



RIVER VALLEY RIDERS REVIEW



RIVER VALLEY RIDERS
EQUINE ASSISTED ACTIVITIES & THERAPIES

WINTER 2018-2019

Rider Spotlight: Lilia

Lilia has been riding with RVR for two years and we are happy to include Lilia and her Mom, Sarah's, thoughts about their experience.

Lilia is 8 years old and here is what she wrote: *"My name is Lilia and I like River Valley Riders! No, I will put it this way, I do not like River Valley Riders, I LOVE it. I love River Valley Riders because I get to learn how to ride horses and spend time with them. I also get to go on trail rides and play games. Most of all, riders get to have FUN! Also, the staff and teachers are GREAT! Cheryl, Therese, Michelle, Joan and ALL the volunteers are very good at their job. ALL of the horses are gentle, cute and lovable. Some of the horses do funny, unplanned things like eat cookies! YEAH for RVR and YEAH FOR HORSES!!!!"*



Sarah (Lilia's Mom) has been helping out by volunteering with RVR for a couple of the school groups this fall, that is so appreciated. Sarah wrote: *"Lilia has been taking classes with RVR for two seasons. Before she started, she had been in weekly occupational therapy classes. Since the age of three, she has needed extra assistance with sensory integration and coordination development. She has never been more excited about any class or therapy than coming to RVR. It is truly a unique program. The instructors create individual goals for every rider. We see benefits of the program in Lilia's daily life. For example, she is learning how to slow down and not rush through daily tasks. Her reading skills are improving because she purposely seeks out books about horses and riding! Lilia has become very attached to her teachers and volunteers at RVR. We are incredibly grateful for the time and dedication that each teacher and volunteer devote to helping every student. Lilia has a countdown until the next season at RVR begins."*



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Letter from Joan Berg, Executive Director	2
Rider Spotlight: Ryan	2
Afton Update	3
Round-Up Dinner and Auction	4
Walk-Wheel and Ride-A-Thon	5
Congratulations Michelle Weidner!	5
2019 Volunteer Training	6
Attention Horse Owners	6
Driver Spotlight: London	7
Fill Your Heart	7

2019 IMPORTANT DATES

April 6:
Volunteer Training

September 7:
Walk-Wheel & Ride-A-Thon

November 16:
Round-Up Dinner & Auction

To get updates on these & other events, visit our website & follow us on Facebook!



River Valley Riders

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Lesson Sites

2007 Neal Avenue South
Afton

Rick-A-Shay Ranch
Scandia/Chisago City

Executive Director

Joan Berg

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About RVR

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.



Letter from the Director



These are exciting times to be a part of RVR. As I reflect back on 2018 I saw 90 individuals participate in goal orientated lessons. Our clients learned about riding or driving horses, and what they themselves as individuals are capable of accomplishing.

"I discovered that the horse is life itself, a metaphor but also an example of life's mystery and unpredictability, of life's generosity and beauty, a worthy object of repeated and ever changing contemplation." Jane Smiley

This quote embodies the reasons why, as dedicated volunteers, we arrive every week to see, to teach, and to learn alongside our clients and horses. We are active participants in what the horse delivers, in return we receive smiles of immense magnitude.

Being visionaries takes planning, the RVR Board of Directors supports this with tenacity and patience. I am proud to be the Executive Director of this amazing organization!

Thank you to donors, volunteers, families, and horses. It is because of your dedication and support of this organization that the vision of River Valley Riders will move forward. Because of you, people with special needs and challenges of all ages are accomplishing more than they ever imagined through the healing power of our horses.

*Sincerely,
Joan Dorle Berg*

Rider Spotlight: Ryan

Ryan has been riding with RVR since he was 3 years old. He is one of only four individuals who has participated for all 19 years of RVR lessons.

In 2018 Ryan achieved his goal to demonstrate control of his horse with good hand position while weaving the cones. Ryan demonstrated improved posture from the beginning to end of the 2018 season.

Ryan continues to benefit from therapeutic riding as a motivating method of engagement to improve his physical strength.





Afton Update - What is River Valley Rider's Future Vision?

When we talk about "Fund the Vision," we want to remind everyone what that means. There are two parts to this vision, the facility and the program.

Facility

The facility part of our vision is to create a fully operating site. A complete facility includes a large indoor arena with observation area, reception area, offices, training rooms, bathrooms, stable for our RVR owned horses, pastures/fences, hay storage building and living quarters for the caretaker. Today we have an outdoor arena, picnic shelter, carriage building, tack building and a well. **We have been fund raising for the indoor arena the past three years and it is now a reality! The picture below was taken on November 17, 2018 of the arena build in progress! It will be ready for use by April 2019.** The next phase for fundraising is the office shell, with finished bathrooms and observation area, plus an annex for a separate mounting area.



Program

River Valley Rider's vision is not only the buildings, but more importantly the PEOPLE we can serve. RVR is well placed to continue expanding its equine assisted therapies and activities to a diverse population of people with special needs. The equine assisted activities and therapies industry is growing as the benefits of these types of therapies are becoming increasingly recognized by both medical and mental health professionals.

With the new indoor arena, RVR will be able to accommodate more participants with increased offerings in therapeutic riding and carriage driving, including private lessons, school groups and senior citizen organizations starting in 2019! We will expand our riding season by 4 weeks in 2019 and plan to increase by 8 weeks in 2020.

RVR has a history of partnering with school districts for their adaptive physical education students. The completed facility, including classrooms, will allow RVR to expand educational support to our local school districts in Minnesota and western Wisconsin. We will be able to support the students to accomplish school goals and objectives in the areas of motor strength, fitness and health, social skills development and communication.

With a complete facility and staff, RVR will be positioned to offer year-round programming and accommodate participants in other areas. This can include hippotherapy where licensed physical, occupational or speech therapists use the power of the horse to help clients meet clinical goals. In addition, equine assisted activities and therapies have been shown to be beneficial for people struggling with a variety of mental health issues, such as veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and at-risk youth. RVR can also expand partnerships with senior citizen organizations or other groups which serve people with special needs. It is easy to understand that the potential client base is nearly unlimited.

In summary, the facility is needed to help us serve more people! RVR will be open full time and year round, able to increase partnerships within the community (schools, therapists, hospitals) and expand our services to other populations (military, senior citizens, at-risk youth, academic enhancement programs). Our future is VERY EXCITING!

Thank you for your support in funding our vision!

"A dream doesn't become a reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination, and hard work."

Colin Powell



Round-Up Dinner and Auction

The 15th Annual Round-Up Dinner and Auction was held Saturday, October 13, 2018 at Inwood Oaks in Oakdale. The event raised funds to help children and adults with special needs by supporting and expanding River Valley Riders' programs.

Thank you to all supporters who made it a memorable event! Enjoyable music by Fiddle Fare, beautiful decorations, delicious appetizers and 165 silent auction items were a great start to the evening.

Emcee Jay Olstad interviewed several riders and volunteers who shared their heart-touching stories. Their smiles and self-confidence were shown in beautiful photos and videos. The live auction was exciting with dinners and a Las Vegas vacation! The overwhelming generosity demonstrated by our donors made this event a success!

Plans have started for the 2019 Round-Up, scheduled for Saturday, November 16th.

We would like to thank these auction item donors, event volunteers, and others who contributed in a special way:

A Butchery Shoppe	Nancy Allen	Advanced Dermatology Care
Jean and Jim Anderson	Joan Berg	American Cruises & Tours - Dean Victorson
Andrew Colligan	Sheila Brown	The Brave New Workshop Comedy Theatre
Canterbury Park	Cafe Latte	Coolibar Sun Protective Clothing
Candyland	Kris Cool	Crabtree's Garden Gate
Mark Code	Peter Caley	Crayola Experience Mall of America
Tom and Kim Conboy	Ann Delmont	Dancing Dragonfly Winery
Danny's Bar and Grill	Details Salon	Sally Reif DelGiudice
Noreen Dillon	Peggy Doyle	Yvonne and Kent Ecklund
Eagan Television	Dan Flynn	Flat Earth Brewing Company
Fiddle Fare	Mary Feist	Ryan Foss
Beverly Gerth	Green Mill	The Girling Family
Hudson 12 Theatre	Cheryl Holt	Anne and Larry Headrick
Todd-Allen Hamilton	Pam Hansen	Hugo Equipment Company
Dale and Brenda Jackson	Inwood Oaks	Jennifer's Equine Massage
Joseph's Restaurant	Barb Knoth	Lynn and Jim Jutz
Kerfoot Canopy Tour	Haley Konsela	Kowalski's Oak Park Heights Market
Let's Dish - Woodbury	Linda Knutson	Sandy and Dick Ling
Joe and Maddie Mauer	The Lee Family	Kathleen Miner
Kyle and Lauren Mealey	Mall of America	Mama Maria's Italian Ristorante
Mike McLaughlin	Mancini's	Minneapolis Institute of Art
Minnesota Vikings	Theresa Milligan	Mystic Lake Casino Hotel
The Nordland Family	Jay Olstad	Next Step Transition Program
Parlour Bar St. Paul	Persona Portraits	Osceola Veterinary Service
The Park Tavern	Katrina Rollins	Phipps Center for the Arts
Resource Logistics	Christian Sellie	River Valley Horse Ranch
Jay Schrankler	Jeanne Stursa	Science Museum of Minnesota
Jill Steeves	Sam's Club	Sea Glass Fine Art Photography
Rick & Judie Steenberg	Nick Salay	Saint Croix Vineyards
St. Croix Saddlery	Sol Luna Salon	St. Croix Casinos - Turtle Lake
Stagetime Productions	The St. Paul Hotel	St. Paul Saints Baseball
The Spofford Family	Jill Tauscher	Jae Taylor Designs
Thomson Reuters	Tana Vogele	Trapped Puzzle Rooms
Sandy Ward	Isabelle White	Jeanette Wilwert
Tera Wells	Friends of RVR	

Thank you for your support!



Walk-Wheel and Ride-A-Thon

What a beautiful day it was for the 2018 RVR Walk-Wheel-Ride-A-Thon! The day kicked off with clear, comfortable weather as we gathered for wonderful coffee donated by Caribou, and delicious bagels and pastries. There was time to greet old friends and meet new ones before embarking on our walking/wheeling/riding adventures.



Approximately forty people were in attendance. Those who brought horses rode an eight-mile loop on the lovely trails at the Lake Elmo Park Reserve, while walkers and wheelers followed a three-mile path. Participants arrived back to the campsite from their trail ready to enjoy lunch. All enjoyed the hotdogs and hamburgers from Hagberg's, along with meal accompaniments provided by RVR volunteers. During lunch, participants were awarded plenty of fun door prizes, collected for the event by Board members and volunteers. T-shirts were also awarded to those who donated to or raised pledges for the event.

In addition to the Lake Elmo Park Reserve event on June 23rd, River Valley Riders' clients participated in a trail ride during their lesson in the weeks following, at River Valley Riders' sites in Afton and Scandia. Thanks to the generosity of donors and participants, nearly \$20,000.00 was raised to support ongoing programming for RVR.

Our sincere thanks to all who contributed to making this event a success! For donations, including those of time, talents, food and prizes - we are so grateful. An event like this would not be possible without you!



Date Change for 2019

In 2019 the event will be held Saturday, September 7th at Lake Elmo Park Reserve. Watch for more information as the time approaches. Please help by sharing the invitation with your family, friends and saddle clubs. It is sure to be a fun-filled day of riding, walking, and wheeling topped off by a great lunch and lots of door prizes!

*A special thank you to
our corporate partner,
American Cruises and Tours!*

**ACT TODAY!
PLAY TOMORROW!**

*Dean Victorson
651-485-4111*

Congratulations to our new Therapeutic Riding Instructor, Michelle Weidner

Michelle Weidner has completed her journey with PATH Intl. to become a PATH Intl. Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor! Michelle has been volunteering with RVR for several years, including sharing her awesome horse Lightning. This past season Michelle co-instructed on Tuesdays at the Afton site. We are so excited to have Michelle join our instructor team!





2019 Volunteer Training

Saturday, April 6, 2019
Start thinking about Spring!

Our season-starting training day for all new volunteers will be offered on April 6, 2019. Current volunteers are encouraged to attend this continuing education opportunity, especially those that started in mid-year 2018 and had not attended 2018's spring training day. The training is being held earlier than other years because we will be starting lessons the week of April 15th as our indoor arena will be completed!

Plan to spend an all-day introduction to the fun and responsibility of volunteering with RVR. We plan to have the indoor classes in the morning at St. Peter Lutheran Church on Neal Avenue South, then move to the RVR site for the hands-on training for the afternoon. Please mark your calendars for a full and active day of learning, including hands-on practice with our therapy horses.

We have therapeutic riding on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings and carriage driving on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays – lots of opportunity to volunteer! So please talk to your friends, relatives, and co-workers about RVR and hopefully they will want to come out to enjoy this great experience. Lead by example — help from experienced volunteers will be key to everyone's success!

RVR is partnering with schools and senior citizen organizations, so there are some daytime volunteer opportunities throughout the season too.

"To ride a horse is to ride the sky."
Anonymous



"The essential joy of being with horses is that it brings us in contact with the rare elements of grace, beauty, spirit, and fire."

Sharon Lemon

Attention Horse Owners

RVR is looking for additional volunteer horses for the Afton site on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings. We need people who are willing to share their calm and quiet horse(s) with RVR. This includes trailering them to and from the site on the evening they choose to volunteer.

You and your horse could give more riders the opportunity to participate and receive the benefits of therapeutic riding! Please call and leave a message at 651-439-2558 or email info@rivervalleyriders.org for more information or to arrange to have a horse evaluated to serve. Please spread the word among your horse owning friends that RVR is seeking volunteers to bring their horses.



Driver Spotlight: London

London has been participating with RVR for nine years. She started in our riding program when she was six. After her riding lesson two years ago, London asked about our carriage driving program and said *"I want to do that."* She has shown excellent progress in her carriage driving lessons. Her communication with the horse through reining skills and her voice has improved greatly. London can now complete a cones course at a trot.



London's mom told us that London was worried about the possibility of driving a car, but is very confident with her carriage driving and that it seems like an in-between step. London likes the speed of the carriage and the relationship and conversations with her instructor Kathy Jo.

London's other interests include the royal families, music and theater.



"In riding a horse we borrow freedom." Helen Thomson

Fill Your Heart

Help RVR's riders and drivers meet their goals and make dreams come true!

There are many ways you can donate to RVR. Please speak with your financial advisor about which method makes most sense for you.

IRA Distribution – If you are 70 1/2 or older, you may be able to reduce your taxes by donating part of your required minimum distribution to RVR.

Stock Donation – Donating appreciated stock has advantages for you as well as benefitting RVR's riders and drivers. RVR's bank, First State Bank and Trust, has created a simple process to transfer stock to RVR. Contact Brad Hallett, Trust Officer at 651-351-3767 or bhallett@fsbt.com

Donor Advised Funds – Speak with your financial planner to see if a Donor Advised Fund is advantageous for you in consideration of the new tax laws regarding charitable donations.

Online Giving – Visit www.rivervalleyriders.org

By Mail – A return envelope is included in this newsletter for your convenience.

River Valley Riders cannot give financial or tax advice to you. Please speak with your financial advisor to determine the best method for you to continue filling your heart-space through your generous support of River Valley Riders. Our riders cannot ride without your continued gracious giving!



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EQUINE ASSISTED ACTIVITIES & THERAPIES

Cheryl Holt Awarded PATH Intl. Certified Professional for 2018



At the PATH Intl. Conference in Orlando this past October Cheryl was given the prestigious award of International Certified Professional for 2018. Several RVR individuals gathered with Cheryl as she received this commendation. She is a stunning representative of RVR and a person whom we highly respect.

Cheryl has been challenging her therapeutic riding students by creating and leading progressive, fun and safe lessons for 12 years. In addition to the six hours per week she teaches in the arena, she serves as Program Director, Board Officer, chair of several committees, and mentor to instructors-in-training. The words to describe her are: dedicated, compassionate, responsible, honest, courageous, intelligent, dependable, kind and hard-working. She owns four horses including a very special therapy horse Miss Pickles.

Quote from a rider:

“Cheryl’s love for horses is reflected in all she does and through her I’ve received the gift of love and bonding with my lesson horse. Her dedication and passion for teaching have inspired and strengthened me in a way that will affect me for the rest of my life.”