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## WELCA Riding Arena Construction Project Update

With most of the steel up, the barn and classroom roof decks on, the building is really taking shape. Soon you'll see steel studs for the walls, parapets and the start of exterior sheeting to enclose the building so work can continue over the winter.



## **Edmonton Kubota Ltd. and the Whitemud Equine Learning Centre Association Announce Partnership to Promote Horsemanship and Equestrian Events**



On September 27, 2016, Edmonton Kubota Ltd. and the Whitemud Equine Learning Centre Association (WELCA) announced a three year partnership to promote horsemanship and equestrian events in the Edmonton area.

Edmonton Kubota will provide equipment for WELCA's daily use including a tractor and RTV as well as additional equipment to assist in the setup, maintenance and tear down of shows and events at the Whitemud Equine Centre show grounds. This will provide Kubota with a highly visible showcase for their equipment. In return, Kubota will be the exclusive equipment provider for WELCA.

For more than two decades, WELCA, a non-profit organization, has been quietly helping to develop people of strength and contributors to the Edmonton community. They are home to a herd of 30 well trained lesson horses, and offer a variety of riding and non-riding programs for people ages six to 65+. WELCA programs benefit many Edmontonians including high-risk youth, aboriginal youth, war veterans, people with disabilities, and the elderly. Thirty-five per cent of WELCA riders have special needs.

WELCA also offers world-class show rings for horse shows and other events. Their grand prix and hunter grass rings as well as three sand rings are venues for all levels of equestrian competition. There are 90 permanent show stalls and 210 temporary stalls as well as parking for 100 horse trailers. The unique river valley park setting in the middle of the city makes WELCA a favorite venue for local, regional and provincial equine events.

“With the new indoor riding arena facility slated to open in 2017, WELCA is poised to become a destination site for shows and special events,” said Trevor Christman, Chair of the WELCA Board of Directors. “And, it is a great time to be growing our partnership with the folks at Edmonton Kubota.”

Since 2004, Edmonton Kubota Ltd. has been the local marketer and distributor of Kubota corporation-branded equipment suited to acreage owners, landscapers, farmers, and construction operators. The equipment is popular with horse owners, boarding stables and equestrian centres.



## News from the Riding Program Administrator

Volunteer training was held at the stable on August 31<sup>st</sup> with 43 new potential volunteers attending. Andrea spoke on behalf of the Board of Directors. Earlier in the afternoon, the staff brought the equipment in from the sheds and we tried 5 new horses out. Four of them are now working in our program – Angel, Diamond, Easy and Zoey!

The fall riding session started on Sunday September 11<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday September 13<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday September 14<sup>th</sup>. We have a full slate of 115 riders – and placed five new riders in the program – they all had ridden in the summer session. All of the staff from the spring session returned in the fall session.

We worked the Palace Casino on Saturday, October 1<sup>st</sup> and Sunday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>. In addition, the ACT/UCT Edmonton South group asked for workers from LBTRA to work their casino October 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>. The ACT/UCT Edmonton South Club has recently donated \$3000.00 to Little Bits.

On Saturday October 15<sup>th</sup>, Jo-Anne, Sharon and I attended the Stony Plain tack sale and we hauled several donated saddles (as well as some of our very old Stubben saddles which we no longer use) to the event. It was well attended and so far we have collected over \$1500.00 from sales with two more saddles to be sold this week. Our LB volunteer, Gail, also attended and helped throughout the day. Earlier she sold one of our saddles to her neighbor and then delivered the ones they didn't buy to the sale. Many thanks to Gail for all of her efforts.

The CIOG grant was completed by myself and Cindi (Instructor Trainee and volunteer from Sunday – Cindi did the financial portion) and submitted on October 11<sup>th</sup>, before the October 14<sup>th</sup> deadline.

Pre-registrations must be submitted before November 30<sup>th</sup> or your spot will be given to someone from the waiting list. There is a late fee added to registrations received after November 18<sup>th</sup> and before November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

### Riding Dates for 2017

#### Volunteer Training

Wednesday, March 15<sup>th</sup> from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at WELCA

#### Spring Riding Sessions

Sunday – March 26<sup>th</sup> to June 18<sup>th</sup> excluding Sunday, May 21<sup>st</sup>

Tuesday – March 28<sup>th</sup> to June 13<sup>th</sup>

Wednesday – March 29<sup>th</sup> to June 14<sup>th</sup>

#### Summer Riding Session

5 days of riding (Monday thru Friday) – July 31<sup>st</sup> to August 4<sup>th</sup>

#### Fall Riding Sessions

Sunday – September 10<sup>th</sup> to November 12<sup>th</sup>

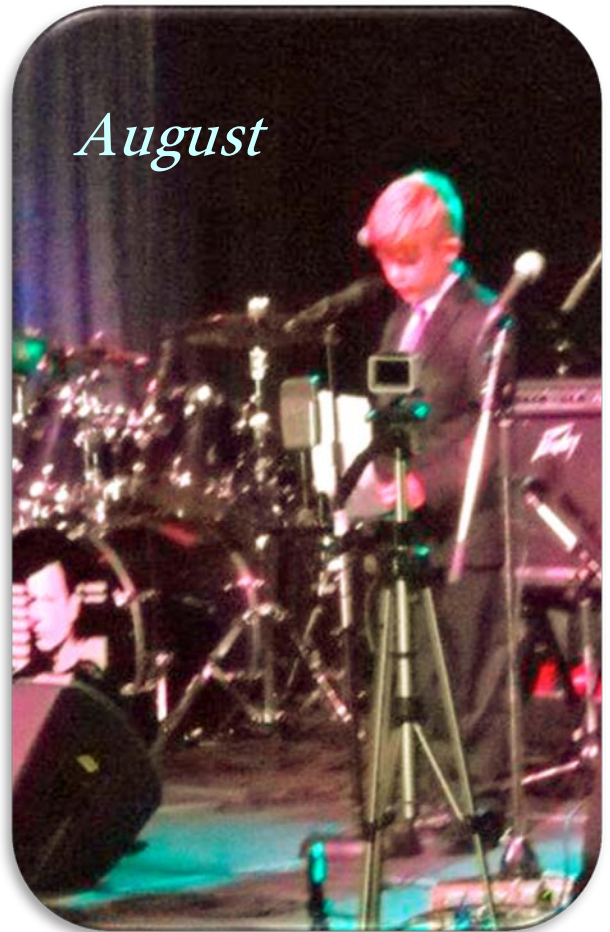
Tuesday – September 12<sup>th</sup> to November 14<sup>th</sup>

Wednesday – September 13<sup>th</sup> to November 15<sup>th</sup>

## 2016 WELCA Gala

Little Bits was well represented at the WELCA Gala at Fort Edmonton Park on Friday October 14<sup>th</sup>. We had a display table manned by two LB parents, and one of our riders spoke at the event about his experience at Little Bits. August (8 years old) wrote a book about Frost – the year we nominated Frost for Therapy Horse of the Year - 2015. He read his book to the guests and did a fabulous job. He added some more comments about riding at Little Bits. August's parents and grandparents attended the Gala as well – they were all very proud that August went to the podium on his own and delivered his story with much ease. After August spoke, there was a cash call for equipment for the Little Bits tack room, office and classroom. The tally was close to \$80,000.00 as a gentleman, John Cloutier from Nordic Mechanical Services, matched the (\$50,000.00) donations from the audience. We have started to receive monies that were pledged.

*August*







Presents

**Volunteer Appreciation Social**

on

**Saturday, November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

from

**14:00 to 16:00 (2 - 4 pm)**

at the

**Glenora Community League**

**10426 - 136 Street - T5N 2E8**

Please R.S.V.P. by November 16<sup>th</sup> so that we know how many people will be attending. There will be food provided, door prizes, long-term service awards, entertainment and a slide show of our riding sessions together.

**Looking forward to seeing you there!**

# Ros - Barn Goddess!

*by Linda Rault*



At this time I would like to thank someone who makes our jobs so much easier – but she always does it behind the scenes - or more correctly in the barn! Ros has been our Barn Manager for as long as Jo-Anne and myself have been here – coming up 30 years. She ensures that all of the horses are groomed, tacked and ready for us in their respective classes. This is no easy task even with the help of all of our wonderful volunteers.

Ros is given a chart at the beginning of each day with the horses and tack requested by the instructors for the day. However, it rarely goes as planned as horses sometimes come in lame or are “off” and changes need to be made all around to ensure that the replacement horse is right for the rider. Her endless patience and calm demeanor carry her through every hour of riding during our spring, summer and fall sessions with tremendous grace! Yes, Ros is one of two of our staff members who are here for **every class every day of riding all year!**

If you go down to the barn, you can find Ros doing any of one hundred or more tasks with any one of 200 or more volunteers. She answers every question and comes to the aid of each person who calls on her expertise. Ros knows each horse, where they live, what they get fed, when they had their feet trimmed, what tack they wear and why they have a certain blanket on or a special haircut or if they are having an off day! She advises the instructors or myself if a horse comes in lame and suggests replacements who may be available. Her advice and experience are invaluable and she dispenses knowledge to anyone who is in need of assistance. She is always ready to lend a hand to the WELCA staff if they need one more pair of hands to medicate a horse or hold one for a wrap change. She can be in the arena spotting while the riders mount or bringing in a piece of tack that has been specially requested.

One of her biggest assets is her ability to direct the group of volunteers with special needs who help in the barn. She will spend as long as it takes to teach someone a simple task and will challenge those ready for more involved tasks. This is where her patient, calm and encouraging ways shine. No matter how many times I hear someone call “ROS?” in the barn – her response is quick, engaging and she is on her way over to the next “crisis.” Safety is always forefront with Ros – both of our volunteers and of the horses and she will call anyone who is not treating the horses right.

In my opinion, Ros is the unsung and unseen hero of our program – her work is demanding, exact, rushed, ever-evolving, and very, very important. I cannot imagine coming to work without Ros being there – although we did make it through a stint when she had a medical issue. That is the only time in nearly 30 years that Ros has missed a day of work. Well – there have been a few where she needed to go to her other job – selling her beautiful silk scarves, calligraphy, cards and other hand-made crafts. Her talents are endless and I know that Little Bits is a better program because of her dedication and diligence to our program.

So...the next time you catch Ros making her way to the volunteer room for a 5- or 10-minute sit or on her way back to the barn to get horses for the next class ready, please say thanks to Ros for her tremendous efforts every day for our riders, volunteers and horses. I know I can never thank her enough for being such a great member of the Little Bits team and even more importantly a great friend.





## Scott I Am

*I decided to volunteer with Little Bits this past Spring because it offers a unique and rewarding experience not only for the riders participating in the program but for the volunteers and staff as well. I had known about Little Bits from my girlfriend who had volunteered here a couple of years ago and ever since then I had always thought that it would be a neat place to volunteer. I had no experience with horses prior to Little Bits so there was quite a learning curve for me at first, but with the help of the staff and other volunteers I was able to learn quickly.*

*I think it's very inspiring to see my riders' improvement throughout the year and being able to have that one on one time with your rider and their horse is a pretty special experience. The staff and other Little Bits volunteers are always so helpful and friendly which makes a great environment for everyone.*

*Being from Edmonton, it's a great feeling to be able to give something back to my community and to support my riders in achieving their goals. For me the best part about Little Bits is the people you get to work with and the opportunity you have to build a relationship with the rider and to watch the progress every rider makes each and every class. Being perched on top of the horse really emboldens the rider and gives them a degree of independence and that's very special to be a part of.*

*I've really enjoyed my Tuesday evenings and I look forward to continuing my work with the riders, horses, staff and volunteers. I would like to extend a big thanks to my riders who have taught me so much about the goodness in people and the human spirit; and also a big thanks to the Little Bits staff for giving me this wonderful opportunity.*



## 25 Years and Still Going Strong

by Jo-Anne Billington



If memory serves me correctly, Deb has been with Little Bits for over twenty years!

She is one of those people who always seems to be there. She has worked with a lot of the riders and has seen them grow from children to young adults, having her hand squeezed so tightly by one and brought to tears laughing with another! Always with a calm and quiet demeanour, she is able to gently encourage her rider when needed and reassure them when she senses some trepidation.

In life, it is not always easy to find someone who has these qualities and Deb possesses these, as well as others.

Although she worked full time, she was able to find time for us. She took a couple of years off, but has since found her way back. She has, and still does

help train new volunteers entering our program. She has also stepped in and taken over as Barn Manager on the odd occasion when Ros had to be away. Having someone with the knowledge of Little Bits and the ability to take a leadership role is a huge asset to us. We are very thankful to have such a dedicated volunteer with us.

Not one to let grass grow under her feet, with retirement she felt she had more to offer. Sitting at home was not her style. With a little research, she has found a new niche! Along with still volunteering two (sometimes more!) days a week with us, she is now a house and pet sitter!

Our program has some outstanding volunteers. Working in the heat, cold, dust and muck is all part of their day at Little Bits. Would they change it? Well, maybe with the new facility it won't be so bad. However, I think the smiles and thank you's each week is what keeps them coming back regardless of the weather.

As I said, Deb has been volunteering with us for over twenty years. Calling her a volunteer does not quite sum up how I feel about her. Friend and family may be more appropriate words to use to describe her. It is not hard to call her that, as she has given her time to allow the riders to grow and mature in a safe and nurturing environment.

Thank you Deb, for all you have done to make each rider you work with feel safe and welcome at Little Bits!



## *Melanie Johnson*

Volunteering is considered a selfless act, but I volunteer at Little Bits for purely selfish reasons. I love working with the riders and the horses. It is inspiring to see how hard the kids work each lesson, and how patient and tolerant the horses are with the riders and volunteers (at least most of the time). The instructors and my fellow volunteers make up a team that I am proud to work with. I always leave my volunteer shift feeling better than when I arrived. Honestly, participating as a volunteer in therapeutic riding lesson is my therapy!

I started volunteering with Little Bits during the 2007 spring session. It might be interesting to know how I first learned about Little Bits. My first full time job was with an educational publishing company, as an editorial assistant and later as their visuals editor. During one of my favourite projects, a photographer and I worked with a Little Bits rider to take pictures for a book that was part of an early reader series. I was so impressed with the organization, I decided I wanted to volunteer with them. The shoot was around 1991, so it only took about 16 years for me to get around to it!

In my day to day life, I worked as a librarian and later as a manager at the Edmonton Public Library for 20 years. I have been married to James for over 22 years. Our son, Jeremy, is 19 and in his second year at the University of British Columbia. It's not a coincidence that most of our vacations are now in Vancouver! In my spare time, I read (a librarian cliché, I know), mess around in the garden a bit, go for hikes or at least long walks, and play silly online games - pretty much the typical hockey/soccer Mom profile. I am happiest working with kids and animals, being outside and getting dirty. So Little Bits has been the perfect fit!





## Rooster

For many years, numerous riders have experienced the joy of riding and learning from this gentle, affectionate soul. Rooster knew when his riders were confident, uncomfortable, happy, sad, tired and many other things which made him such a wonderful lesson horse. He honoured all of these things while proudly and safely carrying his precious cargo.

Rooster was officially retired as a lesson horse in 2012, at which time I was blessed with the gift of being his caregiver. I cannot thank WELCA enough for this magical opportunity. These past four years with him have brought me a lot of joy and he has taught me quite a few life lessons that have proven valuable to me. I only wish he could have told me about his life, as I would have loved for him to share his experiences with me as he was a long lived horse.

Rooster's favourite thing to do was walk to the greenbelt and meadow by the road and graze. He couldn't wait until spring arrived, and I knew he was very disappointed when the winter snows came and he could no longer graze. We always did our best to be the first ones out to graze and the last ones in for the season. We spent countless hours enjoying the beauty and splendor of our river valley.

In the winter, we would exercise in the arena and when we were alone he would follow me everywhere I went without being asked. I knew when he rubbed his head against me and I felt a tingle down my spine, that I was loved. Although he always knew he would get carrots at the end of the visit!

Rooster was a "horse of advanced age" and therefore required special care. He was given hot water or "tea" as his teeth were sensitive. In the hot summer months he was brought in to stand in front of a fan to stay cool and keep his breathing stable. He also took medications and supplements to keep him healthy and happy. Lots of wonderful people took the time to care for his needs and I know he was grateful for this.

Sadly, on the crisp fall morning of September 11<sup>th</sup>, my friend had complications from kidney failure. I am grateful that I was able to spend time with him and tell him how much he meant to me before he passed. He was surrounded by people who loved and cared for him and he went to heaven peacefully.

I know great horses live again and I know he is grazing on sweet green pastures with his friends who have gone before him.

*"The Horse Is God's Gift To Mankind"*

*Arab Proverb*

Until we meet again Roo,  
Dana Watson  
xo