



LITTLE BITS

THERAPEUTIC RIDING ASSOCIATION
for persons with disabilities

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www.littlebits.ca

November 2015

Little Bits 40 Years Celebration

On Sunday, August 30th, 2015 we celebrated the 40th Anniversary of Little Bits Therapeutic Riding Association. We had great attendance (about 250 people) who all enjoyed a beautiful day and lunch in the Blatchfort Hangar at Fort Edmonton Park. Sponsors for our 40th anniversary were Spruce Meadows and Crestwood Veterinary Centre. We also received \$2000 from the Edmonton Hunter Jumper Association and \$500 to the Tuffy Fund in honor of our 40th from a past riding family (Russenholt/Brown). During the program we acknowledged two long-serving Directors of LBTRA – Sharon Breitkreuz for 40 years with Little Bits and Rex Carey who has 33 years of service.



Little Bits 40 Years Celebration *(continued)*





Shannon, one of our riders in Tuesday evening's 8 p.m. class, has artwork on display!

Thoughts from Neil and Patty LeMay

A few years after moving to Edmonton, we were delighted to see a sign advertising for volunteers for the Little Bits Therapeutic Riding Association. Both Neil and I had grown up riding horses: Neil was in the Pony Club in a small town in northern Alberta, and I was in the 4-H Horse Club in a small town nestled between the Rocky and Selkirk Mountains in southeastern BC. Our parents had instilled a deep sense of commitment to give back to our community through volunteering, so this was a great opportunity to do that as well as the added benefit of being around horses. But more importantly, it was a chance to work with youth and adults who have extraordinary abilities.



This is our third year with the program, and we are continually amazed to see the riders when they start with the program – some afraid to even touch a horse, let alone sit on top of one – and then a few weeks later they are sitting up tall on their horse with a grin ear-to-ear, learning how to steer the horse and communicate with it. It is so encouraging to see how the riders and horses connect with each other. They each seem to have an intuitive sense of compassion, patience and understanding for each other.

We have been grateful for this opportunity and look forward to many more years of being at the barn! Thank you for the privilege of volunteering for Little Bits – it has been a wonderful experience!

Wild Rose Trail Ride

The 2015 Alberta Equestrian Federation's Wild Rose Trail Ride was held on September 5th, 2015. Jo-Anne and her friend, Jan, hauled their horses Casey and Max down to participate. It was a bit rainy and gloomy, but overall there were about 40 riders along the scenic trails at the Red Lodge Guest Ranch, located about 7 miles west of Bowden. Prior to the three hour ride, everyone met in the "canteen" for a phenomenal breakfast before heading out on the trail. Each rider paid a registration fee; the proceeds were split among three Therapeutic Riding groups in Alberta. This year we applied and were selected to be one of the recipients. After the ride, Jo-Anne received a mock cheque in the amount of \$1300.00 on our behalf. Since then, the real cheque has been received and deposited. Many thanks to Jo-Anne and Jan and their wonderful equine partners for representing us at this event.



Oilers Nation Donation

by Linda Rault



Through a parent, Sharon Sutherby, and Jay Downton, President of Oilers Nation, we had the opportunity to partner with Oilers Nation at their annual kick-off party on October 8th at The Pint's downtown location. We supplied a couple of workers who helped to prepare "swag bags" and then sat at the ticket booth for a couple of hours. The proceeds from the evening ticket sales all came to LBTRA. We have received just over \$5700.00 from this wonderful evening event. Many thanks to Jay and Oilers Nation for selecting Little Bits as the recipient of that evening's ticket sales.

A Note from Andrea Wiebe



I drove past the sign on Fox Drive asking for volunteers to assist riders with disabilities for a few years before I decided to make the call. I kept thinking “I really need to do that.” I finally called and asked for information, and in September of 2007 I started as a Wednesday evening volunteer. I soon realized I was hooked and it was the horses and riders that were helping me. I have two beautiful daughters but my youngest had medical issues that were at the time out of control and causing us an enormous amount of stress. I just wanted to get out of the house for a few hours, walk, spent time with horses and riders, and not have to think about the issues at home. Soon, Wednesdays were my favorite day of the week and I went into a withdrawal of sorts when there was no Little Bits programming!

In 2009, my youngest daughter, Samantha, started to ride in the Monday morning “Itty Bit” program. Within her first session, the benefits to her balance, motor planning and speech were very apparent. Now I was at the barn two times a week and loving it even more.

In 2011, I submitted my application to become a Director on the LBTRA Board. During my time on the Board of directors, I have held the positions of Secretary and now Vice Chair. Learning about the workings of a Board proved to be a very large learning curve, but also an amazing experience.

Throughout the years, I have been at the barn more and more. When Little Bits wasn't programming, I needed my horsie “fix” so I started volunteering with WELCA on Wednesday evenings with the Learn to Ride program. I also thought “why are the kids the only ones riding?” So I signed up for learn-to-ride classes and then got into the WELCA Horsemanship program; I have now completed Level 2 in the English rider program. Ashley, my oldest, started to ride in the Horsemanship program on Saturday ... now up to 4 days a week at the barn. Another thing I should add is that I have a very tolerant and supportive husband!

Besides the riders and horses, what keeps me coming back are the friendships I have made over the years. The friendships I have with other volunteers, board members, instructors, and fellow parents are lasting ones that I will cherish forever. I can remember laughing so hard in the back one night with Mari, Amanda and Ros that we were crying and gasping for air. I love my Little Bits family and will continue to volunteer my time in whatever way I can.

*On November 8th, 2015
Pauline Busch presented
a cheque for \$500
from RBC to
LBTRA board member
Andrea Wiebe
for donating her hours*





The Edmonton's Prospects 50/50 raffle night for LBTRA was Friday, July 17th. It was poorly attended as it was the first day of Klondike Days, there was an Edmonton Eskimos game, and the weather was poor. We only made \$615.00. For the past 2 years we had been able to work the well-attended July 1st games, with a fireworks show caps the night.

Spring Riding Session 2016

2016 **SPRING** Riding session is a 12 week session and will be starting on:

ORIENTATION DAY for NEW volunteers is on Wednesday March 16, 2016

Sunday March 27 - 10:00 am to 6:00 pm **ending on:**
Sunday June 19, 2016

There **IS** riding on Sunday March 27, 2016 (Easter Sunday) - First Day

There will be **NO** riding session on Sunday May 22, 2016 (May long weekend).

Tuesday Morning March 29 - 9:00 am to 1:00 pm
ending on: Tuesday June 14, 2016

Tuesday Afternoon March 29 - 4:00 pm to 9:00 pm
ending on: Tuesday June 14, 2016

Wednesday March 30 - 3:00 pm to 9:00 pm **ending on:**
Wednesday June 15, 2016



We assisted the ACT/UCT Edmonton South Club with their stroller and wheelchair rental shifts at Klondike Days (July 17th through July 26th) and at the Heritage Festival (August 1st to August 3rd). We supplied several workers for various shifts. In return, the ACT/UCT Edmonton South Club donates a portion of their Casino Proceeds to Little Bits.

Daisy Day at the Canadian Derby



Daisy Day, a.k.a. The Canadian Derby and the Dash for the Daisies, was run at Northlands Park on Saturday, August 15th. Once again, LBTRA sold daisies to the race fans who were at the track. It was a cold and rainy day, but with our super daisy selling workers we managed to make \$4495.90!



Barbara's Little Bits Journey

My name is Barbara and I've been volunteering with Little Bits on Tuesday mornings since fall 2013. I started soon after I arrived in Canada from Poland, my home country. The reason why I came to volunteer with Little Bits is that I was "disabled" too. When I arrived to Edmonton I found myself having troubles with thinking, speaking and understanding English around me. That made me very scared and unsure. I knew I had to find a way to improve. So I started looking for opportunities to overcome my fears.

The first place I could think of was, of course, a stable. This is how I found out about Whitemud Centre, and it was just a matter of time before I learned about Little Bits, too. I knew just right away that this was a place I was looking for, and not only because I love horses.

I have autistic little brother, Filip (13), who lives in Poland with my parents. I just thought that maybe if I come to Little Bits to help other people like him, then maybe I could be "closer" to Filip somehow. And, as a bonus, I was also hoping that if I help those riders with their fights for a better and more enjoyable life, then maybe they would help me with my struggles in speaking and understanding English.

After these two years with Little Bits, I can honestly say that I got back more than I could ever wish for. Little Bits is no longer about foreign language practice, it's all about you - the people who participate. Riders, volunteers and employees - you all are just wonderful, always patient and helpful with amazing senses of humour. You all are unique and do such a great job for Little Bits.

Since my time with Little Bits is sadly going to an end, I would like to take this chance and give my warmest thanks to all of you. I will always remember the time with you as one of the best in my life. Please continue your amazing work and support Little Bits, this special place where every lesson might become a witness of another little miracle.

