

Southlands Therapeutic Riding Society
Annual General Meeting
Tuesday, April 4, 2023
President's Report

On behalf of the STaRS Board of Directors, I would like to welcome you all to the Annual General Meeting for the year 2022-23.

For those of you who don't know me, I am Ann Thomson, the current Chair of the Board. I would also like to introduce our BOD members: Sally Buchignani, Vice-President, Ann Howell, Treasurer, Karen Mott, Secretary, Deborah Katz Henriquez, Gaynor Pinchak, Natasha Maynard, and Jennifer Maynard. Deborah and Gaynor have joined the Board in the last year and we are so fortunate to have them with us. Deborah is the author of two children's books, along with her other professional qualifications. She is a nurse instructor at Langara College and has brought her creative experience to STaRS to help us with fundraising and strategic planning. Gaynor is a former senior executive at Variety and joins us by Zoom from the Okanagan. She has been instrumental in organizing the STaRS membership drive, which has been so successful.

I want to thank the Board members for all the work they have done in their stewardship of STaRS. In particular, our thanks to Ann Howell, who has been our Treasurer. Ann is looking to step down from this position, for personal reasons, although she will stay on the Board. We are looking for an enthusiastic individual who some experience with financial budgeting and reporting to take up her position.

I would also like to thank Southlands Riding Club for providing space for our Board meetings and this Annual General Meeting and acknowledge that we are meeting on the unceded territory of the Musqueam people. To Southlands Heritage Farm and the Maynard Family, thank you for your support to STaRS and for giving us a home!

In our last fiscal year and to the present, STaRS has experienced both opportunities and challenges:

1. We have been so fortunate to be able to bring Susan Bridgeman and Charlotte Nobles onto the STaRS staff. Susan has agreed to act as our Volunteer Coordinator, a huge addition to the smooth running of STaRS and to recognize the importance of our volunteers to our operations. We couldn't do it without you! (Susan and volunteers to stand)

Charlotte joined STaRS in early September 2022 and we could not be happier. Charlotte is an experienced horsewoman, with strong administrative and interpersonal skills. We could not ask for a better person in the Coordinator position. (Charlotte to stand).

2. We have increased our ridership from 30 students in September 2021 to 48 as of April 1. We also have 16 clients engaged in Equine Facilitated Wellness sessions. However, we have lost two instructors over the past year. Sera Kwon resigned in 2022 to focus on her professional career and family. Our longtime therapeutic riding instructor and EFW coach, Penelope Harper, has left STaRS to return to her family in New Zealand. We are going to miss Penelope greatly. Fortunately, we have been able to engage Gail Blanchette on a part-time basis as a senior instructor. Gail is highly qualified and is able to teach group lessons.

With Penelope's departure, we have had to put a number of lessons on hold. However, we have good news: Kae Whittles, who has been a volunteer with STaRS, has recently received her CANtra certification (have Kae stand up) and will soon be working with STaRS. Charlotte expects to complete her certification in June and will be ready to start instructing with STaRS. However, with our growing wait list, we would like to increase the number of instructors that we have to offer flexibility to instructors and therapeutic riding with as many children, youth and adults as possible.

Also, we continue to maintain contact with potential EFW coaches. We are in discussions with a young woman who is registered as a social worker in B.C. and works in Vancouver in that capacity. She has Equine Assisted Learning training from Cartier Farms in Ontario and has conducted EAL with Indigenous children and youth groups. We hope that she will be able to provide services to some of Penelope's current clients.

3. EFW/EFC workshops: Penelope and Alex Cope, our former Coordinator, conducted an EFW/EFC workshop in March for vulnerable girls in partnership with Big Sisters. We have received Telus funding for two workshops for at-risk youth. In partnership with the Centre for Ability, we have arranged two Equine Facilitated Counselling workshops for six youth aged 11 to 17 with special needs, with an emphasis on Indigenous youth and kids of colour. Alex Cope has kindly agreed to facilitate these workshops, which will take place at the Farm on Sunday, April 30th and Sunday, June 23rd.
4. Group lesson pilot: Ring space continues to be a challenge for STaRS. We are very grateful to Pippa Emrick/McPhee and Stuart Carmichael for the continued use of their lunge rings. However, we are still attempting to get access to larger rings in the Southlands area for our riders. To maximize the ring space we have available, we are piloting a series of group lessons starting at the beginning of April. The lessons will take place on Thursday mornings at the ring at Shannon Stables and will be conducted by Gail Blanchette. We are monitoring the viability and logistics of the group lesson approach to see if this is something we can permanently include in the STaRS Program.
5. Jewish National Federation, Vancouver: Through one of our riders and his parents, STaRS has been approached by the JNF to act as a partner/mentor to a group of mothers in the Carmel Valley, Israel, who want to set up a therapeutic riding facility for children and youth

with disabilities. We have been invited to participate in the JNF fundraiser at the end of June and we will receive 10% of the funds that the JNF raises. This has been a welcome opportunity for STaRS to share its experience and lessons learned, as well as to benefit from the generous donation from the JNF.

5. Film: Last year, we introduced the idea of a professional documentary about STaRS that would showcase our work and also get the message out about the benefits of therapeutic riding and EFW. We have been fortunate enough to link with Lee Buckley, who is an experienced filmmaker and cameraman, who has the Lord of the Rings on his resume, amongst other films. Lee has generously offered to do a documentary on STaRS pro bono, including a short PSA that we can use for publicity and fundraising. Lee, please stand up. Tell us a bit about your ideas.

6. And, last but absolutely not least, I would again like to thank our donors, who have continued to support us through COVID and beyond. I would like to thank our individual donors, who are too numerous to mention. You are the base of STaRS support! I would also like to extend a special thank you to Susan Bridgeman, who bakes and creates beautiful cards each Christmas and donates the proceeds to STaRS. Susan's Christmas sale contributed \$2000 to STaRS! Rachel Roberts again raised funds for STaRS on her birthday, March 24th and will contribute over \$2700 to the Rachel Roberts Bursary in 2023. Rachel, we are so grateful to have your ongoing support, both financially and as an ongoing assistant to STaRS.

Overall, our fundraising efforts brought in \$61,500 in 2022. This allowed us to provide **nine** bursaries for those riders who would not otherwise be able to pay for lessons. It has also provided three workshops for EFW to children and youth at risk, as well as allowing us to extend our operations. We are grateful for the interest and support of our foundation and corporate donors:

Al Roadburg Foundation
Antle/Mears Charitable Foundation
BC Gaming
BC Therapeutic Riding Association
Henriquez Partners Limited
Milan and Maureen Ilich Foundation
Paolo Aquilini
Peter & June Young Legacy Fund
Telus
Unity for Autism
Via Sport

We want to recognize Megan MacDonald, who was Stars' Senior Therapeutic Riding Instructor for many years. As many of you know, Megan passed away last year following an illness, far too soon.

And finally, in recognition of our equine friends, who keep us going in good times and bad, we say goodbye to Teddy, our old friend at STaRS. Teddy was well-loved and still missed.