



RIVER VALLEY RIDERS REVIEW



RIVER VALLEY RIDERS
EQUINE ASSISTED ACTIVITIES & THERAPIES

SPRING 2020

Letter from Cheryl Holt, Executive Director

As we begin this new decade, I reflect on our past 20 years and the vision and goals we set out to accomplish for RVR. With the support of our community and the dedication to our mission by our Board of Directors and staff, I feel blessed that we have built a program that we can all be proud of. We have come a long way from riding one night per week in a rented outdoor arena to riding and driving four days/evenings per week with indoor and outdoor arenas on our own property.



There are many exciting opportunities for RVR ahead. We will be focused on strategic planning and refining our path to a fully operational facility with year-round programming. The need for our services is great, as demonstrated by how quickly our 2020 program filled up and sadly how many clients are on the wait list. We need to get to the point where we have horses on site to allow us to really expand our programming to accommodate more clients.

With our first year of having the indoor arena behind us, I am pleased to say it made a huge impact on our 2019 programming. Being the rainiest year on record, we would have had to cancel about 30% of our riding and driving classes! The indoor arena gave us a comfortable and safe environment for our clients, volunteers and horses while Mother Nature raged outside.

I am reminded of how wonderful our horses are, as I am connecting with owners and evaluating new and returning horses. It makes my heart happy!

We appreciate the confidence that all our supporters have placed in RVR and our mission. Years of hard work and determination by so many individuals—staff, board members, volunteers and generous donors have brought RVR to where we are today and will carry us beyond! Your continued support and investment in our mission will help us continue to grow!

With best regards,
Cheryl

“Horses change lives. They give our young people confidence and self-esteem. They provide peace and tranquility to troubled souls, they give us hope!”
~Toni Robinson

COVID-19 Update

The safety and well-being of our clients and volunteers remain our number one priority. Thus, due to ongoing and evolving concerns regarding the COVID-19 virus, RVR has moved out our training day and program start to June. These new dates are tentative, so please visit our website or Facebook page for updates.

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Clare's Story

Shared by Chad, Susan and Clare

Our Clare Bear entered this world on April 21, 2014. Her delivery was traumatic, and she lost oxygen to the brain. Clare was six pounds of perfection and we were excited to begin our journey as a family of three!

Clare was struggling to hit developmental milestones like roll, sit, crawl, talk and walk. Everyone would offer words of encouragement and tell us "she's just doing things at her own pace", but we knew it was something more. With all the hurdles Clare was experiencing, we began our research. When Clare was 2½ it was confirmed by an MRI that there was brain damage in Clare's cerebellum, and we received our Cerebral Palsy (CP) diagnosis.



As first-time parents, we went into this chapter without knowing the world of special needs. It's the biggest challenge we've had to face, but with the greatest amount of joy. Everything we've experienced has come in steps. Every step makes us a little stronger so that the next hurdle will be a little more bearable.

As parents, we are supposed to teach our children how to one day live independently and be self-sufficient in this world. While there is uncertainty that this will be in Clare's future, we will never give up fighting for this.



National Cerebral Palsy Awareness Day is meant to bring awareness to the 764,000+ people that have CP in the US. Clare might have a tougher road than others, but you would never know by the happiness and positivity she shows. She amazes us every day with her will to fight for the quality of life that every child deserves.

THANK YOU to Shamrocks Irish Nook, Clare and her family! In celebration of National Cerebral Palsy Awareness, Shamrocks Irish Nook in St. Paul highlighted Clare's story and donated \$2 to RVR for every "Country Clare Burger-of-the-Month" sold during the month of March!

The RVR Butterfly Gardens at Afton

A few years ago, RVR volunteer Judie Steenberg had the idea of creating a garden at the Afton lesson site. Various donated perennials and annuals were planted and carefully watched to see which plants the deer would leave alone. Surprisingly, they hardly bothered the plants at all...just a nibble here and there. So it was decided to expand the area into a butterfly garden.

In 2018 Charles Boulay from Presentation Church's Boy Scout Troop #461 took on the assignment as his Eagle Scout Project. The original plot was greatly expanded into two gardens just northwest of the outdoor arena. RVR volunteer Jon Cheney helped coordinate the project and acquired many donated perennials and annuals which Charles and the Scouts planted after they prepared the soil. Even before the end of the summer the garden was already attracting butterflies.



In 2019 with additional donated plants, Girl Scouts from Troop #56971 helped improve the gardens even more by planting marigolds and petunias across the front of the butterfly gardens and in various large pots around the lesson site. Throughout the summer the gardens grew and attracted not only Monarchs but many other butterflies as well. Colorful flowers were blooming all summer long. And still the deer have pretty much left the gardens alone.

With spring right around the corner, volunteers are needed to help plan, plant, weed and water the gardens this growing season. Contact us at 651-439-2558 or info@rivervalleyriders.org if you're interested in becoming a part of the RVR Gardening Team.



Congratulations Linda! 2020 PATH Intl. Region 6 Volunteer!

Linda Knutson's dedication has been recognized by the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International! She has willingly accepted more and more responsibility serving 30+ hours per week for the benefit of RVR.

Her numerous roles include:

- Treasurer of our Board of Directors sharing her accounting expertise,
- Carriage driving instructor allowing RVR to expand programming to serve more drivers,
- Co-chair of our Walk-Wheel and Ride-A-Thon fundraiser,
- Horse owner sharing Rio with our riders,
- And much more!

In addition, Linda is involved in all areas of programming including helping during other instructor's lessons and ensuring the RVR family of riders, drivers, and volunteers feel loved and valued. Linda's dedication, quality, depth and time of her service is inspirational!

“At the end of the day it’s not about what you have or even what you’ve accomplished...it’s about who you’ve lifted up, who you’ve made better. It’s about what you’ve given back.”

~ Denzel Washington



Welcome Madeline Boe and the Hippotherapy Pilot Program!

RVR is excited to announce a Hippotherapy pilot program this summer in partnership with Madeline Boe, MS,CCC-SLP, Speech-Language Pathologist & PATH Intl. Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor of Unbridled Abilities Therapy, LLC.

The American Hippotherapy Association, Inc. defines hippotherapy as a physical, occupational or speech therapy treatment strategy that utilizes equine movement. The word hippotherapy derives from the Greek word hippos, meaning horse. The term hippotherapy refers to the use of the movement of the horse as a treatment strategy by physical therapists, occupational therapists and speech/language pathologists to address impairments, functional limitations and disabilities in patients with neuromotor and sensory dysfunction. This treatment strategy is used as part of an integrated treatment program to achieve functional goals.

This sounds a lot like therapeutic horseback riding, and it is similar, however with hippotherapy, the physical/occupational therapists or speech/language pathologists lead the sessions, decide on the therapy plan and set the goals. Each session will consist of only one client. A horse leader and sidewalkers will assist as needed.

This pilot will run for eight weeks this summer at our North Metro site.

Thank you to Madeline for helping RVR step into the world of Hippotherapy!



UNBRIDLED
ABILITIES



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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.

RVR is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law. Financial statements will be provided upon request. EIN# 41-1949447

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



Volunteer Training

Rescheduled - Tentative Date
June 9, 2020 5:30pm - 8:30pm
New Volunteers - Mandatory
Please call 651-439-2558 to RSVP

Our season-starting training day is for new volunteers from all lesson sites. Plan to spend an evening to learn about the fun and responsibility of volunteering with RVR. The focus is hands-on training with our therapy horses. Please review the Volunteer Handbook and other training materials on our website's Volunteer page before the training day.

Dress for the weather - layers, hats, sunscreen, closed toe shoes (preferably heavy-duty shoes/boots). The training is held rain or shine. Please plan to attend this active evening of learning with our therapy horses. Food is not be provided, but water will be available.

We have therapeutic riding lessons on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday evenings and carriage driving lessons on Mondays and Thursdays – lots of chances 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.

It is important to call 651-439-2558 to RSVP and provide us your contact information. If you are unable to access the handbook and forms online, please let us know.

In the past we encouraged returning volunteers to attend as well, but to limit the number of people, we are only requiring new volunteers to attend.

Attention Horse Owners

RVR is looking for additional volunteer horses for:

- our Afton site on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings
- our North Metro site on Tuesday 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.

If you have a horse that you think could work for the program (or know of a horse), please email info@rivervalleyriders.org or call and leave a message on the RVR phone line 651-439-2558. This call could give more riders the opportunity to participate and receive the benefits of therapeutic riding!



Miss Pickles