



# LETHBRIDGE THERAPEUTIC RIDING ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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## Shout out – Norm Lepard

Norm was honored with the Leadership award at the AgeCare Columbia Seniors of Distinction awards.

His steadfast commitment, resilience, and dedication to both the community and those overcoming challenges truly mark him as a genuine leader and a deserving recipient of this recognition. Over the past three years, Norm has spearheaded our Drive for Dream golf tournament with a carefully selected team. Without his leadership and the team's efforts, the success of this fundraiser wouldn't have been possible. Norm personifies both leadership and empathy.

Thank you, Norm, for everything you do!



Norm, posing for a photo during the Drive for Dreams tournament.

## YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

### A Look Inside Therapeutic Riding

Meet Heather!  
She is a 22 year old young lady with Down syndrome. She attends the Lethbridge college, has a part time job, and loves to volunteer.

Karly, her support worker, stated “Heather began her journey with the Lethbridge Therapeutic Riding Association as a volunteer in 2019. While waiting for the Covid restrictions to lift, and riding classes to resume Heather spent her Monday afternoons getting to know the facility and horses through her volunteer efforts.



Heather petting our therapeutic horses.

Heather is a very quiet individual who enjoys and thrives in calm and quiet environments. We found immediately that the LTRA is a very calm and comfortable environment. Heather quickly became comfortable and started exploring her independence with chores in the barn and arena. As someone new to the equine community Heathers introduction to LTRA couldn't have been any better! The horses are so well trained and calm that Heather was comfortable going into their pens and interacting with them very quickly.

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*“These tasks have contributed to her sense of responsibility and independence.”*

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Having started as a volunteer, Heather was able to see and understand how much work goes into caring for horses. This made her really appreciate her riding class and the horses she gets to work with. Each



Heather on our therapeutic horse, Pepper.

week, in her class, she is responsible for brushing and saddling her horse, as well as unsaddling and brushing again at the end of class. These tasks have contributed to her sense of responsibility and independence. She always walks out of the tack room with a big proud smile as she carries her saddle over to her horse.”

Our talented therapeutic coach Elish connects with each rider on a personal level. This includes selecting classes suited to the individual rider’s abilities and cohorting classes in such a way that participants may connect with each other. It was in riding class that Heather met Caitlyn. Caitlyn is another young woman with Down Syndrome who rides with LTRA. Elish put them in a class together thinking they might become friends. A year later, the girls are great friends who not only ride together, but they are also on a bowling team together now. Karly stated “We are so grateful to Elish for facilitating this friendship.”

“The LTRA has provided us with a safe and comfortable environment to work on Heather’s socialization and independence goals. Her sense of independence has grown and she has built long lasting meaningful relationships with other riders as well as other volunteers. We are so grateful for the programs LTRA offers!” – Karly.

## DONOR HIGHLIGHT

In the spirit of true collaboration, we at LTRA are delighted to acknowledge and celebrate our partnership with Southland Trailer Corp. This alliance goes beyond mere financial support; it is a testament to Southland's commitment to community enrichment and shared values.



Recently, Southland Trailer Corp's generous contribution of \$10,000 during our engaging pancake breakfast was a significant boost to our endeavors. However, it is their readiness to support us in multifaceted ways that truly sets our partnership apart. For instance, their gracious offer to convert one of their trailers into a stage for our "Ride for Dreams - Boots, Buckles & BBQ" event is a prime example of their inventive and hands-on approach to aiding our cause.

What excites us most is the potential this partnership holds for the future. With Southland's support, we are looking forward to expanding our Therapeutic Riding and Equine Facilitated Wellness programs across Southern Alberta. This collaboration enables us to dream bigger and reach further, enhancing the lives of those we serve through innovative and impactful programs.

As we continue to grow and evolve, the support of community-focused partners like Southland Trailer Corp is invaluable. Their dedication not just to our cause, but to the broader Lethbridge community, is a source of inspiration. We extend our deepest gratitude to Southland for being a pillar of support and a partner in making a difference.

Together, we are set to embark on a journey of meaningful impact, bringing to life services and programs that resonate with the needs of our community. Thank you, Southland Trailer Corp, for being more than a supporter - for being a partner in our mission to transform lives.

## GET INVOLVED

**Volunteerism is a cornerstone of the services we offer here at LTRA. The contributions of our dedicated volunteers allow us to provide services that we would otherwise not be able to. You make a difference in the lives of those we have the privilege of serving, and we want to thank every one of you!**

**Interested in Volunteering at LTRA? Visit [www.ltra.ca/volunteer](http://www.ltra.ca/volunteer) to get the process started!**





*Lyndsay with her horses, Rocket and Glory.*

## A VOLUNTEER'S STORY

Our organization greatly values the contribution of our volunteers, who dedicate their time in diverse ways such as participating in bingo, organizing fundraising events, maintaining our arena and barns, and supporting our therapeutic programs. Recently, individuals like Lyndsay have joined us through school programs, driven by a deep passion for animals and a desire to assist, significantly enhancing the quality of our programs. Lyndsay graciously shares a glimpse into her background and involvement with our organization.

“My name is Lyndsay Stevenot and I decided to join the Lethbridge Therapeutic Riding Association as a volunteer because I love being able to help individuals experience the joy, freedom, and unique connection of riding horses as well as the inclusive and welcoming environment! I enjoy the amazing community that I get to be around with the staff, volunteers, participants, and horses. I love being

around the horses and seeing their personalities as well as getting to know the participants and seeing how the two interact. I am passionate about helping provide recreation and leisure activities for individuals who experience barriers as I am in school to become a Recreation Therapist. I also have a passion for being around horses. I love the connection that can be made between a horse and a rider as I have seen people develop and create a strong emotional bond.”

Lyndsay brings a unique perspective and valuable experience to our team. Her dedication to our cause stems from a genuine love for animals and a strong commitment to making a difference. Through her involvement in school programs, Lyndsay has seamlessly integrated her passion for helping into our various initiatives, leaving a lasting positive impact on our programs and the community.

## CONGRATULATIONS DARLENE!

Darlene Fitzgerald is one of LTRA's longest serving volunteers assisting in our therapeutic programming, outreach programming, and fundraising events. She also assists with horse care may know the individual personalities of our program horse herd more than anyone else onsite!



LTRA wanted to acknowledge her and the amazing ways in which she contributes to LTRA and the clients we have the privilege of serving. Alberta Blue Cross has a 'Community Wellbeing Grant Program' in which volunteers can be nominated and a grant is awarded to both the organization and directly to the selected volunteers. Darlene exemplifies the spirit of volunteering with her unwavering dedication to the Lethbridge Therapeutic Riding Association and has done so since 2018. Her passion and commitment shine through her relationships with clients, volunteers, and staff alike. No challenge is too great for Darlene; she seamlessly bridges gaps with clients exhibiting challenging behaviors and consistently steps up wherever needed! Her compassion, reliability, and willingness to go beyond expectations make her a lynchpin of our operations being a resident expert on everything from therapeutic programming to horse care. Her compassionate approach and unwavering advocacy empower individuals; promoting the atmosphere of inclusivity and support we strive for at LTRA. As a dedicated advocate and compassionate volunteer, Darlene has indelibly shaped our organization, creating an environment that champions acceptance, understanding, and growth.

Darlene's efforts genuinely enrich our services and greater community, making her an ideal nominee for this award. Apparently, Alberta Blue Cross felt the same way we do here at LTRA and chose her to be one of the recipients of the grant program for 2023! Congratulations Darlene! It could not have gone to a more deserving person. We want to thank you for choosing LTRA and are honored to have you be a part of the organization.

## MEET OUR TEAM: REFLECTIONS FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



*Executive Director, Kale.*

As I reflect on my first nine months as the Executive Director of the Lethbridge Therapeutic Riding Association (LTRA), I am overwhelmed with a sense of gratitude and awe. This journey has been more than just a leadership role; it has been an inspiring immersion into the heart of our community.

I want to start by thanking all of those who have made this such a wonderful experience. From my very first day, the support of our community sponsors and the individuals who have generously donated has been nothing short of remarkable. Your contributions have been the lifeblood of our operations, enabling us to reach new heights in service and care. Our dedicated staff and volunteers are the backbone of LTRA. Their tireless efforts and unwavering commitment have been instrumental in the success of our programs. To them, I extend my deepest appreciation for making

our mission a reality every day. Lastly, the opportunity to meet and work with our fantastic clients has been a profound experience. Each day, they inspire us with their courage, resilience, and joy. They are a constant reminder of why we do what we do and the positive impact we can have.

Collectively, we have experienced significant successes. In addition to our core therapeutic riding programming, we successfully offered many additional programs and services.

Looking ahead, I am excited about what the future holds for LTRA. We are gearing up to launch new programs that will further expand our impact in the community, reaching even more individuals who can benefit from our work.

In closing, I am humbled and honored to be a part of this incredible journey. The past nine months have been a testament to the power of community, compassion, and collaboration. Thank you to everyone who has been a part of this journey. Your support fuels our mission, and together, we are making a significant difference in the lives of many.

Here's to the future and the continued success of LTRA!

Kale Hayes | Executive Director

### HORSE OF THE MONTH – PACO

Paco moved to the LTRA in 2021. He previously worked in a reading program with children. He is much loved by the people who recently donated him. He has been a great addition in our Therapeutic Riding program and shares his big heart with everyone. Paco's favourite treats are carrots and cucumbers.

Our therapeutic horses hold immense significance for us. With their gentle and compassionate nature, they bring a sense of peace and tranquility to the lives of all our riders. When you "Sponsor a Horse" you help in the overall upkeep of these remarkable animals. It covers their feeding, veterinary care, and even their much-needed pedicure and dental days!

A quick description of each horse can be found on our website, <https://ltra.ca/about-us/meet-our-horses>.



**Sponsor Paco Today**

## HEARTFELT GRATITUDE FOR YOUR SUPPORT IN 2023

### Dear Esteemed Stakeholders, Generous Donors, and Beloved Community Members,

As 2023 draws to a close, we at the Lethbridge Therapeutic Riding Association (LTRA) are not only filled with gratitude but also with pride for the remarkable impact we have achieved together. Your support has been pivotal in allowing us to serve our community in meaningful and diverse ways.

This year, thanks to your backing, we have expanded our services to meet the varying needs of our therapeutic clients. Beyond our core therapeutic riding classes, we have tailored individualized services, reaching those who require specialized attention and care.

- ❖ One of our heartwarming initiatives has been the 'Horses in the Window' outreach program made possible through a grant provided by the Community Foundation of Lethbridge & Southwestern Alberta. We've traveled to dozens of sites across Southern Alberta, bringing the joy and therapeutic benefits of equine interaction to those unable to visit our facilities. This program has touched the lives of many, spreading smiles and comfort.
- ❖ We creatively used our equine partners to support college students during their stressful exam week. By attending campuses with two of our program horses, we offered much-needed relief and a moment of tranquility amidst their hectic schedules. Based on the success of this activity and feedback, we have been asked to attend again this spring for the next round of exams.
- ❖ Additionally, we have been focused on identifying and developing programming for priority groups within our community. A highlight has been the creation of a special camp for newly landed Ukrainians. LTRA, in partnership with the Rotary Club was able to provide a large group with a nurturing supportive environment, a safe place for recreation and socialization, and most importantly, an opportunity for them to have some fun during their transition!

Each of these efforts has been a testament to the incredible power of your support. We at the Lethbridge Therapeutic Riding Association (LTRA) are filled with immense gratitude for your support. Your belief in our mission to provide therapeutic riding experiences for individuals with diverse abilities has been the catalyst for transformative change in our community.

Your contributions, whether financial, through volunteerism, or advocacy, have been vital in advancing our cause. Each smile, moment of relief, and empowered individual we have encountered is a testament to the profound impact of your generosity. Through your support, we have not only reached out but profoundly touched the lives of those we serve, offering joy, empowerment, and boundless possibilities.

The strides we have made this year are a direct result of your dedication and belief in our cause. Your support has been instrumental in enabling us to continue offering life-changing programs, fostering independence, and nurturing the well-being of our participants. The power of community and collaboration has been evident in every step forward.

As we look to the future, your ongoing support remains invaluable. It is crucial as we aspire to further our reach, deepen our impact, and continue being a source of hope, healing, and empowerment for many more individuals in need. In closing, on behalf of everyone at LTRA, we extend our sincerest thanks. Your commitment to making a difference resonates deeply within our community, creating a ripple effect of positivity. Together, we stand as a beacon of hope, compassion, and transformative change, shaping a brighter, more inclusive future for all!

With Gratitude,

Karen Ortega | People & Program Coordinator

### Gratitude for an Anonymous Donor

Our heartfelt gratitude goes out to a generous donor who has contributed funds to support our operational requirements. Thanks to this anonymous supporter, we've been able to upgrade our waterers, reducing the risk of freezing during cold weather. Additionally, we've successfully undertaken essential renovations on our historic barn, reinforcing its foundation. While the donor prefers to remain anonymous, we sincerely express our gratefulness for their tremendous generosity. The donated funds will play a crucial role in supporting our operational needs so we can focus on sustaining our therapeutic programming. With deep appreciation, we extend a sincere thank you from the depths