

## **The Brae RDA Partnership**

**AGM 31<sup>st</sup> August 2010**

### **Chairman's report for year April 2009 – March 2010**

Welcome to the Chairman's report for this, the second year of The Brae. Instead of resting on our laurels after an amazing first year, we decided to try to match the previous year's successes, I wasn't sure if it was possible. However, it was not long before good news started rolling in.

#### **The Big Lottery – Volunteer Development Programme**

We were delighted when our bid to run this programme was successful, not only was this a huge opportunity for The Brae but also a wonderful achievement in terms of bringing Lottery money to the city. The process involved an inordinate amount of work, but the result was £350,000 over 5 years to provide support and training to volunteers. The project started in September and allowed us to employ Alison Melville, our Volunteer Co-ordinator and Cindy Grant, our Admin Assistant, both on a part time basis. It also partly funds Mary's post of Centre Manager and provides funding for training and equipment and covers some of the increased costs of having more people at The Brae. It does of course involve thorough evaluation through monitoring and the associated paperwork, but this provides valuable evidence of the skills, knowledge and experience our volunteers are achieving. Not only is this important for the Big Lottery but it will also be very useful for funding bids we make to other Trusts and Organisations.

#### **Research Post**

Through funding from NHS Tayside Endowment Funds we have been able to employ Fiona Fumme on a part time basis to carry out research on the benefits of horseriding from a physiotherapy point of view. Fiona started with us on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2009 on a 3 year contract and we look forward to reading her findings.

#### **Yard Manager**

Unfortunately, Christina, our Yard Manager decided it was time to move on to new challenges and handed in her notice in March this year. We were sorry to see her leave, as she has been with us since we opened, but we appreciate her decision and wish her all the very best for the future.

#### **Volunteers**

If anybody ever felt a bit despondent about society, they just need to visit The Brae for a few hours. We have an army of amazing people here: the salt of the earth! It never fails to amaze me what volunteers are willing to do for the centre, ask them to jump and the reply is 'how high?' As is to be expected, we have lost some of our team this year, we thank them for their support and wish them well for their futures. We have also welcomed many new volunteers,

one of our most famous is that charming gent – octogenarian Harry. His work record must be one of our most esteemed, with his former employer being none other than the Royal Family.

To try to provide a continuity of standards, including cover for the Yard Manager, we decided to introduce the role of Volunteer Supervisor. This was a totally new concept for The Brae and I would like to thank everyone for their willingness to make this work. We also created some opportunities for Supported Volunteering, where individuals can work as volunteers along with their support worker. We have received very positive feedback on this as there is a shortage of real volunteer activities for people who require support to take part.

To further recognise the value of our volunteers, the first meeting of the Volunteer Forum took place in February. This is volunteer led with the opportunity for volunteers to share their thoughts and suggestions with some already having been taken on board.

### The Centre

It became apparent that to maintain our indoor arena sand and control the level of dust, we needed to water it on a regular basis which was looking to become problematic and costly. The local Fire Brigade had been very supportive on a short term basis and we would like to note our thanks to them for their help. We decided that the best long term solution was to install a sprinkler system that would be as economical and easy to use as possible.

We were very lucky to have some smartening up work done with new kitchen units donated by Duncan Soutar of DBM Kitchens and office units donated by JTC through Hamish McAlpine. The extra storage and new layout has made the best possible use of our space, but we were still overflowing. To help with this Scot Brown of Storage 4 U very kindly let us have a small secure unit free of charge to assist with this. We also had to deal with a lot of rain last year which caused flooding problems that had to be investigated. Happily these have all been fully resolved and we would like to thank DJ Laing for their support with this issue.

### Horses

We expect to have a bit of a turn around of our horses, but this year did seem to have a few more issues than we would have hoped for. We have said goodbye to 4 and hello to another 5. This in itself has created a lot of organisation, time and energy to advertise, sell, source, integrate and train our horse 'team'. Thanks to everyone involved in this over the year. Unfortunately, to add to this, Paddy became lame this year which has involved lengthy investigations and rest, we hope he makes a sound recovery and is back working soon.

### Carriage Driving

After a variety of training sessions plus a huge amount of determination and hard work, our first carriage driving team passed their assessment and The Brae received approval from RDA to run carriage driving sessions. Well done to Alison, Joan and Christina for all their enthusiasm and commitment and a special thank you to Zoe Sanders for her knowledge and support. This led to our first client, Hannah Craig starting carriage driving sessions in October. There are just not enough words to express the smile on Hannah's face as she took her first drive around the centre.

Our carriage driving team also took part in a couple of external events which involved assistance with transport which was very kindly provided by Irene Croft, John Messeter and George Anastasiou.

#### Horse Sponsorship

This year saw the launch of our 'Sponsor a Pony' and we have been delighted with the uptake: O'Reilly is fully sponsored by a group of staff at Dundee College. Trixie by The Alistair Scott Fund, Gordon by The Rotary, Salsa by The Aberbrothock Fund and Women Ahead, Rolley by Women Ahead and Paddy has been part funded so far by several individuals. We hope to eventually have all our horses fully sponsored.

#### Web site

After investigating several options for our website, we were delighted when Ian Longair offered to give us some help. Being a former lecturer at Abertay University meant he had a wealth of knowledge and information to share with us. Not only has he taken on the website but has also become our IT support, which with the new computers and equipment we've received this year has been a major contribution. We would like to thank him for joining us and also thank Katie Horne for all her work over the years on our previous website. Look out for the Blog and Facebook facility coming on line later this year.

#### Newsletters

The difference of having a permanent Administrator has been immense, not only is the huge amount of paper work now more manageable but it has also allowed us to make further developments. One of the most important is the Newsletter. We now have a Volunteer Newsletter and a Rider and Supporter Newsletter. This is an excellent way of ensuring that as many people as possible know what is happening at The Brae. To keep our costs as low as possible, we are aiming to have these distributed to as many people as possible via email.

#### Training

In line with the Volunteer Development Project, we continued to provide a variety of Training for volunteers which included our own in house stable management, horse care, leading and sidehelping, an introduction to the physiotherapy values of riding as well as external training provided by Scottish Autism and Speech and Language Therapy using Makaton, First Aid Training and Instructor Training. We would like to thank everyone that helped with these, particularly Felicity Ivory of RDA.

We also took part in a pilot of the Asdan Community Volunteering Qualification through Dundee College, 9 volunteers started this new course in November with 6 completing in June and 3 continuing. This is a new flexible qualification that accredits volunteers based on the voluntary work they carry out and as course tutor I would like to thank all the participants for their enthusiasm and hard work.

## Public Relations

It sometimes seems that The Brae is always being mentioned in the press in some form or another, but surprisingly there are still a lot of people that have not heard about us. It is therefore important to keep working on developing the public awareness of what we do here at The Brae. This year has seen a variety of groups visit to find out what all the fuss is about, including:-

Professor Tony Wells and some managers from NHS Tayside  
Round Table

Rotary, who were so impressed that not only have they sponsored Gordon, but several members volunteer on a regular basis.

We also had groups of people come for a day's Employee Volunteering from

Tax Credits

Job Centre

Alliance Trust, who like the Rotary, have decided to become more involved with The Brae by sponsoring

Boris and encouraging staff to be more involved on a long term basis.

## Highlights

In April Dundee City Council recognised our achievements and invited us to a Civic Reception in the city chambers with over 80 managing to attend. This was followed up by a visit to the centre by several councillors and staff to raise their awareness of what we do.

We held our first ever Summer Ball in May, which turned out to be a resounding success with over £6k raised.

June was a busy month: Mary was invited by Valerie Roy to speak to the area RDA AGM in Inverurie, with three of us going to support her, Volunteers week saw a couple of our volunteers appear in the local press, sharing their stories and involvement and Sue Rolfe and I received a Dundee College 'Stars Award' for Community Involvement.

In August, Mary persuaded several of us to take part in The Lord Provost's Parade which involved us walking through the town in cardboard boxes dressed as horses and riders.

In October we had 4 riders taking part in The Scottish Dressage Competition.

In November we held a Vaulting Demonstration organised through Jenny Legate of Equibuddies who is keen to work with us in offering this opportunity to our riders in the future.

On 28<sup>th</sup> November, directors and staff dressed up again to host our very first Volunteer Recognition Evening in the theme of the Wild West. This was a great evening, several of our young volunteers received their MVAwards, Graham Thow and Jessica Narsupur received RDA Over and Above Awards, June Mitchell received a Best Endeavour Award, George Shearer received Most Handsome Gardener and Chrissie McGillveray received Most Delightful Cleaner.

## Fundraising

This has been a very successful year for generating funds through our local activities. The team have once again had as doing a variety of antics to bring in the cash. We have also had a great deal of support from various individuals, groups and organisations and we have had increased use of the centre in the evenings with groups from the Dundee and Alsatian Dog Club, Morgan

FP Rugby club and Claverhouse Equestrian with donations going towards our general running costs. We would also like to thank The Robertson Trust for continuing to support us with a £10k grant towards general running costs.

#### Policies and Procedures

We have spent quite a considerable amount of time and energy writing and sometimes re-writing the raft of policies and procedures required to ensure that The Brae meets all its statutory requirements.

It can be quite a daunting task so I would like to thank everyone who has been involved with this for sticking with it and seeing it through.

#### And so, the final paragraph

We have had our challenges over the year, one of the biggest and least pleasant has been the Muck Heap, but thanks to some sterling effort, we think we have reached a solution on this.

Sometimes it feels that it is just one thing after another, that some of the paper work is more bother than its worth, or that it just seems to be raining heavier and longer than last year!

Well, we survived one of the worst winters in 30 years, with our valiant volunteers and staff risking the roads to make sure our horses were looked after. My fellow directors and I have found our responsibilities increase over the years to match those of a lot of paid company directors. The Brae now requires £150,000 per year to operate at its present level, but with £70,000 of that coming from The Big Lottery we only need to bring in the £80,000 balance. We have a great centre here that more and more people love to come to. Our Centre Manager has proved again that she's got more sticking power than that Muck Heap and we've got the salt of the earth to help us with the slippery bits.

So thank you all for helping to make this another amazing year, in fact I think it may even have been better than last year!