



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 25, 2005

### **NEW PROGRAM STARTING IN CRESTON**

Therapeutic Riding has come to Creston! Creston & District Society for Community Living is expanding their services to include a therapeutic riding program.

"More Than Just a Pony Ride," therapeutic riding is a unique program that uses horses as therapists. While learning riding and horsemastership skills, adults, youth and children with developmental, cognitive, mental, physical and social challenges gain a host of benefits. These benefits run the gamut from physical exercise as well as improved balance and coordination, to increased self confidence and a sense of freedom.

Riders may participate for a variety of reasons: rehabilitation, skill development, fun, recreation, and may even compete. In order to meet each rider's individual needs, their program is specifically designed for them. Therapists, the instructor and the rider him/herself are involved in customizing a program. Sessions may include games, trail rides, physical therapy, riding lessons, or lessons in horsemastership skills such as grooming, leading, feeding etc.

Lessons will run on Wednesday's starting May 18 and will run for eight weeks. The first session was scheduled to start on May 4, however, the organization was unable to schedule the site visit in time that is required by the Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association (CanTRA) to become a CanTRA Provisional Member Centre . The lessons will take place at Diamond Cross Arena (five minutes north of Overwaitea on Highway 3) and will be scheduled around the rider's time constraints. "We initially scheduled lessons for 9:30 – 2:00" says Program Director, Sarah Schmidt, "However; we have had a number of requests for lessons after school, so we will be accommodating those requests and running later in the day, depending on volunteer availability."

Therapeutic riding is a volunteer intensive activity – some riders may need as many as four volunteers - one to lead the horse, one on each side and one behind. No experience with horses or the disabled is necessary to volunteer, as Volunteer Orientation and Training Sessions are currently being held on a weekly basis. Volunteering with therapeutic riding is a great way to get some exercise, meet some fun

people, learn about horses and be involved in the disabled community. There are also volunteers needed outside the riding ring to clean tack, raise money, transport horses, etc.

The group is currently looking for some sort of secure, storage that they can have on-site for their tack and equipment. “People are being so generous, but I now have no room in my living room to sit down. There are saddles and bridles and helmets, you name it - everywhere!” says Sarah Schmidt, Program Director. “How we are going to get all this stuff to the arena on a weekly basis is challenging my creativity.” she adds.

Another challenge for the group is to transport the loaned horses to the facility. They have a truck, but are hoping that someone can step forward and donate a horse trailer, or the use of a trailer.

If you are interested in becoming involved in this unique program, contact Sarah Schmidt at 428-2296 or [sschmidt.cdscl@shawlink.ca](mailto:sschmidt.cdscl@shawlink.ca).

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