

The Brae Chairperson's report for year April 2016 - March 2017

Riders

Our aim is to provide opportunities for children and adults with disabilities to take part in therapeutic riding and carriage driving to the level of their ability. Sessions are run by specially trained instructors, physiotherapists and volunteers. This year there were 1,063 riding sessions, 69 vaulting and 89 carriage driving sessions carried out over 6 days per week.

One mum said "For a child like J there is very little to do in the way of leisure activities, especially ones that are actually therapy in disguise. Although J has great fun and enjoyment from riding, he is also working hard without really realising it. He is exercising muscles that he doesn't normally use on a day to day basis and also relaxing muscles that are usually rigid due to his cerebral palsy. He is really tired and ready for a sleep after his lesson!"

Another said "For children who always have to rely on others, being on the horse with someone other than a parent or care giver must give a feeling of independence that they rarely experience".

Back riding

We have provided 96 back riding sessions this year which have proved to be extremely successful and very popular. We are very proud to have been able to provide this unique activity in the Tayside area with all participants having been reported as demonstrating improvements and benefits. Unfortunately though, our physiotherapist received an offer of employment too good to refuse and left us at the end of March. We are working to replace him but as this is a highly specialised position we are aware that it may not be straight forward and take longer than we hoped.

Vaulting

Following on from our successful vaulting pilot we introduced two sessions per week aimed at school age riders. These proved very popular with most achieving the grade 1 proficiency certificate and some Grade 2, demonstrating improved communication, balance, co-ordination, team working, patience along with new excitement and fun. We found that mixing children that have come before with new ones benefits all as they can share knowledge, demonstrate skills and build their own confidence whilst encouraging new participants.

Carriage Driving

Our carriage driving team deliver sessions from April to December, inside in poor weather and in the outdoor arena and on the farm tracks when the weather allows. Some of our carriage drivers prefer to be inside, but most enjoy outside in the fresh air and the elements, trotting along through the countryside is an exhilarating experience which is hard to replicate in any other way, other than the annual picnic of course, in Crombie Park which 11 drivers attended this year. Special thanks to Andrew Reid for towing the trailer.

This year Wendy French, Gaellain Watt, Neil Muir and Bob Whitley all passed the grade 1 carriage driving award and Alison and Joan attended the regional carriage driving day in Aberdeenshire in April.

Volunteers

Volunteers are our life blood, we could not operate without them and by way of re-payment, we not only expect them to experience every kind of weather available, work in bright sunshine, trudge through slippery muddy fields, barrow tons and tons of poo, carry out horse checks 365 days per year, step in at short notice to cover for absentees but also to attend training and development. This year's wide range of topics included Horse Psychology 1& 2, Physiotherapy, Participant Expe-

rience, Safeguarding, First Aid, Sensory Training, Falls, Fire and Faffing about and guess what, they enjoyed them all.

We continue to work with placement providers such as Project Scotland, Helm and Job Centre Plus providing opportunities for young people to develop employability skills and have once again welcomed teams of Employee Volunteering from Greggs, BT, Elanco and DWP.

This year we carried out a pilot with Monifieth High School with placements for 6 senior pupils and are delighted that 4 continued throughout their academic year and into the summer break.

Maintenance

Along with all the routine tasks, our annual plan included a replacement sand leveller, a new mounting block and the mere task of getting 60 tonnes of sand and fibres into the indoor arena, spread and levelled all without many people even noticing.

Changes

As mentioned before, Duncan left us in March for new opportunities as did Andi with her new venture, we thank them for their time with us and wish them all the best for the future.

We also lost our beloved Blue this year and welcomed Paddy McGinty to our team.

Fundraising

Our local fundraising team had another successful year with a wide range of activities including the Brae Ball, Quiz, Charity shop, Coffee morning, College meal and a team of swimmers in the Rotary swimathon

Achievements and performance

Digby Brown chose us as their charity partner

Barbara Manson, our new Regional chairperson and Lorna King regional instructor visited in June

Emma developed a Fire Safety training video which can be viewed from home

26 riders took part in the Discovery Games

Approx 46 young volunteers received Saltire Awards over the year

Lucy Pandrich won Saltire Summit Award

Around 50 young riders attended the annual Dreamnight event with over 30 Brae volunteers helping out

Katie Horne was nominated for RDA Volunteer of the year award and received an Over & Above Award

Mickey (riding and carriage driving pony) won RDA Horse of the Year Award

Kirsten Taylor gained two rosettes in the RDA Champoinships at Hartbury and thoroughly enjoyed the experience then went to the Scottish RDA Dressage Competition in Glasgow and came first in her class.

Janet Parkinson received her RDA Presidents Award from HRH Princess Royal at Kinfauns in October

Alison Doyle won DVA Trustee/Board member of the year

The Brae appeared in a short news feature by STV

Over 200 people attended the Brae Christmas Play on a cold and frosty saturday but left with warm hearts thanks to all the riders, horses, volunteers, staff and our director Wendy.

So, another interesting year at The Brae. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone that has been part of it, our supporters, our riders, our volunteers, our staff and our directors. The Brae is an amazing place and it is thanks to you all for making it so successful.

Alison Doyle
Chairperson