



BELVOIR VALE RDA

ANNUAL REPORT

2015-2016

Registered Charity No. 1162970

GROUP ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR

Riders

When Belvoir Vale Riding for the Disabled Group was launched in August 2015 there were 11 riders registered with the group supported by 16 volunteers. Over the past year Belvoir Vale provided over 580 riding sessions to more than 18 riders living locally with disabilities ranging from Physical and Sensory impairments to Intellectual and Learning Difficulties. The number of volunteers has increased to 19. The Group is very fortunate to have three specially trained and qualified RDA coaches and a very active and supportive Board of Trustees.

The participants are all Independent, drawn locally from Nottingham and surrounding villages. The majority of the sessions are held at the weekends but weekday and after school lessons are available and proved very popular over the summer. The Group is particularly proud of its philosophy to treat each rider as an individual, tailoring its support to their specific requirements hence the class numbers have been kept small. This has resulted in the need to operate a waiting list for the most popular sessions. There are currently five riders on this list.



Volunteers

The Group cannot operate without its dedicated team of volunteers of which there are currently 19, nine of whom are under 25 years of age. These volunteers come from all backgrounds and consist of the Coaches, horse leaders and side-walkers, Trustees and those that help at Special Activities such as our Summer School and at the National Championships.

Supporting our Young Volunteers to make the most of their experience is something that the group takes very seriously and is proud that during the year three have successfully completed the volunteering requirement for their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award and 2 have gained their Bronze YELA (Youth Equestrian Leaders Award). All three volunteers are now working towards their Silver levels.



Coaches



During the year Tara Senuik gained her RDA Group Coaches badge. Both Tara and Abi Walker have now enrolled on to a UKCC Level 1 course. In October, Lesley Davies gained her RDAC badge and was later assessed in February to be competent to deliver RDA Show Jumping level 1 and 2, the only group in Nottinghamshire to be accredited to do so.

During the year the Group have been keen to develop links with specialised physiotherapist professionals (Hippotherapist) to advise and help our more physically challenged riders. Nicola from Rise Hippotherapy Ltd assessed two of our riders, Olive and Scarlett, and she will continue to work with us and the children in the future so that we can maximise the therapeutic benefits of riding to them.

Ponies

At the launch, the Group was using two ponies and one horse to deliver the lessons. Two of these, Bluey and Baloo were hired from the Belle Vue Stables and Pumpkin was loaned from the Group's Chairman, Lesley Davies.

In October the Group received a very generous donation of a pony from a local family who wanted to make sure that she would go somewhere where she would be appreciated. She had taken their daughter from complete beginner to talented dressage rider. Ali (Royal Libre Gem) has proved extremely popular with the more able riders and enabled several of them to take part in the Dressage and Countryside Challenge Competitions at Regional and National level. She has adapted very well to the change of environment and is a treasured asset to the group.





In February Roma joined the team from Kesteven RDA on a long term loan basis enabling him to continue his important RDA work but retire from his more strenuous Riding School commitments. He has four regular riders and has filled an important role for our slightly older participants who have outgrown Pumpkin but who are not yet ready to move on to Baloo. He is an extremely popular and valued member of the team and the Group is very grateful to Kesteven.

The Group is conscious that there is not a suitable mount available for the more inexperienced and nervous adult riders who find that Baloo is just too tall. It is hoped that in the next year a suitable new recruit can be acquired.

The Group will continue to promote the Pony Champion Scheme whereby businesses and individuals make a monthly contribution to support the costs of the ponies. Currently two ponies, Pumpkin and Ali are supported using this scheme.

New Club House

There was great excitement in June when the commissioning and installation of a purpose built and designed Club House started - funded through a generous gift donation to the group by Dr & Mrs Davies. The build is very impressive and a much needed facility acting as a classroom for the children to learn horse care and related activities, and also provides a warm and welcoming environment for the riders and their families.

The group then successfully fund-raised to construct a disabled access to the Club House and provide a suitable external terraced area so that parents and supporters can safely view the riders during the RDA Sessions. This was made possible through the very generous donations of materials and labour from local suppliers and friends of the Group.



Events

Belvoir Vale RDA held a Christmas Fun Day in the stables and played host to the adorable cuddly pony Squirrel Nutkin. The children had the opportunity to paint and plait her mane and tail, this was followed by cakes and carols, then a surprise visit by Santa Claus himself.

The Regional Dressage competition was held in early May at Hill House Equestrian Centre near Market Rasen. Sophie and pony Ali tried really hard and came away with a red rosette. Their score was not quite high enough to qualify for the Championships but it was a brilliant first attempt at dressage.



In May six riders on Pumpkin, Ali and Roma represented Belvoir Vale RDA at the Regional Countryside Challenge Competition at Scropton Riding and Driving Centre in Derbyshire. This involves a course of obstacles which challenge the riders skills acquired in their RDA sessions - steering, balance, coordination and concentration are all put to the test.

For three of these riders this was a completely new experience having never ridden in a competition before. All the children and ponies performed amazingly well with Belvoir Vale taking the top three placings in Class 1 and 2nd and 4th place in Class 2. These fantastic results meant that Joshua, Sophie and Chellie had qualified to represent the North Midlands Region at the RDA Championships in July.

These Championships are the largest event of its kind for disabled riders bringing together riders from across the UK. This year the event was held over three days, 15th-17th July at Hartpury, Gloucestershire, with all the riders given the opportunity to ride in the Countryside Challenge class as well as an Introduction to Dressage class.

Sophie and Chellie competed on Ali on the Saturday and Joshua on Pumpkin on the Sunday. Just to be at the Championships was an achievement in itself but when Chellie won a 1st and 2nd prize, Sophie two 3rd places and Joshua 3rd and 5th - the champagne corks were popping!

These fantastic results could not have been possible without the dedicated and hard working travelling support team of grooms, coaches and supporters. Thanks must also go to the volunteers who helped look after the other ponies left at home.



Summer School

The Group recognises that not all its riders want to take part in formal competitions but may relish the opportunity to try alternative activities to their usual weekend sessions. This year four Summer School days were held on Thursdays during the school holidays which allowed the riders to come together and participate in joint activities.

These included a mini gymkhana, a musical drill ride, fun horse care sessions, a treasure hunt around the yard and art projects in the Club House all followed by coffee, juice and lots of cake.

One of these days was given over to celebrate the first year anniversary of the Group. A party was held with stalls and games on the lawn and a ribbon cutting ceremony to formally open the new Club House. This day was also used to award every rider with a personalised certificate and medal to celebrate their individual achievements throughout the year.



On the final day the Group was invited to The Group's secretary, Jane Nuthall's home. The children greatly appreciated the opportunity to ride around her fields and then enjoyed playing pirate themed games and a picnic in the lovely garden. Many thanks go to Jane and her family for their kind hospitality.

Donations and fundraising

Pony Champions.

The Group is indebted to Mrs Jill Williams and Dr and Mrs M Davies for their support of ponies Ali and Pumpkin. The Group will continue to look for other businesses and individuals to help support the costs of the other equine members of the team.

Donations - the group has been the recipient of several donations throughout the year for which they are really grateful:

Dr and Mrs Martyn Davies
Tarmac
Ms Cody Baxter-Codrington
Mrs Lynsey Jones
Mrs Kate Dawson

Fundraising

The Group was represented at the Colston Bassett Village fair in July with a promotional stand of photographs and an opportunity for visitors to partake in the 'Malteser Challenge'. The day was a great way to engage with families and raise the profile within the local community.

Plans for next year

A residential Riding Holiday has been booked for next August at the Clwyd Special Riding Centre. The group plans to take 6 children accompanied by a parent/carer and a team of volunteers to the purpose built centre so they can experience a wide range of horse based activities.

For those of our riders where a residential holiday is not appropriate we shall be running an 'Away Day' experience at another equestrian centre a little closer to home.