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October 14, 2018

Board of Directors
Southlands Therapy Riding Society
6767 Balaclava Street
Vancouver, BC

Dear Directors,

We are writing this letter to thank everyone associated with the STaRS program at Southlands Heritage Farm. The staff, instructors, volunteers, other STaRS riders and their families have created, and continue to maintain, a calm and welcoming place where children and adults with special needs can participate in the riding therapy program.

Our daughter Mia, who has Cerebral Palsy, started riding with the STaRS program just before her 3rd birthday, and has ridden every week since then. Her physiotherapist recommended the program as a way to develop her core strength and balance. Her instructors made the sessions fun, and although Mia disliked her physiotherapy sessions, she loved her riding lessons.

When Mia began her riding therapy she had very little core strength and poor balance; she needed help to sit up properly on the pony and could not maintain an upright seated position for very long. Now, at the age of 10, Mia has developed a great deal of strength and balance, and is riding extremely well. She loves her lessons, often riding in the arena off the lead, and has begun learning her first dressage pattern. Her goal is to compete in equestrian at the Paralympics when she is older. In June, Mia completed her second 5K STaRS Run, Ride, Walk fundraiser, and this year finished 6 minutes ahead of the personal time goal she had set for herself!

Riding has been a major factor in Mia's strength and balance development in addition to building her overall confidence and quality of life. We were originally told she would never walk, but she is able to walk and run in her mobility walker and has recently been able to walk up to a dozen steps without assistance. She continues to challenge herself both on and off the horse.

We sincerely feel that the STaRS program has been a pivotal factor in Mia's physical development, helping her to develop physical and emotional confidence, and providing a place where she can be herself and be part of an accepting and encouraging community.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for providing this amazing therapy program.

Sincerely,

Megan & Lukas Chrostowski