

## Donor Newsletter

This past year with the pandemic has been a very challenging year for Southlands Therapeutic Riding Association (“STaRS”). STaRS closed in March 2020 and reopened with a Covid Recovery Plan in July 2020. Since then, we have been operating at a limited capacity, bringing our riders back into the program as COVID conditions allow. However, we have been operating at a loss since we reopened, as we cannot schedule sufficient lessons to cover our costs, due to pandemic restriction. Persons with disabilities have been severely compromised with lack of access to activities during the pandemic and those individuals that have been able to return to the STaRS program are very grateful.

STaRS is proud to share the following story about one of our riders.



Kaiya is a 15-year-old, active girl who has Down Syndrome, and Autism. She acknowledges she has diversities but refuses to let them define her. She is in Grade 9 at Kitsilano Secondary School where she does a modified academic program with 1:1 Support. She loves Horseback Riding and has been riding with STaRS for many years.

During the pandemic there have been many changes to her schooling and supportive therapies which have required her to adapt to constantly changing schedules, which is not an easy task for her. After a 3-month break due to Covid restrictions, she was able to return to her weekly sessions with STaRS.

Through the STaRS Program, Kaiya is learning so much about her own emotions and skills for self-regulation. With coaching from her STaRS instructor Sera, she has become more connected to the horse’s emotions, is learning how to motivate, encourage and reassure him, and how to apply self calming strategies to enable herself to remain in charge. We have seen her generalize these skills to her everyday life where her awareness of the impact on her own emotions on others has significantly increased. We have seen so much growth in her patience, empathy and understanding of those around her, and her increasing ability to self regulate has resulted in more

opportunities and confidence to socialize with others. In addition to her emotional growth, she is developing her independent riding skills for which she is able to set goals and is so proud.

*Kaiya says, "I love that I am learning how to trot, and how to get my horse Austin to do things when he is feeling stubborn. I am learning how to encourage him. I really look forward to seeing Austin every week."*

We are so proud of Kaiya and so grateful to the STaRS Program and the excellent skills of her STaRS instructor. Sera is able to understand Kaiya's specific learning needs, make the lesson fun, and break down the tasks into manageable learning steps. STaRS teaches Kaiya how to have a "Can Do" attitude to challenges which is transferable to her everyday life.

Thank You Sera, Emily and STaRS. We are so grateful.

Denise, Kevin and Kaiya.

In spite of the barriers that COVID has created, we are proud of STaRS' achievements in 2020 and 2021 to date:

With volunteer and professional help, we were able to redesign our website;

We have expanded our community outreach with help from our Coordinator and a communications volunteer;

We have sponsored an instructor in training, with funding from the BC Therapeutic Riding Association;

We hired a new instructor to replace a longstanding instructor in the program who had to retire due to illness; and

We have gained access to an additional riding ring in the neighbourhood to accommodate our riders.

STaRS would like to extend a huge thank you to our foundations/donors for 2021:

Al Roadburg Foundation

BC Therapeutic Riding Association

Edith Lando Foundation

Kermit & Theo Legacy Fund

Morris & Helen Belkin Foundation

Mr. & Mrs. PA Woodward's Foundation

Peter & June Young Legacy Fund

The Hamber Foundation

Warm Hearts Charitable Foundation

Without the generosity of our 2020 Donors & Foundations STaRS would not have been able to operate during the pandemic. Thank you!

Al Roadburg Foundation  
Antle/Mears Charitable Foundaioon  
BC Therapeutic Riding Association  
Kermit & Theo Legacy Fund  
Lohn Foundation  
Milan & Maureen Ilich Foundation  
Peter & June Young Legacy Fund  
Succession Guy Vanier  
Telus  
YP Heung Foundation

STaRS would also like to thank the individual donors which are too numerous to mention. We truly appreciate your support!

STaRS' survival relies on donations such as yours and its core group of dedicated volunteers. We have had to postpone our annual fundraiser for the second year in a row, the June STaRS run/walk due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We hope that you will consider donating to STaRS now at 6767 Balaclava St., Vancouver, BC, V6N 1R7 or through CanadaHelps. We can provide tax receipts for all donations over \$25.00