

2 0 1 1 F A L L E D I T I O N

# RTES *Riding High*

Richmond Therapeutic Equestrian Society \* Making a Difference in the lives of Children with Disabilities

## What Horseback Riding Means to Brendan

When my son Brendan is asleep, he looks like any other 7 year old boy. As he wakes up, he sounds and acts like a 1 year old in the body of a 7 year old. And that is only the beginning of how he is different.



He was diagnosed with a heart defect when he was still in the womb. Days before his 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday, he was also diagnosed with Autism.

The heart condition left him with a scar the length of his forearm when he was 2 days old. You can still count all 7 stitches. This condition also leaves him more easily tired out than other kids, even during a walk in the park. To keep up his energy levels he needs to, and enjoys, eating more than the horses at RTES.

Unfortunately, the Autism has exponential impacts in comparison to his heart issues. The severity of Brendan's Autism likely means that he will require one on one support for the rest of his life. He is not yet able to communicate reliably with words or sign language. His sensory processing disorder means that activities like going to a birthday party, going to a playground or

joining sports activities are challenges that require the aid of social storybooks and paid tutors. These are fears for Brendan to overcome along with his sensitivity to noisy environments and strong preference to observe children playing from a safe distance rather than interact directly with them. Ironically, the best thing for Brendan's social skill development is more time spent with other kids.

He has been willing to participate in regularly scheduled one on one play dates with other kids in the past. For the success of these play dates, his sensory needs have to be addressed during the play dates

with the use of trampolines, musical instruments and various other OT devices. But now that he is in full time school and both my husband and I work full time, this is not an option. It is too difficult to coordinate Brendan's schedule, our schedule, and the schedule of another child and parent.

Fortunately, RTES provides Brendan with a unique opportunity to participate in something he finds extremely fun to do and is therapeutic too. The movement of the horse provides enough sensory input to Brendan that it allows him to interact with the Instructors. He has become accustomed to the company of another child who rides in the same slot, and he has formed an attachment to the horses he rides. He has learned the sign for "go" and "stop". He has even learned to hum the theme song to "Bonanza". He is now willing to travel through a crowd if he is given a piggy back ride. And on a recent trip through the Okanagan, he looked out the window when his little sister called out "horsie!".

Brendan really misses horseback riding when the semester breaks come up. On June 29<sup>th</sup> 2011, we took Brendan and his sister to see Minoru's statue. This was to celebrate the last day of school and to make up for the semester break in horseback riding that week. I noticed that the statue was donated to the city by the Ilich family.

Later that week, I read in the local newspaper that Milan Ilich, a major patron of the RTES program, passed away that same day. Our condolences to his family. On behalf of Brendan, our family would like to thank the Ilich family for making the RTES program available to Brendan and other kids like him.

Gloria Grill



## *Calendar of Events*

Fall Session  
September 26 -  
December 5

RTES Closed  
Monday October 10th

In House Show  
October 29th

RTES AGM Tuesday,  
November 8th

RTES Closed December  
25th to January 4th

Winter Session  
January 9 - March 21

In 2000, the Riding Centre where our program was located was put up for sale, thus putting into uncertainty the future of RTES. While we struggled to come up with a plan, we were put in touch with Milan & Maureen's daughter, Laurie Cavanaugh, who along with her husband Barry and business partners Trevor and Wendy Graham, invited us to move the program to their newly established Twin Oaks Farm.

## Remembering Milan

At the end of June RTES lost a very dear friend and Patron, Milan Ilich – well known and highly respected businessman in this community. A quiet philanthropist, whose generosity can be seen throughout the City of Richmond.

To start a Therapeutic Horseback Riding Program was a huge undertaking for a group of parents and community volunteers, even with the guidance of the City of Richmond and the Richmond Committee on Disability. We received a few donations from community organizations, but not enough to cover program requirements for staff, horses, etc. Not that is, until we were introduced to Milan Ilich.

From the very beginning, Milan and his wife Maureen took a keen, but quiet interest in the program - - - providing RTES with a large grant to help us get the program off the ground, then ensured that we received annual donations in the years that followed. Milan was a very quiet individual who avoided public acknowledgment of his generosity, so the only way we could see that he received our thanks was to take the plaque of appreciation directly to his office and present it to him.



In the fall of 2001 we moved the program to Twin Oaks, where we were given the opportunity to construct our own program space (offices, rider's lounge, tack room, cross-tie-stall and mounting area) beside one of their two indoor arenas.

As we reached our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at Twin Oaks this September, we did so knowing that all we have accomplished, all the children whose lives have been changed – all of this would not have been possible had it not been for the support of Milan, and his family.

We will never forget him!

## Staff Changes

We have had to say good bye to Sandra, our Program Director. We regret that she is leaving us, after 10 years as leader of the RTES program. We will miss her, but we understand that it is the right decision for her and her family.

Erin will be taking over the program leadership and will be joined by Stephanie Tate, CTRI – the latest addition to our team.



Stephanie Tate, CTRI



# Summer Camp 2011

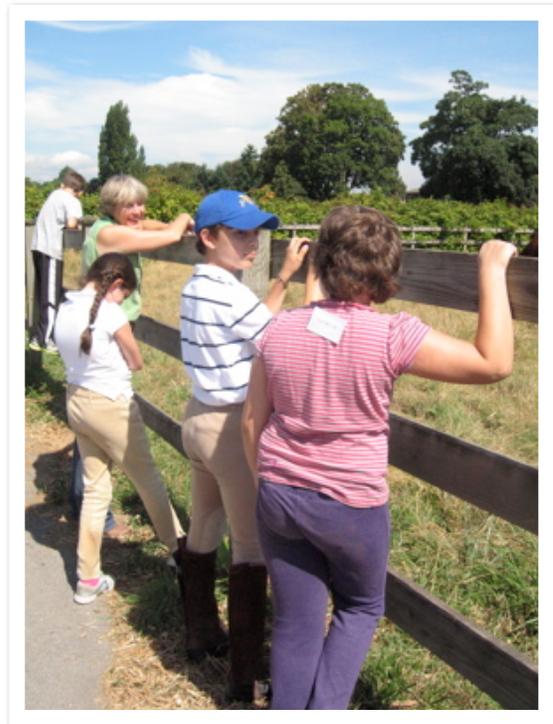
Seven children ranging from 6 years to 11 years old arrived at RTES for Summer Camp from August 22 - 25 this year. The week was filled with horse back riding, stable management lessons, games and crafting.

All but two of the campers this year have come to the RTES Integrated Summer Camp many years in a row. It is great to see the kids grow, learn and mature. Every year the social aspect of camp gets better and better as the kids all remember each other and enjoy the annual reunion.

As with every year, the horses are the highlight and the favourite part of everyone's day. This years camp was restructured to allow the kids more time each day with the horses and crafts were done in large groups with all seven kids together.

Riders progressed with their riding skills as the week went by and some very inventive pet rocks were created!

A special thank you to all the volunteers that came out in the heat and walked many kilometers each day in our arena to make this camp possible.



# Welcome Dusti!

RTES would like to introduce the latest member to our equine team, Dusti a 12 year old Norwegian Fjord Mare.

Dusti has been with us since July and has been a star during her training period and can't wait to start helping our riders learn to ride and enjoy the company of a horse. Dusti loves kids, going for trail rides and food; she is on a bit of a diet, so please do not feed her any treats.

Dusti comes to us on free lease from Marie Hurley of Tappen British Columbia. Thank you Marie for letting Dusti join our team of "Therapists". She will be well cared for and abundantly loved.



## Looking for Fundraising Committee Members

If you are interested in helping RTES by being on the fundraising committee, please contact Erin via email or phone: [rtes@shaw.ca](mailto:rtes@shaw.ca) OR 604-241-7837

No experience necessary. Any and all help is appreciated!

# Our Mission

To provide a quality therapeutic riding program for children and youth with disabilities in order to promote physical, social and psychological well being.

**DONATION FORMS FOR USING VISA OR MASTERCARD CAN BE DOWNLOADED FROM OUR WEBSITE.**



## **RTES Membership (\$25 annually) and Donation Form**

All donations are tax deductible. Registered Charity # 89415 0135 RR0001

I wish to support the Richmond Therapeutic Equestrian Society.

Enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for Membership and/or \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for Donation.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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