

## Volunteering for Wenlo RDA

I first started learning to ride when I was nine years old at the Meadow School of Riding with Dawn Whitmore-Kirby as my instructor. I really loved not only to ride, but to learn how to care for the horses as well. When I turned twelve, I was able to spend all day helping out on a Saturday and learning how to lead. I felt happy to be able to give something back by helping children learn to ride as older girls had done for me when I first started. Whenever I see a smiling face after a lesson it certainly makes all of the running worth it.

Particularly, though, when it is a disabled rider as you know that their lesson will benefit them both mentally and physically even more than other riders. It is also lovely to see the progress of these riders and watch them get excited about choosing toys to drop into the bucket and scream in delight when Dawn suggests a trot. Dawn, herself, puts so much effort and patience into her work, only expecting the reward of a happy rider and their family. She is a very inspiring person and passes these ideas onto all of the other volunteers and I as well.

I have made many friends over the past two years. We share each other's interests and get on really well together. Sometimes, I feel that I get on better with my friends at the riding school than I do at school, but maybe that's because we only see each other once a week! My friends are not just human, though, because I have developed a close bond with the horses, as well. In particular, an Irish gelding named George. George can be quite particular about how you do things with him, maybe a bit more sensitive than the other horses, he's not mad or scary, just a little bit different. He is one of the main reasons why I love spending my Saturday there.

I won't lie, fitting in my homework can sometimes be a bit of a squeeze, but its worth spending my Friday night pouring over my textbook if I can get a bit of fresh air on a Saturday. I find myself looking forward to it all week because it is somewhere I feel valued and appreciated. I have responsibilities and I think that has made me a better person. There are some mornings when I wake up and just want to lie in for hours, but I know that if I get up and enjoy the day, I will feel better for it.

Being a Wenlo RDA volunteer has made a massive difference to my life and has shown me how lucky I am not to have some of the conditions that people do, but I can say thank you for that by helping the people that do. If I didn't spend my Saturday at the Meadow School of Riding, I would probably be a different person.