

The Brae

AGM 24th September 2013

Chairman's report for year April 2012-March 2013

This has been a very successful and relatively steady year which ended with us celebrating The Brae's 5th birthday.

Staffing

Following on from the 3 year Research post, we recruited a part time physiotherapist, Duncan Sangster, on a fixed term post in August 2012. His role is to continue the delivery of one to one sessions and groups, providing physiotherapy to individuals with physical disabilities. He will also promote the benefits of Hippotherapy to encourage a wider range of clients from the local area.

Riders

With over 100 riders attending the centre every week, we see individual's improvements on a daily basis. We also try to encourage riders to become involved as volunteers where possible, this mum's comment encourages us to continue this opportunity, "I can't put into words how grateful I am to The Brae and the staff who make such a huge difference to Shannon, they have no idea just how much they have enhanced her life"

This year we have awarded a variety of certificates for proficiency tests, riding and stable management. There have been several external competitions with 3 of our riders travelling to Hartbury to take part in the RDA National Championships, they all did us proud. So did the 5 riders who took part in the Scottish RDA Dressage competitions in Stirling. Liz said "I have just had one of the best days ever at Bannockburn RDA. Thanks so much to the staff and volunteers who came with us, their time and hard work is much appreciated. I so enjoyed the experience of being among horsey people and horses and although I wasn't very good, Mickey was a star and I cannot wait to do more. My first rosette!"

The Carriage Driving Team have also been very busy this year, with a core of very reliable volunteers they have been taking riders out and about around the tracks to experience the surrounding countryside. They also held a very successful picnic in Tentsmuir with over 10 people joining in the fun.

Volunteers

The Brae continues to offer a locally unique opportunity for people from all walks of life to come together and work in a positive, supportive environment, learn new skills, improve

self-esteem and develop new social contacts. Feedback from volunteers validated this opinion with many reporting increased self-esteem and enjoyment of the work required. Pauline said "The circle of my life is now ten-fold from a year ago. I feel humbled and privileged to be part of something very special".

The requests for Supported Volunteer placements continue to grow due to the few organisations that are able to provide these. To try to meet the number of enquiries, it was decided to introduce a 12 week block rotation with an average of 11 attending every week. These require careful planning and collaboration with individuals and their carers but the enjoyment is obvious and therefore worth the extra effort.

The Volunteer Development Programme funded through The Big Lottery has continued to offer opportunities for volunteers to receive a wide range of training including the standard Health & Safety, Rider Support, Stable Management, First Aid, Makaton, and What could possibly go wrong? This year we have added sessions on Mental Health Awareness, Feeding our Horses and the very popular, Horse Psychology. Accreditation for skills and qualifications gained this year included RDA Green Card training, Over and Above Awards and ASDAN Community Volunteering Qualifications. To celebrate all the achievements over the past years, we held a Volunteer Award Ceremony with 90 volunteers and staff attending a glittering event at Westpark, Dundee and over 50 volunteers receiving a variety of awards. Rotary Dundee have continued their regular support through their community project with 12 willing pairs of hands taking their turn on the rota to help out every week.

Community activity has increased with more support through Employee Volunteering days with groups from DWP, RBS, Axis Shield, PPCL willing to roll up their sleeves and do some of the not so clean tasks. We have also had a group of 30 pupils from Dundee High school flex their muscles and undertake some hard graft.

Work Placements

As with supported volunteering there is a city wide need for opportunities for young people to develop fundamental skills, confidence and self-esteem in an enthusiastic and supportive environment. The Brae is ideally suited to offer something different and has provided successful placements for Barnardos, Rathbone, Project Scotland and Helm Training this year.

Maintenance

CCTV was installed

Large Mirrors were installed at the end of the indoor arena to encourage clients to check their posture

Trailer and water bowser were bought for use with the quad bike to reduce some of the heavy work involved in the grazing areas

An extension was added to the scissor platform

To maximise the resources, the grassy area in front of the building was fenced off to provide additional grazing.

Fundraising

We have had another successful year with support coming in a variety of forms.

We were Sainsbury's chosen charity for the year, benefitted from Asda's Green Token initiative and the use of their facilities for training, Tesco donated Easter Eggs and received support from Barneys Fund,

Most of our horses have been sponsored this year by a variety of organisations, Dundee Rotary, Hubert Scott Trust, Graham Trust, Alliance Trust, Peco, Sainsburys and various individuals and groups. We also welcomed our tenth horse, Mickey joining us through the People's Post Code Lottery.

Achievements and performance

The Brae hosted a RDA Regional Training Day in September and the Discovery Games for the second time with competitors joining us from Glenfarg and Blairgowrie

4 Brae volunteers were presented with Saltire Summit Awards

Claire Sutherland was chosen as one of the first ever Saltire Ambassadors in Dundee

Kristin McMaster received a Rotary Endeavour Award

Joan Jack was nominated for the Regional Over and Above Award

Dundee's Lord Provost, Bob Duncan, visited the centre in September and joined in by sitting on Prince to have his photo taken, what a sport! He then returned on the Xmas Fun Day to judge the Best Dressed Xmas Pony. This event was organised by our volunteers and was its usual merry event, well done to all our party planners.

There was a week of celebrations for our 5th birthday, with something every session to ensure that no-one missed out, certificates were presented, cake was eaten and one volunteer per day received an Over and Above Award

We have noted an increase in requests for talks and presentations to local community groups who are interested in finding out more about the good work that happens here.

A new look website was developed, regular Newsletters were produced and a Facebook page was launched to provide an up to date way of keeping in touch with all our riders, volunteers and supporters. Thanks to everyone involved in this massive and on-going piece of work.

There have also been numerous reports of a growing clan of people regularly being seen around Dundee either carrying distinctive jute bags or wearing colourful Brae hoodies. If you see them, please report them to the appropriate authorities.

As always, I would like to say a huge Thank You to all our directors, staff, volunteers, riders and supporters, we could not do it without you!

Alison Doyle
Chairperson