of the adult groups on Tuesday mornings.

John is one of the few riders who mounts and rides independently, but has a leader when he does stretches and sometimes for the extra security. He notes that "...every little success, every little tiny bit of progress, is a big, big thing for me" and adds that besides the thrill, joy and the satisfaction riding brings, he has tangible health benefits. Riding strengthens his muscles; it improves his balance and helps his mobility. He is walking more confidently when he rides regularly. Most of all, riding feels good and it gives him a lightness of moving about that he does not otherwise experience. In John's words "The world looks like a different place on the back of a horse."

Little Bits Achievement Days Winners

Thanks to everyone for your wonderful efforts in collecting pledges.

Winners of the **2011 Achievement Day prizes** are as follows:


Sophie C. and **Celine L.** collected the minimum requirement of \$1500.00 and both ladies will win back their spring riding fees of \$405.00. Congratulations, Sophie and Celine! Great work!

Katie H. (Sun.) and **Dana & Darren M.** collected the minimum requirement of \$1000.00 and they will be excused from 20 hours of participation service equal to a total value of \$320.00.

Special thanks to the following riders for collection of over \$100.00.

If your name is highlighted, you have won a \$25.00 Cineplex Odeon Gift Certificate.

Please see Linda or Jo-Anne to collect it!



Adam T.	Cassidy F.	Emily T.	Ian W.	Kevin A.	Marc B.	Samantha M.
Alex K.	Chantelle M.	Erin K.	Iasabella H.	Kimberly W.	Marlow W.	Samantha W.
Andrew G.	Chelsea L.	Ethan L.	Jan A.	Kirsten N.	Michael D.	Sean R.
Arden M.	Clare L.	Evan C.	John J.	Lauren P.	Michael Y.	Shannon D.
Ariel B.	Connor T.	Gabriel D.	Julia S.	Liam D.	Mikayla W.	
Brayden P.	Dante L.	Greg S.	Katie H.	Lily S.	Quinn M.	
Casey A.	David S.	Ian G.	Kelly K.	Logan K.	Rachael K.	



Volunteer Profile: *Stan Homan*

by Linda Rault, Riding Administrator

Stan Homan was honoured for his 20 year (1991 – 2011) anniversary with LBTRA. Surrounded by his Tuesday a.m. volunteer family and LBTRA staff, he was honoured by having a tacking stall in the barn named after him. He also received a plaque and a very nice collage of photos put together by Olena.

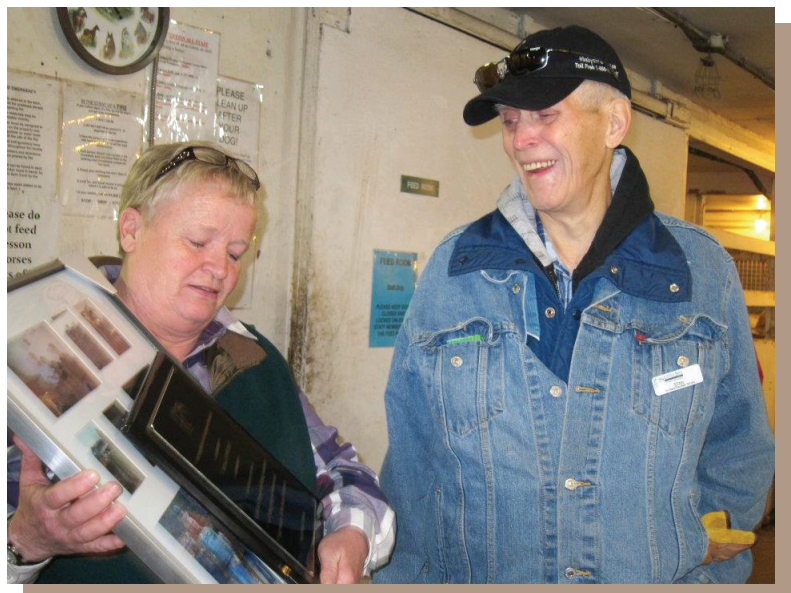
Stan started to volunteer with Little Bits back in April, 1991 while he was still employed with Telus. He started at Little Bits at the urging of his daughter, Anita, 19 at the time. Anita is now the Supervisor of Consultants for the Special Needs Sector of Edmonton Public Schools. To this day Anita can be found here on Sundays working alongside her father. Over the years, Stan has done every conceivable job that Little Bits put in front of him, including serving a three year term on the Little Bits Board of Directors.

However, Stan was most happy when working with the riders, the horses and the other volunteers. Either in the barn or the arena, Stan is always ready to lend a hand. Several riders have developed strong attachments to Stan and are always eagerly looking to find him in the arena.

Stan's compassion, gentleness and strength all lend themselves to making him the wonderful volunteer and role model that he is. Stan has also mentored a few special needs volunteers who work with us in the barn. These individuals also look up to Stan and emulate his actions and ethics with great pride. Stan retired from Telus 11 years ago and fills his days volunteering with Little Bits on Sundays and Tuesday mornings and also volunteering at Sports Central. His wife Dixie has never minded sharing Stan with Little Bits and often accompanies him to our special events.

Three years ago, Stan received a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer, but in true Stan form he hasn't let that keep him from his volunteer duties with Little Bits. So, the next time you see Stan in the barn, the arena or the coffee room, please acknowledge that you have met a man of great substance, compassion, dedication and determination. I truly feel blessed to have known this gentleman for the past 21 years. He is one of the special Little Bits friends we are all fortunate to have.

Thanks Stan, for 21 years!



New Fundraising Opportunity

On Monday, May 14th Little Bits Therapeutic Riding Association will embark on an innovative fundraising campaign with GenerUs Marketing Solutions. This unique fundraiser will not only benefit Little Bits but will also provide you the opportunity to purchase a quality product or service you actually want ... at a DISCOUNT!

You will receive an email containing the featured offers. All you have to do is sit in your comfy chair and click on the offer of your choice. Then tell all your friends! Put the offer on your Facebook and Twitter, and forward the offer email to your contacts. When they visit www.generus.ca and purchase a certificate, between 10% - 20% of each certificate sold will go directly to support Little Bits Therapeutic Riding Association. With the wide variety of merchants featured, there's sure to be something for every taste. Shopping at your fingertips AND supporting Little Bits. It's a WIN WIN!

Our goal is to raise \$1000 for assistance with arena and horse rental fees and we only have 1 week to do it! So pass it along! The more we sell the more we make! Watch for the offer email on Monday, May 14th. Thank you in advance for your support!

Instructor profile: *Evan* My Five Years with Little Bits

I began with Little Bits as a volunteer in 2007 during the spring session. I enjoyed it so much that later that year I began the certification process with Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association. The wonderful staff of Little Bits, particularly Linda and Jo-Anne, supported and taught me so much along the way! I had so much fun going through the certification process with Lisa and Lynda. In 2010, I began teaching on Sundays with Jo-Anne. It's been terrific getting to know the wonderful riders, volunteers and horses.

Outside of Little Bits, I work with children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their families as a Speech Language Pathologist. I grew up riding horses and participated in Pony Club and 3-Day Eventing. Most of my spare time is spent with family, friends and my two dogs and two horses. I'm looking forward to another great session at Little Bits!

Instructor profile: *Sonja Christopher*

Sonja Christopher is a certified therapeutic riding instructor through Certified Horsemanship Assoc. and has been instructing for Little Bits for over 10 years. She lives on acreage by South Cooking Lake with her husband, two daughters and an assortment of animal family members.

Sonja is the Vice-President of the newly formed association, Home on the Range Autism Ranch, a non-profit association to create the first rural Alberta self-sufficient housing, as well as employment opportunities, for adults with disabilities.

Sonja is also the secretary/treasurer for the Alberta Association for Animal Owner's Rights, a non-profit association she became passionate about because of the success she has had with supportive therapies for her animals and her strong belief that animal owners should have the right to choose the best animal wellness provider for their animal whether it is a veterinarian or certified non-veterinarian.

Sonja feels blessed to instruct at Little Bits and thoroughly enjoys the challenges and rewards of the job. Whether it is teaching a rider how to do a rising trot, helping a new volunteer to pick out one of Joker's hooves, or finding the right saddle that fits Snowball - she enjoys it all!

Equipment Guidelines

Parents who are assisting the instructors with any mounting or dismounting have been requested to fill out the Capri Acknowledgement of Risk forms. This decision was made by the Board last fall.

Another new policy that was passed by the Board of Directors is being implemented. We have started talking to parents about the Personal Helmet Policy. We have been inspecting helmets and requesting that those riders who need to replace their personal helmets do so by the start of the fall session at the latest.

The envy of other volunteer coordinators: *Petra Schulz, Volunteer Coordinator*

When I meet other volunteer coordinators at workshops or chat on forums I follow, most are amazed when they hear about the number of returning and long-serving volunteers we have. They ask me to share the magic, but I wish I could take more credit. Our wonderful riders, great horses and the overall atmosphere of the program are the reasons that our volunteers come back. Many times when I ask volunteers what make Little Bits special for them, I hear the same answer: "I came for the horses, but stayed for the riders."

Considering our aging and dusty facility, muddy paddocks and long shifts alternating with inactivity, our volunteers are not deterred in their dedication. I try my best to schedule only as many helpers as we need and to keep everyone busy, ideally with the same rider, but I have resigned myself to the fact that scheduling volunteers for our program is an inexact science. Basically I need to use the "Air Canada" approach to scheduling, so I "overbook" to fill all the seats. This means that sometimes people are not as busy as they hoped to be (this can be remedied by brushing down horses that are forever shedding and muddy this time of year). At other key times, when we are short-handed – during final exams, when the flu bug is making its rounds, and on Mother's Day – people walk for several classes and stay much longer than they had initially intended. Those are the times when I especially appreciate the willingness of volunteers to go the extra mile (literally) and families to lend a helping hand. Thankfully our riders and their families keep the team nourished with the fabulous snacks they provide.

For those who like numbers, here are some stats from the spring session: we have 104 returning and 45 new volunteers, as well as 25 people on our waiting and on-call lists. On Sunday, April 17th, we had 39 volunteers walk, lead and brush for 129 hours. Many active volunteers received service rewards this year, including 2 for 20 years of service, one for 15-years, five for 10 years and eleven for 5 years. If you know anyone who would like to join us, please direct them to the volunteer page on the Little Bits website: www.LittleBits.ca. **I hope our readers enjoy learning about some of the people who contribute so many hours to make the program happen. I would like to introduce you to some of these volunteers:**

Some volunteers come in pairs, such as mother-daughter teams Kim & Mary and Kath & Danielle, and a young couple, Rod & Melinda. Our mother-daughter teams are both long-time returning volunteers who are always there and have regular riders they like to work with. Mary is a nurse and Kim, following in her mom's footsteps, is getting her degree in nursing; if their "horse-side manner" in any indication, they are the type of people you would want at your bedside! Kath gets busy with us before looking after her animals at home, and daughter Danielle comes as often as her university schedule allows. Rod describes Melinda as "crazy about horses," so he felt that he had to learn more about the creatures his wife adores, as well as have a better understanding of people with disabilities as he prepares to get into medical school.

Jackie does not help in the barn or the arena, but she is getting our files into top shape. When she told me that she has formal training as well as many years of secretarial experience, I jumped at the opportunity to bring her on board. Jackie now looks after the "small stuff" I'm not so good at. Other volunteers have joined our board, which is still looking for new members, especially those with legal, fundraising or human resources experience.

Stuart is a long-term volunteer, who came to Little Bits as a teenager and next year will be getting his 10 year award. He works as a courtesy clerk at a supermarket and on his days off spends 6 to 8 hours helping out. He is happy to do whatever needs to get done, but there is one rider he has a special bond with and there is no messing with this assignment!

There is new volunteer Catherine, who looks after her family full time, but has time to join us on Tuesday mornings. Her participation was encouraged by her daughter who used to volunteer with us, but is too busy with school at the moment. KaYeon is an exchange student from Korea and came to us via the University of Alberta's international program, which has recently partnered with us. Prior to her first Sunday in the arena KaYeon had not been near a horse and felt more comfortable to stay close to the riders. She is enjoying herself and appreciates seeing a side of Canadian culture she would not have experienced on campus.

Attalie is a new volunteer this year and is fascinated by horses, but wanted to get to know them better before she decides to ride. She has autism and comes with her mom, Eleanor, to help in the barn on Sundays. They are enjoying themselves so much that not even Attalie's allergies will deter her.

Inspired by Our Riders

by Petra Schulz, Volunteer Coordinator

The contribution our volunteers make to the success of the program never ceases to amaze me. Since returning to Little Bits this spring, I am determined go beyond application forms and surveys and take time to find out about these individuals and what role Little Bits has in their lives.

One such opportunity arose in the second week of riding when Andrew, a regular volunteer since 2006, came to see me at the end of his shift, stating he wanted to make a donation. For the past 6 years and since his last year in high school, Andrew has lead, side-walked and groomed for many hours every week, often walking back-to-back lessons when we are short-handed. Not only is he is one of the volunteers who makes an above average time commitment, but he also wanted to support our riders in other ways. Over the past winter, Andrew has been shovelling snow for seniors; he presented us with a gift of \$750, representing his entire earnings from that job! This generous donation will pay for two horses for the fall session or support the fees of two riders.

Andrew agreed to sit down with me and answer some of my questions when he was not needed in the barn or the arena. After graduating from high school, he studied environmental sciences at the University of Alberta. No matter how busy his schedule was, he managed to volunteer for the fall season while working as a firefighter for the forestry service in spring and summer, including the blaze that devastated Slave Lake last year. This year he is getting ready to enter a master's program in conservation biology, focusing on the endangered grizzly population. He reassured me that even graduate studies will not keep him from Little Bits.

I asked Andrew what makes Little Bits so important to him, and he explained that while he initially came for the horses, it is the riders, their achievements and their enjoyment that inspires him. When friends ask him about Little Bits, he speaks of the good atmosphere and how he gains as much as he gives. He mentions one of our adult riders, Emily, as someone who encouraged him with her positive outlook.

Horses of course still play an important part and his favourites over the years were Buck, who passed away a couple of years ago, and Willie, who sadly died only days before the season started. Andrew is making friends with some of the new lesson horses that have joined us this year. He is now getting to know different riders, working earlier hours as he did in the past. His track record with Little Bits gives me confidence that with him on their side, the future of grizzly bears looks brighter.

Excerpt from an email from Eleanor C., who volunteers together with her daughter, Attalie

"We enjoy volunteering at Little Bits a lot. You and other staff and volunteers are so friendly and patient that we love to come every Sunday though we still have a lot to learn. The way you schedule the volunteers is great as well; Attalie and I can always find the experienced others available to teach us what we need to learn. As the work demand is never too much or too rushed, Attalie loves doing what she has learned. I also found out more about riding from other volunteers. Attalie would actually like to try the riding lessons. Thank you for letting Attalie and I volunteer at Little Bits; it is truly a wonderful experience. See you again tomorrow!"

Thank You to our June 2011 - April 2012 Donors

Little Bits would not be what it is today without you; every donation makes a difference.

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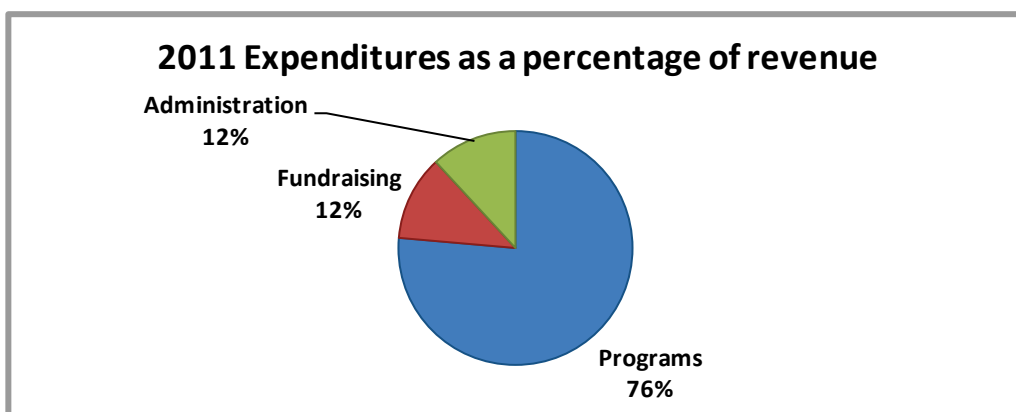
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Johnson, Andrew	Lusson, Charlotte	Ristau, Pat	Vomer, Natalie
Johnson, Elsa	Lynch, C.	Robbins, Duane	Wallace, Charity
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Kelm, Dirk	Maurer, Elleah	Sears, Paul	Yee, Nancy
Keyes, Annegret	Maurer, Jason	Seidel, June	Young, Lynette
Kinders, Ethel	Maxwell, Gisele	Semenchuk, Rosa	Zahary, Eleanor
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