

The Brae

AGM 23rd September 2014

Chairman's report for year April 2013 – March 2014

Our 6th year has been a relatively steady year with continued successes.

Staffing

There have been no changes in our staff this year and our team continue to look for new ways to enhance our service. Andi achieved the RDA Coaching Qualification and Duncan completed his ACPTR course and is now qualified to practice hippotherapy techniques including Backriding.

Riders

We have provided 1,274 riding sessions and 180 carriage driving sessions this year to riders over 6 days per week. Riding offers so much to our riders, one young rider said 'I've learnt steering and trotting, riding Tyson is exciting'

Mathew's parents said 'We have seen such a change in him and this has been the only activity which has produced no stress or anxiety for him'. Mathew said 'horseriding is totally awesome!'

Another development this year has been the forming of the MS Cowboys, a group of adult riders with Multiple Sclerosis. This group, due to the support they have received from The Brae team have progressed from riding in the indoor school to rides around the farm tracks and to finish off their block managed a day pony-trekking in Blair Atholl with Andi. Pauline said 'trotting outside was like running with the wind against my face' and described lessons as 'a fun way of doing physio as you don't even realise that you are doing your exercises'.

Horses

We said Goodbye to Tyson who has moved to Cranloch Riding Centre in Elgin where he continues to help out with RDA sessions and Hello to Romany who joined us in his place.

Volunteers

We are very proud of our large band of volunteers which averages at around 150 again this year. We have a core group who have been with us from the beginning but as with all voluntary organisations, there is continuous movement in this area with regulars moving on for a variety of reasons and new people coming to join us. To ensure that all our new volunteers have all the training they need we introduced an 8 week probationary assessment this year which sounds tough but is actually a nice way to make sure that everyone is confident in their knowledge and ready to progress onto the wide range of training we provide. There have been 47 planned sessions along with many impromptu sessions as required. Sessions covered; stable management, working in the school, leading in lessons, physiotherapy in riding, the new star rating system, first aid, horse psychology, Laminitis, health & safety, Safeguarding course for instructors, Makaton and communication skills. This year the team requested a practical Makaton in the school session, Bernie the Speech & Language Therapist said 'this was the best training session I have ever taken in the whole of my career', what great feedback!

Supported volunteering placements continued with one young man building up enough confidence to become a rider. Interestingly, it is usually the other way around with riders progressing to becoming volunteers.

To try and entice some more mature people into volunteering, the FRY group was born. Fit, Retired and Young at Heart, attracted a small group with 2 completing the training programme and both staying on as volunteers. Their positive feedback of the course will help us with our next cohort.

3 volunteers attended the MADF (Making activities for Deaf people fun) in Aberdeen, bringing back ideas and suggestions to use at The Brae.

Employee Volunteering gives organisations an opportunity to demonstrate Corporate Social Responsibility and we have been very lucky to be chosen by several companies that have encouraged their staff to spend time with us carrying out tasks that require a large number of hands and lots of energy. These companies include; Novartis, Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Water and Trust Housing.

Work Placements

Our work placements continue to attract interest from organisations due to the variety of work that young people can undertake in a supportive environment. This year we have had young people from Barnardos, Job Centre Plus, Rathbone, Project Scotland and The Helm.

Maintenance

Maintenance is an ongoing activity with general repairs to fencing, doors, paths etc. Our large project this year was to upgrade the car park.

Fundraising

We have had another very successful fundraising year supported by a wide range of people and organisations.

The Rotary funded a new carriage for Boris, repairs to our larger carriage and an electric bike to accompany the team.

Nicolson's Cycle Shop donated a second electric bike

Dundee Round Table - £2,500 for wheelchair friendly Round Table

BT Employee Funding provided Horse sponsorship

A wide range of organisations including Morgan Academy, Gillies, Helix Offshore, WS Phillips, Ex-Presidents Bowling Club, Cedarlea Art Group and the Classic Car Group all supported us through a variety of events.

Andi & Jessica donned kilts and took part in the Perth Kilt run and raised over £550

Our own Fundraising team organised their usual variety of activities getting us all to join in on Quizzes, Coffee Mornings and even introduced us to the world of Swishing.

Achievements & performance

6 riders took part in the Grampian & Highland Dressage Competition in Inverurie

We hosted the equestrian element of the Discovery Games with 19 Brae riders and 8 riders from Glenfarg and Blairgowrie completing the Handy Pony course

We hosted Eric McKechnie's Effective Riding training day with 35 instructors and volunteers taking part

5 riders took part in RDA Dressage competition at Bannockburn

Lisa Hastie and Ashley Winton were presented with their Saltire Summit Awards

Claire Sutherland was invited to the Saltire Reception at Edinburgh Castle and was runner up in RDA Regional Volunteer of the year

Harry Nunn won the public vote for The Great Scot Awards Community Champion and received his award at a glitzy dinner in Glasgow where he met his hero Gordon Strachan and Judy Murray

The Volunteer Friendly Award renewal was achieved in October

Bea won Regional Volunteer of the Year Award and runner up for RDA National Volunteer of the Year

Andi and 5 volunteers attended the RDA Supra conference

Katie Malone got into last 3 of Dundee Sports Award's Young Volunteer of the Year

Shona Robinson MSP was impressed by her visit to us in March

New Databases were designed for riders and volunteers to help ease the logistical challenge of organising timetables

Facebook was developed further as an important means of communicating with volunteers

Mary and volunteers were invited to Grange Primary Assembly to hand out rosettes and medals gained by pupils at The Brae

Carrie Reid, nominated for RDA Most Improved Rider Award, said 'the benefits to my mental health are a bit harder to describe as they are pretty much invisible to other people'

In any organisation, it is very easy to get caught up in the day to day trials and tribulations and lose sight of achievements, but here at The Brae we are incredibly lucky to get such wonderful feedback from so many people. We are not just a riding for the disabled centre, we are much more than that.

We are part of their family, some of their friends, the freezing place to get wrapped up in umpteen layers in the winter and the place they have to wear hats and gloves in the summer. We are special, we change people's lives. We couldn't do that without our supporters and amazing team of staff and volunteers who go the extra distance, who give up their own time to support our riders in competitions, fun days and various fundraisers and above all else, do it with a big smile and a warm heart

Thank you to everyone, you know who you are.

Alison Doyle
Chairperson