



THERAPEUTIC RIDING PROGRAM

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 11, 2005

THERAPEUTIC RIDING UPDATED RELEASE

Therapeutic Riding has come to Creston! Creston and 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.

This initial session will run on Wednesdays at Canyon Park, starting May 18 and will go for eight weeks. There are still openings for riders available and lessons will be scheduled around riders' 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 training is provided.

This Saturday, May 14, at 9:30 am, there will be a Volunteer Workshop for people interested in horse handling and/or sidewalking given by Jane James of the Cowichan Therapeutic Riding Program. The session will consist of classroom time in the morning at a location to be announced and hands on practice in the afternoon at Canyon Park.

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Ms. James started the Cowichan program over twenty years ago and has been at the helm ever since. She is a past president of the Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association (CanTRA), one of the first to attain the new CanTRA Coaching Certification and has been an examiner of CanTRA Instructors for many years. She is also the Chef d'Equipe for Canada's successful Para-Olympic Equestrian Team. "We are so excited to have someone of Jane's experience and calibre coming here – it's a real boost for the program" says Schmidt. "She is also conducting our site inspection so that we can become a CanTRA Provisional Centre Member which will bring credibility and recognition to the program."

The group is currently looking for a horse or stock trailer (or the use of same) to be donated. "The biggest challenge that we face at the moment is horse transportation. We have some great horses that the owners have donated the use of – we just have to get them to the location!" says Sarah Schmidt, Program Director. "If anyone has a trailer they aren't using, we really could use it" she continues.

If you are interested in the volunteer workshop this weekend or donating/lending a stock/horse trailer or would like further information about the program, contact Sarah Schmidt at 428-2296 or sschmidt.cdsc@shawlink.ca.

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