



LITTLE BITS

THERAPEUTIC RIDING ASSOCIATION

for persons with disabilities

info@littlebits.ca

www.littlebits.ca

November 2012

Miss Rodeo Contestants Visit Little Bits

On Wednesday, November 7th, three of the Miss Rodeo Canada contestants, some of the alumni and board, and the current Miss Rodeo Australia came to the barn, despite the terrible weather, to see and experience our program.

Miss Rodeo Canada Board Alumni made a \$100.00 donation to Little Bits.



The contestants interacted with the riders and got a bit of hands-on experience. The riders loved their crowns so much that they kept trying to take them off the ladies! However, those hats are solidly secured to the girls' heads. So, despite a few attempts, the crowns remained safe!

*All 2012 (Spring and Fall) volunteers
are invited to our annual*

Volunteer Appreciation Party

Saturday, November 17th

12:00 - 2:00

Meadowlark Community League Hall

15961 92 Avenue

Enjoy some good food, the company of fellow volunteers and staff, have a chance to win door prizes and celebrate our long-term service award winners.

Please RSVP either on the Facebook event, by email or the RSVP sheet in the volunteer lounge. Please let us know if you are going to be bringing a date.

5 Year Service Awards

Congratulations and a huge thank you to our volunteers who have been with us for 5 years!

Amanda Boyce (2011)

Andrew Braid (2011)

Roy Fisher

Marielle Lam

Elisabeth Mayfield

Rahul Srivastava

Bernice Sweet

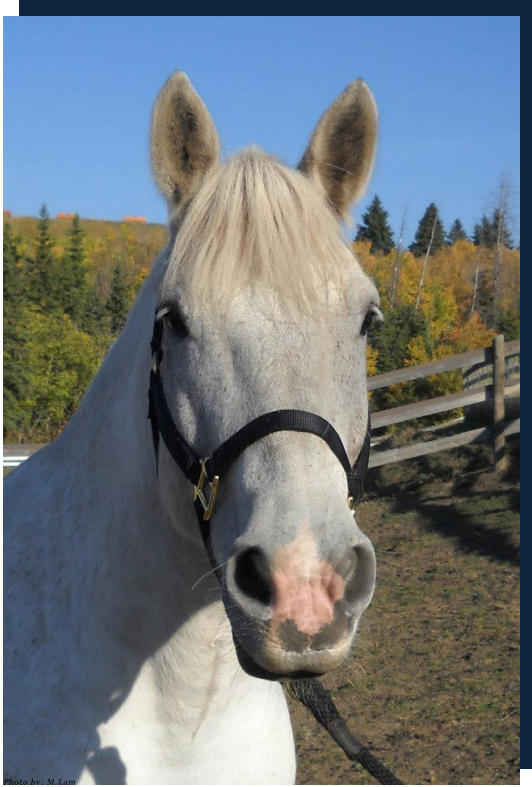
Robert Taylor

Gladys Toth

Andrea Wiebe

Little Bits Volunteers - Fall 2012





New Horse Profile: Luke

Age: 10 *Breed:* Norwegian Fiord Percheron cross

Height: 16 hands *Weight:* 1400 lbs

Luke is a big beautiful grey who is becoming known for being a gentle giant. He is privately owned but leased to Whitemud to earn his board. Luke is used for Whitemud lessons and Little Bits lessons. He is from Oregon where he would gallop around the ring as a flag horse for rodeos. Luke moved to Saskatchewan and was used to help train young horses by ponying them. Some other quirky characteristics are that Luke has done Gymkhana and parades.

What Little Bits likes about Luke: In a therapy horse, you want a horse that will move forward easily and is smooth for the rider. Luke has nice movement and is smooth to ride. He is very sensitive to your leg for such a big horse.

"Luke has a nice smooth walk. He is wonderful at the trot. I have been riding him for 3 months and he is almost my new favourite. He has a beautiful personality and is very handsome!" – *Sophie Connell, one of Luke's lucky riders*



Doug Goss, chairman of the TELUS Edmonton Community Board, presents \$16,000 donation to Little Bits Board of Directors chairman Jodee and Board member Tom.

My Experience with Little Bits

My name is Leslie and I am Little Bits first practicum student. I am completing my last semester of a Bachelor of Arts in Sports, Recreation and Tourism. Every physical education student at the University of Alberta must complete a fourteen-week professional practicum where the students enhance their academic education by exposure to and responsibility for practical situations. The purpose of practicum is to achieve integration between theory and practice and acquire skills necessary to enter the field of recreation or physical education with a reasonable degree of knowledge.

I was first exposed to Little Bits when I decided to do an analysis on their volunteer program for my volunteer management class. This was near the same time I needed to start looking for a placement to do my practicum. I have always loved horses, spending my childhood and teen years riding. I did mostly English jumping and spent a few summer in a western saddle, cattle penning. I didn't have much experience with persons with disabilities but I have found in my last year or so I have become more interested in therapeutic recreation. All these factors lead me to contact Little Bits and a month or two later, I had a practicum!

My first month with Little Bits has flown by! I have spent my time doing a mixture of administrative tasks, volunteer coordinating and helping out around the barn. I've really enjoyed getting to know everyone: the riders, the volunteers, the staff and the horses! I see recreational therapy as a way to use different forms of recreation and leisure to improve one's overall quality of life. Through spending time in the barn and watching the lessons, I've come to learn that equine therapy definitely improves a rider's quality of life. Seeing a rider's smile while he or she is on the back of Cocoa, Ali-Cat or Snowball is heart-warming. Or even seeing a rider who was frightened at the beginning of the session make improvements shows the value of what we are doing at Little Bits. Through doing administrative tasks I've also learned how a recreation non-profit operates by working on grant applications, fundraising events and volunteer coordination.

When I finish school in December, I am nervous to be leaving the comfort of the last 4 years but also excited to have the freedom to explore my options. I do not have an exact career in mind yet but my passions are in outdoor recreation, adventure education and recreational therapy.



Photo by: M. Lam

Riders in the
8:00 pm lesson
on
October 31st

Volunteer Profile - Marielle Lam



This year we have a record number of volunteers for 5 year awards and one of these dedicated people is Marielle (Mary) Lam. When Marielle moved to Edmonton from Ontario in 2006 to join her husband here, she missed her contacts in the horse community back home. In Ontario, Marielle had part-owned horses, showed, trained and had a close-knit circle of horse loving friends. Her observant husband spotted our road sign and suggested Little Bits could be the answer to being closer to horses and to finding new friends. Both have worked out well as Marielle comes to Little Bits on Wednesday evenings and is part of a circle of friends who volunteer together. Marielle has become close to the two riders she supports and she loves teach them about horse care after the riding lesson.

Her favourite horse over the years was Buck, who has since passed away. Her second favourite is Rooster, who retired from active duty this fall, but is still here at Whitemud. Of the current lesson horses, Popeye ranks on top. Marielle finds that his grumpiness makes him special. Marielle likes horses with a big personality that she can translate to the photos she takes. She has a good eye for horses and riders and knows how to show them in the right light and position, but not so well just working with people alone. The photos on our Facebook page and the soon to be updated horse portraits on our website showcase her talent. Because of that, Marielle is our go-to resident photographer and we are looking forward to her slide show during the volunteer appreciation party.

Outside of Little Bits, Marielle helps out on Sonja Christopher's farm. Marielle and Sonja jointly own a horse called Gator that is in training to become a lesson horse. Gator is a rescue horse, most likely a quarter horse with a bit of Arab, and he looks a little bit like Popeye although he is a little less grumpy and loves his food.

For Marielle, contributing to her community is an important part of what she does. In addition to Little Bits she volunteers with the Edmonton Food Bank, where she spreads the word about the work we do. In the 5 years since her husband read the sign that sent Marielle in our direction, she has found horses, friends and new talents at Little Bits.

Little Bits hosts research project on the benefits of horseback riding for children with autism

Cecilia Llambias is a graduate student at the University of Alberta in the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine. Here is how Cecilia, who works under the supervision of Professor Joyce Magill-Evans, describes her project.

Is there research evidence indicating that riding horses benefits for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD)?

This is a question that people usually respond to based on their personal experiences. For all of us who are familiar with horses and spend our time with them, we know that interacting with these wonderful animals is of great benefit. However, we need more than anecdotes and there has been very little research done in this area. This is the reason for this project and the collaboration with Little Bits and WELCA.

The use of animals in health began long ago. However, in the last decades there has been an increasing interest in therapies assisted by animals. Some authors indicate that children with ASD get along better with animals than with people (Pavlidis, 2008; Sams et al., 2006). The animals' nonverbal communication system makes it simpler to understand than human communication (Grandin et al., 2010). Through their interaction with animals children with ASD learn skills that they can transfer to their relationship with people. There are several approaches in the use of horses in therapy. One of them is therapeutic riding, which is a group approach to riding lessons with therapeutic goals for people with disabilities, and Little Bits would fall into this category. A study of children with ASD (Bass et al., 2009) found that in addition to the physical benefits of therapeutic riding, there was an increase in social engagement, less distractibility and fewer sedentary behaviors. Another study of school-age children with ASD found that therapeutic riding was associated with increased vocabulary, increased sensory integration, and decreased repetitive behaviors (Gabriels et al., 2012). These studies support the anecdotes about the benefits of therapeutic riding for children with ASD.

The approach used this project is called "hippotherapy". Hippotherapy differs from therapeutic riding. Depending on the person's needs, it may be more appropriate. The American Hippotherapy Association describes Hippotherapy as a physical, occupational and speech therapy treatment strategy that uses the movement of the horse and its environment to promote development. It is done in a one to one setting by a rehabilitation therapist. Therapists use the horse to address specific goals to improve the functional person's skills. Research about hippotherapy for children with ASD is just emerging. Thanks to the support of Little Bits, this study will contribute to our knowledge.

My project is carried out in the WELCA facilities, home of Little Bits. Eight children with ASD ages 4 to 7 are participating. The study began in July at the University of Alberta where the children had some free play session to get to know them. Next, the children started one hour of hippotherapy sessions per week. They are learning riding skills and horse care, such as grooming, and saddling. If you see video cameras in the arena, you will know the child is in the study. You are more than welcome to observe, but remember, do not distract the child. The parents' commitment to the study has been remarkable and several hope to have their children ride with Little Bits in the future. Parents and teachers are also talking about the changes they are seeing at home and in school. We have to wait until the end of the study to share what we are seeing.

We are very thankful to Little Bits and WELCA for their kind support and welcome. They have provided not only the facilities and equipment, but also wonderful and very well trained horses, and extraordinary volunteers to help in the sessions. Little Bits and WELCA are helping children with ASD here in Edmonton and beyond. The results of this study will be presented at national and international conferences, and published in scientific journals. Thanks again to Little Bits, WELCA, the children and their parents, the volunteers, the people from the barn, and to all those who in one way or another are helping us in this project!

Cecilia Llambias, Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, University of Alberta

Project Citizenship

“People with disabilities and their stories of engaged citizenship”

This fall, Project Citizenship completed a profile on our long time volunteer, **Wes Treleavan**. Project Citizenship is a social change initiative that is about enhancing the experience of citizenship for people with disabilities, and raising awareness in the greater community about the valuable contributions they make.

The coordinators of this initiative believe that for far too long, persons with disabilities have been marginalized and not truly valued in their communities. This project aims to help persons supported by SKILLS Society to move from the margins of community to the middle. Project Citizenship is a collaborative effort between SKILLS society, Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts, and the Community Service Learning component at the University of Alberta.

Wes's story was documented using photographs, film, and narratives taken at Whitemud Equine Centre during Little Bits programming in the fall of 2011. The documentary is of Wes and his 8 years of contributions to Little Bits. The 9 minute long video told of how, despite Wes's disability, he shows us his inspiring gifts and his passion for giving back to others are what really matter. His civic engagement and enthusiasm for helping others has much to add to the conversation about what citizenship means. When asked what he likes the most, Wes said he likes the kids and the horses the most. It makes him proud to be able to help.



Here are some quotes in the video from our Little Bits community:

“His greatest contribution is his enthusiasm for everything he does.” - Ros Schell, Barn Manager

“Wes is treated like any other volunteer, he is a dedicated worker who has a gentle spirit and is emotionally invested with the kids.” - Linda Rault, Riding Program Administrator

“He is caring and selfless. We rely on Wes. He never complains and is a role model to others.”
- Jo-Anne Billington, Riding Instructor

“Wes is a great volunteer and leader who loves the kids.” - Andrew Ryan, Volunteer and parent of rider

“The kids like me and I like them.” - Wes

Project Citizenship held a community event showcasing the stories and sparking community conversations about what citizenship means. It was an exhibit at SNAP gallery for a week in September that displayed the videos of the persons with disabilities including Wes. If you would like to watch the video, go to projectcitizenship.tumblr.com and scroll down to find Wes. The film was made by Candace Betiku and Emily Shimbashi.

Volunteer Updates *by Petra Schulz, Volunteer Coordinator*

The fall session started off well with over 50 interested applicants attending another successful orientation night. We had several riders and volunteers as well as board members come out and help make the evening a success. Much of the evening was spent in the barn and in the arena, demonstrating grooming, tacking and a riding session, with riders who were more than happy to come in a week before the official start date.

We are fortunate to have 150 of our current volunteers return for the fall session, in addition to 50 new volunteers and 34 people still waiting for a chance to help us out. The fact that we are blessed with so many returning volunteers is reflected in a record number of 5-year awards, which we will be celebrating at our volunteer appreciation event on November 17th.

But to set the record straight, we are grateful for the efforts of all volunteers, returning and new, in the arena, the barn, the office and those who have made the extra commitment to join our board. It makes my day when I can assign a regular shift to a new volunteer and they respond as if I told them they won the lottery. Equally it breaks my heart if there are people I can't place, or if volunteers come in and don't get to walk or lead because riders are away. It helps us immensely if riders let us know of their absence as much in advance as possible.

One of our spring volunteers, Leslie Lukasewich, joined us in a new role as a practicum student with the University of Alberta's Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation. Leslie has been assisting in a number of areas, which has allowed me to focus on some long-term projects, such as our volunteer policies and volunteer rider matches. This fall we have made a concerted effort to match volunteers to riders and keep this as consistent as possible. We have focused on experienced and returning volunteers with regular schedules and attendance for these roles, but any volunteer who is interested in a match and is able to come for most of the sessions should speak to Leslie or me. Our riders have responded well to this and some ask for "their" volunteer to lead and side-walk.

Having a practicum student has also allowed me to focus on some longer term projects, including the completion of our volunteer policies, finalizing our

volunteer screening process and making sure our file and information management is in keeping with current privacy legislation. The draft versions of these documents are almost completed and will go to the board of directors and committees for review before they are finalized. If you ever have any questions about privacy protection and information management at Little Bits, please speak to Linda or me.

Every fall we have a group of students from the Faculty of Pharmacy join us to complete 50 hours "Service Learning" requirement, which is part of a first year course. Leslie and I attended the service learning fair on campus, which allows students to see the potential sites. We had a lot of interested applicants and through a matching process four enthusiastic volunteers have joined us this fall. This program has been in place for more than 8 years and I would like to introduce you to the four students who have joined us this fall. *(continued on next page)*



Photo by: Mariella Lam

Jed rides Joker with the assistance of two volunteers.

Volunteer Updates *by Petra Schulz, Volunteer Coordinator (continued)*

Klaudia studied general sciences prior to her acceptance to pharmacy after her 3rd year. She is from Edmonton and has horse experience from summer camps she went to as a child. What attracted her to Little Bits were of course the horses, but also the chance to work with children and adults with disabilities. She has learned how effective non-verbal communication can be and hopes this will make her a more understanding pharmacist. Most of all she has a lot of fun volunteering at Little Bits; she spends most Sundays with us and time just flies.

Ari was in the general science program at MacEwan University before joining the pharmacy program. He is from Quebec and came to Alberta as a member of the Princess Patricia regiment. He stayed in Edmonton to go to school after completing his service with the Canadian Armed Forces. Ari has no horse background other than some trail rides, but was attracted to Little Bits because he likes to be active and outdoors and wanted a chance to interact with our riders. By spending some time talking to parents, has gained a new appreciation of the challenges people with disabilities and their families face. He hopes this knowledge will help him in his practice and he will remember Little Bits as a rewarding and enjoyable place to volunteer.

Travis has a Bachelors degree in biological sciences with a minor in agriculture. His family has a small cattle operation and has been around horses all his life, although the nine horses his family owns are now mostly used for pleasure, as quads replace them in moving cattle. Travis' home town is Consort, south of Wainright and shares this distinction with the country music legend k.d. Lang. He choose Little Bits for his service learning hours because it gives him a chance to be with horses while he is in the city and also because he wanted to personally meet people with disabilities. Travis says he has enjoyed getting to know our riders, and he and his girlfriend Elisabeth, who also volunteers with us, look forward to their Sunday afternoons.

Kaitlyn is from Sherwood Park and is one of the few students to transfer into pharmacy after only 1 year in BSc. She comes with lots of horse background, as her family has two Arabs and two quarter horses. Kaitlyn goes on trail rides together with her dad; her favourite is Zina, a 24 year old Arab with lots of energy to spare. Kaitlyn was attracted to Little Bits as she wants to share her love of horses with others. Working at Little Bits has taught her that pharmacists and other health providers are important in the lives of people, but only for very specific reasons and for a limited time, while families are always there. She wishes she had known about Little Bits before and she hopes to be back in the future.

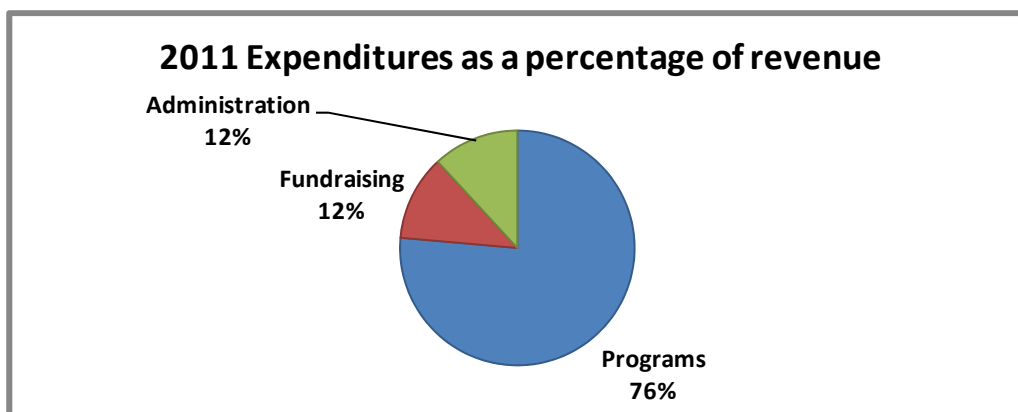
As always it is my privilege to get to know so many great people who generously give of their time, talent and energy. I want to sincerely thank all of you who have come to work with us this fall as returning and new volunteers, as well as parents, spouses and family members who give up their own family time to free up our volunteers who are so essential to the success of Little Bits. – *Petra Schulz*



Linda and Joanne dressed up as each other for Halloween !



Donation Form



How donations to Little Bits Therapeutic Riding Association were used in 2011



Please fill in the following form and enclose it with your donation to:

Little Bits Therapeutic Riding Association

Box 29016 Lendrum P.O.

Edmonton, AB T6H 5Z6

Phone: 780-476-1233 **Fax:** 888-398-4003 **E-mail:** info@littlebits.ca

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Postal Code: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Please visit www.littlebits.ca to make a donation online through CanadaHelps.org

YES! I would like to help make a wish come true!
I would like to donate: \$ _____

I would prefer my contribution to be used:

- ☐ To sponsor a rider
- ☐ Where it is needed most
- ☐ Cheque enclosed ☐ Cash enclosed
- ☐ I would like a tax receipt
- ☐ I do not want a tax receipt

*Please make cheques payable to:
Little Bits Therapeutic Riding Association*

Charitable Registration #11902-1277 RR0001
Tax receipts available for donations over \$10