April 2020 News REGION 9

Celebrating our volunteers!
Coping with COVID-19.

Message from Teresa Bron
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The theme for this newsletter is Volunteers, but in all honesty, it's been communication that has been on my mind daily for the past few weeks. We are being updated continually about the COVID-19 virus and the changes it is making in our lives and our daily routines.

Our communication skills connect us with the world, especially important now that we must practice physical social distancing. In this time of uncertainty and upheaval we all have an opportunity to shine in some way by helping someone in need. Something as simple as making a phone call to reassure your friends and family you are still there for them.

The volunteers in our centers have shown us daily, for many years, what it means to give of yourself and be there in the moment, lending comfort, a sense of safety, and support. Thank you to all volunteers for the examples you have set and may we all be as altruistic during this time of stress and unknown.

I pray we are all stay safe and get through this crisis with even greater appreciation for one another and a deeper appreciation of good communication skills.

Volunteer Spotlight: Karen Koday
I would like to take a moment to thank one of my volunteers personally. Karen Koday has been a Carriage Driving volunteer with me for the past four and a half years. She has traveled with me from WA State to Billings, MT to help with a driving demo and has helped with two Region 9 Conferences, assisting in my presentations. Weekly she helps groom horses, harness, lead, ground drive, and push carriages here and there as necessary. Karen’s super power is her ability to talk to everyone and make them feel special and important. Karen is a fabulous communicator and I am so thankful for everything she does to help lessons run smoothly.

ALASKA STATE NEWS

From Carrie Drury, Alaska State Chair
Equine Assisted Therapy Alaska (EATA), Anchorage, AK

Volunteer Spotlight: our Board President, Steve Ribuffo

Steve has been the hard working President of EATA’s Board of Directors since 2010, and was a volunteer with the program before that. As Board President, he presided over eight Cowboy Ball Fundraisers, helped direct the funding and construction of the Mabry Equidome, and provided invaluable insight into the organization of our mostly volunteer nonprofit. Kassi Fetters will be picking up the reins and taking his work forward as EATA’s new Board President. Steve has promised not to go far and will continue to provide guidance and direction in an informal capacity (“If you need a guy to do something, I probably know a guy who knows a guy to get it done.”) Thanks, Steve, for your many years of dedication and hard work in moving EATA forward to serve the needs of Alaskans with disabilities!
News:
The EATA program will begin on May 26, 2020 and run through August 14, 2020. We are trying a new approach to this season by splitting the program in 2 halves. The first half/5 week session will be from May 26-June 26, 2020. We are taking a two week break beginning June 29 (July 4th week) and the week of July 6. Resuming sessions on Monday, July 13. The second half/5 week season will run from July 13- August 14, 2020. Essentially, we are providing a 10 week program or two 5 week programs.

A huge thank you to the trustees of the Reitman Foundation for providing EATA with a generous grant to go toward the purchase of new horses and housing for our Program Director. Your donation was much needed and much appreciated! We can't thank you enough! Know that your gift will be well used to further EATA's goals.

Our first Paint Nite Fundraiser nets $600! Thanks to everyone who bought tickets and/or helped spread the word to others about our first Paint Nite fundraiser! All the participants had a great time and took home their own masterpieces. We were able to earn $600 to support our summer therapy programs.

Welcome, Sweetie! She joined the EATA herd on Valentine's Day and is getting to know her new stall mates at their winter pasture. Sweetie is 20 years old, a papered quarter horse, and has a great temperament. Here is Swetie with Janie Call.
Birch Grove Therapeutic Riding Center, Eagle River

Volunteer Spotlight: Finn Drury
BGTRC would like to pay a little extra attention to one of its volunteers, Finn Drury. Finn is a freshman in high school and enjoyed a full summer of activities at the barn interacting with riders. He started with horsemanship skills, including grooming and knowledge of tack. Practicing his role as offside assistant at the mounting block was well-received and practicing as a side-walker came next. We will all remember the first day he was a side-walker for one of BGTRC riders. Pictured below is our 10 year old athlete who absolutely loved her interactions with Finn. She even sang a song for him while she was riding Riley and he was assisting as side-walker. Once she dismounted and Riley was happy to be back in his paddock eating, we all witnessed our rider decorating Finn’s hair with the ribbon clips meant for a horse’s mane. She even adorned his nose with one. Finn just giggled, enjoying his time with his new barn friend. Other areas of expertise Finn helps in are manure management (2 full buckets a day!), hay bale mover (he was once challenged to slide 5 bales in a
line down the center aisle and he did it!), and a jack-of-all-trades “what needs to be done” kind of volunteer. BGTRC is proud of Finn and the barn-hand, side-walker he’s become and we’re happy to call him one of ours! Thank you Finn!
BRITISH COLUMBIA/ALBERTA PROVINCE NEWS

Message from Karen Tanchak, State/Provincial Chair for BC and Alberta

What a crazy time we are facing. The stress of uncertainty, concerns for the health of ourselves and our loved ones, and major changes in our routines. I wish each and everyone patience and peace of mind during this time.

While our programs are in flux and we face our challenges it can be difficult to find a positive to focus on. Here in the Okanagan, the snow is still on the ground, our program is still a month away from commencing but the preparation has begun and the planning and scheduling was almost complete. The concern for our participants,
volunteers and instructors is always in the back of our mind. Will we be able to provide the wonderful services that we are all so passionate about?

Will our volunteers stay engaged and want to come back if they are away from participating in our programs for an extended length of time? For how many of you has that thought crossed your mind?

Well, I got a call from two of my volunteers asking what they could do for the program and/or the horses. I invited them out to hang with the horses. They took the lead from the herd, practicing their boundaries and social distancing. They each took a brush bucket and a couple of apples and immersed themselves in the herd. Each horse was given an opportunity to have its back scratched, ears rubbed and the fairy knots removed from the mane. At the same time, my volunteers were able to relax and let go of their own worries of the every day stresses that have been weighing heavily on them.

The result:

A medley of horse hair:

and some very happy horses hanging in the sun.

I am encouraged and feeling confident that our volunteers will remain engaged and loyal to our programs. These groups are passionate and truly enjoy and appreciate the gift that they give each and every time they step into our facilities and work with our special participants. That is a positive that we can hold dear to us.
Kamloops Therapeutic Riding Association
The only PATH International Center Member in all of Canada!

Volunteer Spotlight: Sandy Vancamp.

Sandy has been volunteering with KTRA since 2009. That is coming up on 11 years! He is our volunteer yards and maintenance specialist. Although he is often reprimanded for spoiling the horses with his ‘training through treats program’ his passion and commitment to Kamloops Therapeutic Riding Association is invaluable. Thank you Sandy!
IDAHO STATE NEWS

Message from Annie Mabry, Idaho State Chair

Volunteers come in all shapes and sizes, all ages and abilities, and all have something precious to share with us – their passion, commitment and loyalty to our participants and to our program’s Missions and Visions. In this newsletter we are celebrating these amazing individuals and their generous hearts, who give so much in many different ways, to keep our programs strong. A huge thank you to each and every one of you!

Swiftsure Ranch, TEC, Bellevue, Idaho

Volunteer Spotlight: Rae Hirning

Volunteer Rae came to Swiftsure through her lifelong passion of enriching the daily lives of children with disabilities and challenges in the community. What she did not
imagine after spending many days at the ranch was developing a real love for the horses.

Her experience with horses was very limited prior to volunteering with us, and now she enjoys all of the different interactions with the Swiftsure herd. Special times for interaction with the horses include bringing them into lessons, leading them to the arena and spending time grooming them in between her volunteer shifts. She has a couple of favorite horses but is shy to say which ones...because she loves them all! Make no mistake, the riders are the ones who absolutely captivate her heart. She has worked with many of our participants as an aide with the school district for many years. Experiencing them in different settings and experiences here at the ranch, she notes the benefits they receive through therapeutic riding.

“ I see them relate to their horse and watch the confidence grow. The sense of freedom is powerful to watch as they relate and encourage each other. Even for those students who are quieter, the bond is very special.”

The entire Swiftsure team is so proud and thankful for Rae ad her dedication to learn more about our equine partners and for developing new skills which help tremendously in lessons.

Rising Stars, Twin Falls, Idaho

Volunteer Spotlight: Bob Rynbrand
Rising Stars has been blessed with some amazing volunteers over the years. Bob Rynbrand was one of Rising Stars’ most passionate and dedicated volunteers. For 10 years he had a very special role as a volunteer at Rising Stars. Bob always said the first thing he had to learn when he started volunteering with us was “which end of the horse sneezed”. He wasn’t much of a horse person, although over time he became quite comfortable with them, but he found his calling in numerous other jobs “at the ranch”. Bob saw a need, ask permission (sometimes after he had already done it) and got busy making the small things happen. He made sure the water cooler was filled, cups were restocked, trash bags were changed, horses were loved on, participants siblings were properly spoiled and entertained, keys were made, odds and ends were fixed and much more. His passing has left a very deep empty spot in the hearts of all those involved with Rising Stars. As we approach the one year anniversary of his passing, we are all reminded daily of all the little things he did for Rising Stars. He was a good one! He never missed an opportunity to talk about Rising Stars to his friends, local business people and anybody else he could corner. Bob had a way of letting people know how much Rising Stars meant to him even if they really didn’t want to know. Our time with him was a special gift. We
wish he was here with us to kick the dirt in the new indoor arena that he dreamed about with us for so long.

MONTANA STATE NEWS

From Stephanie Richardson, Montana State Chair
Eagle Mount, Bozeman, MT

Volunteer Spotlight: Myrt Woosley

Myrt Woolsey and participant at Eagle Mount.

On March 6th and 7th, Eagle Mount Bozeman's Adaptive Horsemanship Program hosted our 2nd Annual Horse Show and Sponsor Social! In order to honor our faithful and hardworking volunteers, we created an award through Myrt Woosley's example of an outstanding volunteer. Myrt was Eagle Mount's first Adaptive Horsemanship director and has continued to be a reliable and committed volunteer. Her effort to go above and beyond to ensure the success of participants has been paramount. The Myrt Woosley
Award - "Volunteer of the Year", is one which recognizes volunteer/s with exceptional display of the following attributes:

- Committed to the Eagle Mount Mission and the people we serve
- Dependable and goes above and beyond what is expected
- Teachable
- Has been serving as a horsemanship volunteer for over a year
- Empathetic of participants needs
- Encourages and supports those around them

We were excited and honored to present three awards this year to our weekend graining and feeding team. They have been committed to serving our program on weekends as well as in classes as leaders, sidewalkers and horse exercisers on a weekly basis. We are also so incredibly grateful for all of our volunteers who were not recognized in this way. They all have an integral part and we could not do what we do without our volunteers!

OREGON STATE NEWS

From Amanda Garrison, Oregon State Chair

Bright Horizons, Siletz, Oregon

Volunteer Spotlight: Denise Austin and Steve Tessitore

We are fortunate to have a multitude of wonderful volunteers that make our therapeutic riding and interactive vaulting programs possible. Two individuals in particular, however, truly stand out.
Denise Austin

Denise Austin has been volunteering with our program for four years, and in addition to being invaluable in scheduled lessons, she is always a phone call away to fill in, clean stalls, pick up bedding, or blanket on a cold night.

Denise always brings a great attitude, patience, and humor with her to the barn. Her generosity with her time is priceless. And as if all of these amazing aspects weren't enough, sometimes she bakes treats and leaves them in the refrigerator in the office!
Steve Tessitore

Another individual who is truly unparalleled is Steve Tessitore, who has been volunteering for nearly two years. Steve’s attention to detail and marvelous sense of humor make him a favorite with riders and instructors alike.

Steve has a unique balance of whimsy and responsibility which is a rarity, and to top it all off, he listens intently and follows instructions well. Steve puts in long days at the barn, and I can always tell when he’s been there because something is left slightly better than he found it. He lowers feeders for the 12.2 Welsh pony, and sings songs to the somewhat grumpy Tennessee Walker/Appaloosa mare.

We are so fortunate to have these two at our barn, along with our other marvelous volunteers. I hope they stay for years to come, and many more riders have the good fortune to experience a TR or IV classes.

Forward Stride, Beaverton, Oregon

At Forward Stride volunteers are a very important part of our community and we have been blessed with the most hardworking and dedicated individuals. Our volunteer program offers an inclusive model providing an opportunity for everyone to have a place here. We have over 100 volunteers each week that serve our community in many different ways ranging from caring for our horses to helping our clients in classes. Several of our volunteers have stayed with us from the time Forward Stride began, over 15 years ago. We are so thankful for their loyalty and contribution to our organization. We truly could not achieve our mission of helping and healing without them.

Volunteer Spotlights: Diane L. and Susan E.

Here are a couple stories from 2 of our long time volunteers. Both Diane and Susan have volunteered with Forward Stride for over 10 years.
Diane L.

Diane started in the early spring of 2006, as a leader for an adult class, when Forward Stride was in Wilsonville.

Her volunteer jobs have included leading, sidewalk walking, a.m. turnout, p.m. horse care, night check, Shriners, the monster garage sale, helping with sessions for the Native American Rehabilitation Association (NARA), Herd Health and any facilities maintenance or repair she can help with.

Diane says her years of volunteering at Forward Stride “connect me to my humanity, prove to me repeatedly the strength of community, teach me the rewards of humility and remind me always, to be present in the moment.”
Susan E.

I began volunteering at Forward Stride in February 2007 at the barn in Wilsonville. I first volunteered as a leader/side walker, but when the barn moved to Beaverton I began to volunteer for P.M. horsecare on Monday evenings. I did P.M. horsecare for a long time in Beaverton. Occasionally, I would fill in for people leading or sidewalk.

When in Beaverton, I began riding at the barn in a drill team that Pati was teaching. Later I began to take a fundamental class and independent rides. At the new barn I fill-in volunteer for A.M. horsecare once in a while. Due to personal matters I could not consistently get out to do horsecare. Presently I have a fundamental class and 2
independent rides. Julz and I have ridden in classes/drill since I started riding at the barn.

I began volunteering at Forward Stride during a very sad time for me. Volunteering and being around horses again gave me something to look forward to and think about. Being around people who love horses and are invested in helping others succeed is an uplifting experience. If I am feeling upset or worried about something, I know that when I leave the barn everything will look a whole lot better. There is nothing better than riding Mr. P outside on a sunny day. He understands me and I understand him.

**Riding Beyond, Ashland, OR**

**Volunteer Spotlight: Jenn Lieber**

Jenn Lieber, head horse handler and board member, has been with Riding Beyond since its beginnings in 2013. Moving to the Rogue Valley in 2008, curiosity led her to wonder how the wisdom of horses and their non-predatory power can teach respectful communication, collaborative leadership skills, and mindful awareness. She co-founded Pony Playtime for 3-5 year olds, and co-facilitates several summer
horse camps. She delights in the laughter, energy and learning created when humans and horses are free to play together. Her creative art activities that enhance our work together with horses is a powerful component of what happens with breast cancer survivors at Riding Beyond. Additionally, she brings strong intuitive skills with horses in eliciting transformative experiences for our volunteers, our horses and our participants.

WASHINGTON STATE NEWS

From Devon Stone, Western Washington State Chair

Little Bit Therapeutic Riding Center in Redmond, WA

Volunteer Spotlight: Cali Swedberg

Do you have a funny or meaningful Little Bit moment you can share?
It’s hard to come up with just one. Every week, something sweet or hilarious (or both) happens. There is one hippotherapy client I used to be with who would say
“HI CALIE!” with such excitement every week. It always made me feel so special. I had to hold back tears on our last session together.

**What motivated you to volunteer at Little Bit?**
At a particularly spacious time in my life I discovered VolunteerMatch.org, and through them I discovered Little Bit. Working with horses AND people with disabilities?! That’s a thing?! I was thrilled. These were two important parts of my life prior to relocating from Minnesota that I had been missing. *How had I never heard of hippotherapy?* Little Bit is my soul breakfast--the most important and nourishing part of every week.

**Do you have a hidden talent, or a hobby you love to spend time on?**
My undergraduate degree is in dance. I grew up studying ballet and later fell in love with modern and improvisational forms. I’ve performed in Washington State, Idaho, Minnesota, New York, and abroad in Toronto, Austria, and Serbia. My true hidden talent and most beloved hobby, however, is napping. I’m an expert.

**From Heidi Nobles, Eastern Washington State Chair**

**Alatheia Riding Center**

**Volunteer Spotlight: Bonnie Grant**
“Today I want to introduce you to Bonnie Grant. Bonnie and her husband Leon have been volunteering at Alatheia Riding Center since our very beginning. If we are ever in a pinch she is always right there ready and willing to help! She is one of the kindest people you will ever meet and goes above and beyond to bless her riders. Currently, Bonnie has been hard at work making masks for any rider, volunteer or family member who needs one. Thank you, Bonnie, for everything you do to help keep us all safe and healthy!”