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# CanTRA Caller

The Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association | L'Association Canadienne d'Équitation Thérapeutique

Registered Canadian Charity # 11883 6543 RR0001

## President's Message

As we welcome in 2021, we must face it with renewed energy and a new commitment to our work of facilitating that wonderful communion between horse and human. Many who depend on us for this are missing those soft fuzzy muzzles, warm knowing eyes and the 'therapy' that they give. Somehow, we must return to programming as best we can in the face of this raging global pandemic.

Right now, you may find your board of directors to be skeptical about how the current patchy revenues will match up to meet the ever-present expenses of the horse world. I urge all of you to be patient and be brave facing your board, and to share your passionate view as they may not understand the joy and achievement you see as each participant learns and grows, physically and emotionally. Ask them to come see for themselves when you resume, masked and physically-distanced of course. They will soon be more understanding of your program's importance to the community.

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Even so, your board will still be looking for answers to their hard questions. Make the commitment to get your team together on a virtual platform regularly to attend CanTRA webinars and trainings, and to share ideas about how revenues can be generated and expenses can be paid, perhaps with in-kind donations. A local farmer might be happy to donate some round bales to your herd. Or a local lumber mill might donate a truckload of shavings. You must be brave and ask, and explore new programs

to source revenues. Possibilities like a Frontline Heroes Program to put your horses to work helping our able-bodied but weary healthcare workers. They will be happy to help pay the expenses in exchange for an hour of peace and quiet, being led around, perhaps with their eyes closed, feeling the horse's gentle walking rhythm and experiencing the soothing aromas of the horse farm. Your staff can make this happen, safely and with little assistance.

Explore the idea of training members of the participant's 'family bubble' to act as their volunteers. You might also take this downtime to explore adding a CanTRA EFW Program or look at what it would take to partner with a therapist to provide hippotherapy in your community. Dreaming and planning now can boost programming and revenues later. Opportunities abound if we remain open to new ideas.

And more exciting news. We, at CanTRA, are working hard to bring you virtual services, such as Virtual Centre Accreditation, if everything falls into place as we hope. Stay tuned for updates on these important programs. We feel your pain and promise to respond.

Please hang in there. Don't let go. Through it all, stay strong, stay calm and CanTRA on.

**JoAnn Thompson Franklin** PT



### CanTRA Centres operating during COVID-19

Each provincial and territorial government in Canada has legal requirements and guidelines for their province and territory regarding COVID-19. All CanTRA members and all CanTRA Centres are advised to proceed in accordance with the laws and guidelines of the province or territory in which they are located. As the laws and guidelines differ across Canada, it is not possible for CanTRA to have a policy that covers all of Canada.

# Valley Therapeutic Equestrian Association

## Innovative Front Line Heroes Program

Throughout Canada, therapeutic riding centres have been struggling to find ways to maintain their programs and provide vital services to their clients in the face of the multitude of challenges presented by COVID-19. As provinces undertake their phased approach to reopening and finding ways to cope with the pandemic, so too have therapeutic riding centres.

Valley Therapeutic Equestrian Association in Langley, BC, created the very innovative Front Line Heroes Program, which has been an inspiration to the therapeutic riding community nationwide. This recreational therapeutic equine experience aims to provide relief to front line workers from the mental stress and anxiety experienced working on the front lines of the pandemic. These equine-assisted activities can play a significant role in alleviating stress, anxiety and depression relating to trauma. The one-hour session with one of the therapy horses is run under the guidance of a CanTRA certified instructor and a mental health professional who work together on stress and anxiety reduction strategies using breathing and mindfulness techniques as well as stretching exercises to release tension. Staff and participants are taking measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 using social distancing, face masks and shields along with frequent hand washing and sanitizing.

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In tandem with the Front Line Heroes Program, Valley launched a fundraising program that provides the opportunity for members of the public to sponsor a Front line Hero for a Recreational Therapeutic Equine Experience at the cost of \$60. This fundraiser also provides a way to make a session available to those who may not be able to afford one. To date more than 50 sessions have been donated to the program.

Valley Therapeutic Equestrian Association was recently nominated for the Langley Chamber of Commerce Excellence Awards in the category of Outstanding Support. This award recognizes an organization or business that has shown exemplary responses to the COVID-19 crisis to ensure the well-being of their employees, customers and community. Valley continues to develop programs in the mental health area to help others in the community who find themselves on the front lines of the fight against the burgeoning mental health crisis.

Photo: Mike Bradley.



Photo: Charles Zuckerman and Zenna Wong of Humans of Support

**Quote from Janet – BC health worker about the Frontline Heroes Program and Rosie the horse.**

**“The program put on by Valley was a light in the darkness. It was a place I could forget the day-to-day stressors at work, to talk about my feelings, to put behind me the worry and fear. The bond I felt with Rosie lifted my spirits and brought a joy that I hadn’t felt in a long time. Somehow she just knew that I was struggling – she was peaceful and calm, and that’s what my soul needed.”**



# Rainbow Riders in Newfoundland

## Making Adaptations for COVID - 19

**F**or Rainbow Riders in St. John's NL, the craziness of 2020 didn't start with COVID-19. For us, only days into 2020, it began with what will forever be known as "Snowmageddon", a series of intense and relentless snow storms that quite literally shut down the city like nothing we had ever seen. Several staff were bunked at the barn 24-7 for five straight days and the clearing of paddocks and property required countless hours from staff and volunteers. Lining up outside grocery stores was a thing here a few months before COVID-19 had even made itself known. It was a tough time that cancelled programming, but nothing really prepared us for the shutdown to our program that COVID-19 caused on March 14.

Like most, our programs ground to a swift halt, volunteers were disallowed onsite and staff were furloughed indefinitely. We were extremely

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fortunate that fantastic barn and program staff teamed together to provide care to the horses as volunteers. In Newfoundland, being an island finally worked

to our advantage: cases of positive COVID-19 have stayed in the single digits for most of the last six months. We adapted our facility to include transmission prevention protocols that included masks, gloves, hand sanitizing stations, distance decals on floors, signage on walls and increased cleaning services.

Once businesses and organizations could reopen with parameters in keeping with the "new normal", we began to look ahead to restarting programming. Parents and caregivers were extremely grateful we were again offering programming. While the lockdown was difficult for everyone, our special needs community was particularly impacted. It was clear they had experienced physical and emotional deterioration and many of their other go-to recreational and therapeutic activities were still yet to resume.

Even though the provincial health authority had given summer camps the go-ahead, we felt this would not be our safest option. We saw this as an opportunity to try a completely different summer framework. We decided to offer a longer hybrid program that would give our riders an unmounted horsemanship component at the beginning and end of their riding lesson. We also decided to open up any extra spaces to non-diagnosed participants for the



*Olivia Menecola (rider) with Katie and Sofie Menchenton (side walkers) and Morgan Janes (leader).*

Photo by Erin O'Reilly



first time. With additional experienced summer staff hired thanks to Canada Summer Jobs, we were able to deliver one-to-one programming for the unmounted portion in the safest way possible. Using PPE and cleaning and distancing protocols, the staff ran the hybrid program from 9 to 10:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. to noon with four participants per timeframe delivered at our two cross tie areas and the two wash bay areas. In the afternoon we offered only private or semi-private lessons.

We were not prepared for the overwhelming uptake of the program and we maxed out our registration at 67 participants. This was the maximum number of participants Rainbow Riders had ever registered in its 30-year history. I am so proud of our staff for the quality

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of the programming and we were very pleased to hear extremely positive feedback from riders, parents and caregivers. On the heels of our busiest summer, our early fall semester saw 68 registered. Every single participant from summer re-registered. We hope things will continue to stay safe here in Newfoundland (and everywhere!) and

we can build on the demand and appreciation we felt for our therapeutic riding program over the summer of 2020. Sometimes circumstances force you to adapt for the better!



Nathan Chaulk rides Arwen (owned by Jayne Carter). Support crew (L-R) Erin O'Reilly (instructor), Emily MacGregor (leader), Madison James (side walker), Jaiden Green (side walker). Photo by Charlotte Ackerman.



2020 Therapy Horse of the Year - Rosie from Valley Therapeutic Equestrian Association in Langley BC showing off her blanket which was sponsored by Manning Equine Vet Services.

Photo courtesy of Valley Therapeutic Equestrian Association

# Para-Dressage Webinars

Clive Milkins has been the Para-Dressage high performance program technical leader for Equestrian Canada since 2017. Throughout 2020, Clive was in the UK during various stages of lockdown due to COVID-19 and spent time creating valuable Para-Dressage Webinars for Equestrian Canada covering many of the fundamental topics related to para-dressage.

These Para-Dressage Webinars are posted on the EC YouTube Channel and are available for viewing free of charge. Therapeutic Riding Programs are often where those with disabilities begin their riding careers. It is therefore excellent if CanTRA Members can gain more understanding of the progression from therapeutic riding to para-dressage.

## Here are the links for connecting to the Para-Dressage Webinars.

[Para-Dressage Equine Paces](#)

[Para-Dressage Webinar: Human Impairments and Equine Paces](#)

[Para-Dressage Webinar: Para-Dressage Classification](#)

[Webinar: Para-Dressage Adaptive Equipment](#)

[Para-Dressage Webinar: Para-Dressage Video Competition Series](#)

[Para-Dressage Webinar: The Power of Para-Dressage](#)

*Laura Hall with Clive Milkins in Tyron, North Carolina.  
Photo by Jamie-Ann Goodfellow*



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## Donating the Easy Way!

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Go the CanadaHelps way! [www.canadahelps.org](http://www.canadahelps.org) Type in "Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association" in the "I want to give to" space. Your tax-deductible donation will support children and adults with disabilities right across the country!



## Mission Statement

The Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association - promoting excellence throughout Canada in therapeutic riding and equine-assisted therapies through certification, accreditation and education.