



# RIVER VALLEY RIDERS REVIEW



RIVER VALLEY RIDERS  
THERAPEUTIC RIDING PROGRAM

SPRING 2013

## Letter from the Director



Welcome to the enchanted land of River Valley Riders. One day the princess noticed several people that had no way to ride the beautiful horses they love so much. "Oh my," she said "that cannot be!" So she gathered many special dedicated volunteers and asked them nicely "Please can we make this happen?" and waved her "magic wand" and there it was...a place to ride in Wisconsin, then at Rick-A-Shay Ranch, and now in the very special place called Afton.

When blasts of cold rain fall from the sky, sadness blankets the enchanted land and all the hearts of the riders and carriage drivers. This bad weather stops all the magic from happening in the enchanted land of River Valley Riders.

This is not just a whimsy fairy tale, there is really a program that brings joy to many hearts every week. This year is special because we have started the journey to create a magical center called **The Home of RVR**. Year-round equine assisted activities and therapies for everyone who may benefit will be a dream come true. Please be a part of this amazing transformation to our 38 acres in Afton.

Thank you!  
*Joan Dorle Berg*

## Volunteers Learn and Have Fun at Winter Learning Clinic for "Understanding Horses"

On February 17th, RVR hosted the Winter Learning Clinic for 13 participants at Rick-A-Shay Ranch with RVR therapy horses, Rahji, Gomer, Klass, Frosty, and Boss. The learning clinic offered hands-on practice of learning to tack, lead, and ride our special horses. Participants tried many of the exercises that our students use in their lessons including riding backwards and Around-the-World.

Thank you to Pam Foshay and the 8 RVR volunteers who organized this event!

### Spring Session Lesson Dates

- ◆ **Rick-A-Shay Ranch:**  
*Tuesdays 6 & 7pm:*  
April 23, 30; May 7, 14, 21, 28; June 4
- ◆ **Afton:**  
*Tuesdays 5:45, 6:45 & 7:45pm:*  
April 23, 30; May 7, 14, 21, 28; June 4, 11  
*Wednesdays 5:45, 6:45 & 7:45pm:*  
April 24; May 1, 8, 15, 22, 29; June 5, 12
- ◆ **Wisconsin:**  
*Thursdays 6 & 7pm:*  
April 25; May 2, 9, 16, 23, 30; June 6
- ◆ **Carriage Driving in Afton:**  
*Schedule coming soon*

### About River Valley Riders

*The mission of River Valley Riders is to enrich the lives of children and adults with special needs by providing equine assisted activities and therapies.*

*Lessons are conducted in accordance with the safety, training and instructional guidelines of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International.*



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## 14th Annual Walk-Wheel & Ride-A-Thon



The 14th Annual Walk-Wheel and Ride-A-Thon will be held on Saturday, June 22nd at Lake Elmo Park Reserve with trails for walking, riding or wheeling.

**Join us for a fun day of enjoying the park, friendship and food!** To participate or to donate to this event in support of RVR, please visit [www.rivervalleyriders.org](http://www.rivervalleyriders.org). More information will be mailed out later this spring!

If you have any questions, contact Cheryl Holt ([cholt@ergotron.com](mailto:cholt@ergotron.com)) or call 651-439-2558 and leave a message.

## New RVR Website from the Nerdery Overnight Website Challenge

RVR participated in The Nerdery Overnight Challenge on March 9-10, 2013 for 24 hours of website development. Our team, the Arachnyd Webslingers donated their time and talents – valued at \$25,000 – and have strengthened RVR by providing a professional and functional website. This new website will help us fulfill our mission with a greater connection to our donors, volunteers, and participants.

The team discovered that RVR's branding was not consistent and worked to create a brand identity for not only our printed materials and new website, but also social media. With improved Facebook and YouTube profiles and a new blog and Twitter account, RVR is ready to tweet, post, like and share all our great stories

and information with current and potential participants, donors and volunteers! Considering the different user types, the new website was created using responsive web design to accommodate web access on a wide variety of devices from desktop to mobile to tablet.

Other exciting additions include class schedules, weather updates, and cancelation notices. The most important outcome is the new website will be easier to use for everyone and let us focus on our mission of enriching the lives of our riders! The Arachnyd Webslingers and all the Nerdery volunteers exceeded our expectations of this wonderful and most generous event.

## RVR Board Members

### Officers

Joan Berg, Executive Director

Gail Olsen, Vice President

Cheryl Holt, Secretary

Kathy Jo Hanson, Treasurer

### Directors

Sally DeGiudice  
Melissa Hagstrum  
Brendan O'Meara

Yvonne Ecklund  
Mike McLaughlin  
Jill Steeves

Noreen Dillon  
Theresa Milligan  
Jenny Sargent

### Advisory Board

Aaron Keller  
Dr. Bruce Oscarson



## Volunteer Spotlight – Jill Steeves

I first heard about adaptive riding while my son David was swimming at the Courage Center pool with Joan Berg. She thought David would benefit from riding a horse. At age 6 and unable to sit up unassisted, I couldn't imagine my son on a horse. But ride he did. And it was a life changing experience for the entire family.



*Anne, David, and Jill at the Ride-A-Thon*

Riding nights were the highlight of David's week. He got stronger and could hold his head up; as a basically non-verbal kid, he could say the name of his horse "Abby" and eventually rode one season without a back-rider. Upon arriving at the fairgrounds, he would say "Happy."

At 8 years old, my daughter, Anne wanted to ride too. What young girl doesn't love horses? While David had his lesson, she had one too riding off a lunge line. Eventually, she owned two horses and rode and showed in the Hunter/Jumper world. By high school, she was also volunteering with River Valley Riders.

As a parent standing on the sidelines, I witnessed all the individual riding successes, the excitement and skills gained. Families, volunteers and riders all had one thing in common, big smiles. We developed great friendships that went from one season to the next. Joan and her devotion to the program were inspirational to me.

I eventually realized that I needed to give something back to RVR. In addition to being a regular financial contributor, I joined the board. The Board of Directors have the responsibility of governing the entire organization and for upholding RVR's mission and ensuring the financial stability of the organization through active fundraising.



*David driving Olaf with Orphy and John*

River Valley Riders has indeed been a family affair. And because of that, I've put River Valley Riders in my will, so that the program will continue to sustain itself for many years to come.



## River Valley Riders Volunteers—Let's Get Started!

Our season-starting Training Day—for all new volunteers from all RVR sites—will be offered April 13th in Afton. Plan to spend an all-day introduction to the fun (and responsibility) of RVR volunteering. Returning volunteers are welcomed and encouraged to attend also. **To RSVP for training please e-mail [rjberg@centurytel.net](mailto:rjberg@centurytel.net) or call 651-439-2558.**

The day will begin at St. Peter Lutheran Church in Afton at 8:00a.m. for breakfast. Indoor training will begin at 8:30a.m. and continue until mid-day, when lunch will be provided. After lunch we will go 1 mile down the road to RVR's property at 2007 Neal Ave. S. for outdoor training, until 4:00p.m. You'll learn about therapeutic riding, the children and adults we serve, and the horses who help us. Get ready for a full and active day, including hands-on practice with our therapy horses. We will be outside for half the day so please dress appropriately: layers, closed toe shoes—preferably heavy duty shoes/boots, sunglasses, hat, raincoat, etc. **NOTE—Indoor training at the church will happen no matter what the weather brings!**

**Returning volunteers may attend training or e-mail [rjberg@centurytel.net](mailto:rjberg@centurytel.net) or call 651-439-2558 in order to be assigned a volunteer position.**

### Directions to St. Peter Lutheran Church at 880 Neal Avenue South

From I-94, exit on County Road 15/Manning Avenue. Turn south on Manning Avenue and continue 1 mile. Turn left (east) on 10th Street South. Turn left (north) on Neal Avenue South and the church will be on immediately on your left. The morning training session will be held in the building at the rear of the parking lot.

Rick-A-Shay Ranch  
Scandia, Minnesota

Joan and Roger Berg's Farm  
East Farmington, Wisconsin

Locations:  
2007 Neal Avenue South  
Afton, Minnesota

Phone: 651-439-2558  
E-mail: [rjberg@centurytel.net](mailto:rjberg@centurytel.net)  
Web: [www.rivervalleyriders.org](http://www.rivervalleyriders.org)

8362 Tamarack Village  
Suite 119-440  
Woodbury, MN 55125