

**LITTLE BITS**  
THERAPEUTIC RIDING ASSOCIATION  
*for persons with disabilities*

[info@littlebits.ca](mailto:info@littlebits.ca)

[www.littlebits.ca](http://www.littlebits.ca)

June 2013

## Snowball wins CanTRA Therapy Horse of the Year



**Snowball**  
1975 - 2013

We are so saddened that Snowball, our CanTRA Therapy Horse of the Year, passed away on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013 after a sudden bout of colic.

### *Excerpts from Snowball's Nomination Documents*

*by Linda Rault*

Little Bits is so proud to nominate Snowball for the CanTRA Therapy Horse of the Year Award for 2013! She is a lot like the "Eveready Bunny" as she just keeps on going and she does it with such a happy spirit. Though some may find it odd that she is still working at 38, she has never shown any desire to stop. All of the lesson horses at Whitemud Equine Learning Centre are very well cared for with closely monitored working hours, great veterinary attention, chiropractic and massage therapies, and periodic weeks off throughout the year.

If Snowball does decide she has had enough, she will have a home here for the rest of her life as she is always happy to come inside to her stall for the night ... every night. With just her stall guard up, you are sure to see her standing with her head in the alley looking for a friend to stop and give her a pat.

Snowball is one of those truly special lesson horses that we are blessed to have in our lives, and to share with all those who have needed and who still need her assistance.

Snowball, a white Arab cross, was born in 1975. She was purchased by a group from the Board of Directors and given back to the Whitemud facility in 1999. To this day, Snowball does 6 hours per week with Little Bits and 6 hours as a beginner lesson pony. She retired from jumping in 2006. Snowball rarely misses a day of work due to sickness or lameness.

Words used to describe Snowball are caring, attentive, polite, patient, versatile, trusting, kind, and pizzazz! She is truly worth more than her weight in gold and we will never be able to replace her.

Snowball is certainly going to be remembered as a superstar by everyone who knew her. -- *Linda Rault*

*From Ainsley:*

I like to ride Snowball.  
I like Snowball she is nice.  
Nice girl.  
I love you Snowball.

Si-Chih was extremely shy when he started at Little Bits and he was frightened of animals. He did get on the first time he attended, and he has since blossomed both physically and with his personality. This is in large part due to his confidence in Snowball and his volunteer partner Bernice.

*From Ainsley's Mom:*

I remember when Ainsley wanted to ride a "white" horse. She was given Snowball, and they were a great match. Ainsley loves Snowball, and would still be happy to ride her, but she has grown too big for her. It has been amazing watching Ainsley learn to ride independently on Snowball. I think Snowball knew how much Ainsley loved her, as she listened so well to Ainsley. She also learned to trot independently on Snowball, and the last session Ainsley was with Snowball she started to get the feeling of cantering. It is amazing to sit back and watch a big smile come across Ainsley's face as she learned new things, always giving Snowball and "good job" pat once they completed their turn. Ainsley always asked if she could take Snowball to the barn, so she could take off her saddle and brush her. I think this is very important to Ainsley and to Snowball, that she also learned to look after Snowball.

*From Si-Chih's father:*

"Snowball is the second horse my son rode in past two years. During these years, he somehow felt more comfortable when he was with Snowball and not to mention that we feel his range of leg movement and stiffness due to cerebral palsy are improved a lot. From my observations, I think it was due to several natures of Snowball. Snowball shows a good temper and easy going. Furthermore, Snowball seems aware what is she doing and really does a good job. Because of this, my son loves to come to these lessons. With regarding these natures, I believe Snowball definitely is the therapeutic horse of year, at least, she is in my heart." -- *Chih-Yuan (Richard) Tseng*

*From an able bodied rider:*

The moment I saw Snowball, I knew she was my dream white pony. Snowball and I first met when I was approximately 6 years old, and she was the one and only pony I ever wanted to ride. Snowball has to be one of the most willing, caring, patient, and loving horse I have ever met. I learned the majority of my basic riding skills on Snowball, and am so thankful that it was her that taught me because she made me very trustworthy of horses and confident. I have so many fond memories of Snowball. One that always comes to mind is when I was 7 years old, riding her in the indoor arena with my mother leading me around at the trot. I had the biggest smile on my face and couldn't stop giggling. I would beg my mom to keep taking me for more trots around the arena, which she was not a fan of running, especially in a sand arena. Life was perfect in that moment. With a smooth trot and rocking horse canter, there is no better horse to learn all your basic skills on. I am now 19 years old and have been showing this past summer. I always remember what Snowball did for me and am forever thankful for her. She will always be my dream white pony. -- *Sally Robertson.*



Little Bits Volunteer Orientation - Spring 2013

Our wonderful volunteers help support Little Bits in many ways, including leading and side-walking our fantastic horses as well as helping in the barn, getting the horses ready for our riders. Some of them work two or three classes and others do a lot in the background. Little Bits is successful because of our dedicated volunteers!

## Little Bits Appreciation BBQ for our Volunteers



Monday, June 17<sup>th</sup>

5:00 - 8:00 pm

Hawrelak Park

Site #1

Enjoy chatting  
with your fellow  
volunteers!



Have some  
fun  
playing games!

**\*\*\*\*\* Western Saddle Draw \*\*\*\*\***

**Sunday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Well here it is, the best chance you'll ever have to win a western saddle with all the bells and whistles! This package includes the saddle (seat is 15 inches), full bridle, breast collar, girth and deluxe saddle pad.

Tickets are only \$20.00 each and they are going fast! There were only 200 printed, so pretty good odds! You can get these tickets on Sundays, Tuesdays or Wednesdays from any of the instructors, Linda or Mari.

If you do want to get one and are afraid we may just run out, call us and leave a message at 780-476-1233 or email us at [volunteers@littlebits.ca](mailto:volunteers@littlebits.ca) OR at [info@littlebits.ca](mailto:info@littlebits.ca)



## Little Bits Classic Breakfast Fundraiser

The inaugural Little Bits Classic Breakfast fundraiser was held on Sunday, May 26<sup>th</sup> in conjunction with the Edmonton Classic Horse Show that was put on by the Edmonton Hunter Jumper Association (EHJA).

Our involvement was facilitated through the efforts of Devon Craig from the EHJA, and we are very grateful to her for all of her work with us. She was able to obtain three very generous sponsors who helped tremendously with our expenses: C.W.Carry Lmt. Steel Service Centre and Structural Steel Fabricator; Nancy Sanbourn Royal Lepage Noralta; and Horselife Saddlery and Riding Apparel.

Flo Lanctot and Sharon Sutherby (LBTRA parents) took charge of the breakfast and did a fabulous job of putting on a delicious pancake and sausage meal for all who attended. The coffee for our event was donated by Tim Hortons, Store #3336. With the help of two other Little Bits parents and three volunteers from the EHJA, the breakfast ran smoothly and we were very pleased with the results. We would also like to thank the kitchen at Villa Caritas, Chow Turner for the use of a cube van, and our very dedicated parents for selling tickets and attending the breakfast themselves.

Including ticket sales, we were able to clear about \$4500 after expenses. This includes a generous donation of \$2000.00 from the Albert Trail Riding Association (ATRA) and some private donations.

The day was sunny and warm and the site was beautiful with stunning displays of the jumping talents of the horses and riders who were competing in the Edmonton Classic.

We will continue to foster this partnership with EHJA to make the breakfast even more successful next year.

# My Road to Volunteering

*by Roy Fisher*



I got to Little Bits via the long route which didn't seem to have LBTRA as a destination. I've been a railway station agent, a soldier in the Canadian Army, a soldier in the U.S. Army, a Military Policeman, a Veteran of Foreign Wars, a programmer/analyst, an engineering technologist, and a security specialist. Fishing, hunting, sailing, and woodworking are fine pastimes that I enjoy between retirements. So how did I get to Little Bits? My wife Louise saw a short article in the Edmonton Journal which got her particularly excited, especially since they were looking for volunteers to help with kids and horses. We were hooked after attending the volunteer introductory session.

When we started in 2007 we came one day a week for three hours. As the weeks continued it was evident that there were time slots where there was a shortage of volunteers, so I would come in on days where the need was greatest which often wound up to be three days a week. Like most addictions, it sneaks up on you.

The question is “what keeps me coming back to the programme”? The rhetorical question would be “what's not to like”? It's the dedicated and enthusiastic staff members that are fun to work with. It's the riders and parents that need the services. It's the rider's visible progress in the programme. It's the horses that perform so well. It's all in the company of great volunteers that I've met.

To pick one favourite moment out of many is quite a task but I'll pick the one where over the years I've seen a rider's progress from requiring supports and two side walkers to unsupported riding. That wasn't a moment but it is rewarding.

My favourite horse would have to be Max, who taught me all I know. You see, when I came to Little Bits I knew nothing about horses. This became evident on the first day when I saw Ros working on a horse's feet. I said aloud “wow, you even do their nails?” Ros stood up to her full height and looked heavenward. She said “Thank you Lord, you've brought me someone that I don't have to retrain”. When it was time to take the horses into the arena, I was given Max to lead. You've all heard of the Horse Whisperer of course. Well, Max was a horse and he whispered “Look, I know what to do. All you have to do is hang-on to the lead and follow me as we do the routines”. That day went well as I followed Max wherever he went. The following week he suggested that I would blend in better if I wore a denim jacket. I was beginning to look like I belonged. I told Max that everyone could still see I was a tenderfoot. Max whispered “go to the Work Warehouse and get a pair of tan work gloves to stick in your back pocket. And get some work boots. The street oxfords are a dead giveaway”.

That's my story, and I'm sticking to it.

Walk on, Max.

## **Volunteer Profile – Claire Sandercock**

*by M. Lam and Sarah Pemberton*

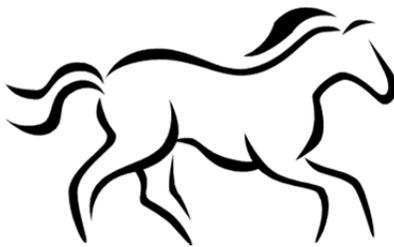
If you are ever looking for Claire Sandercock, all you have to do is go to where the horses are getting ready for their riders. Claire is quiet but quick to be there when something needs to be done. She first started to volunteer with Little Bits in the fall of 2012; with her busy schedule, once a week worked out great. Being home-schooled has allowed Claire to do Light Horse 4-H; her love of horses has brought her to the Little Bits Program. Future dreams are to one day attend Olds College, own her own horse and buy a farm. Claire is also a very talented and growing artist.

Claire heard about the Little Bits program through a 4-H friend who was volunteering at the time. After seeing the sign on Fox Drive, she knew this would be the perfect place to get her required 80 volunteer hours in order to attend Olds College. One of her favourite moments is seeing the riders' joyful expressions, because they seem to enjoy riding as much as she does! Her favourite horses are Mr. Dee because he has a lot of "go" and is very affectionate and Ali-Cat because she has so much character and is very nice to work with.

Claire enjoys the long lasting friendships she has developed with others at Little Bits. She also enjoys the snacks that the parents provide for the volunteers and buying a t-shirt or hoodie to help support the program!

## **Fall 2013 Volunteer Orientation**

**Hands-on training  
with the horses**



**Information  
booklets**

**Wednesday, August 28<sup>th</sup>**

**7:00 – 9:00 pm**

**Whitemud Equine Learning Centre**

**Come and learn all about the Little Bits Program  
and ask any questions you might have!**

## Horseback Riding is Fun!

### But Is It Good for Children with Autism?

by Cecilia Llambias

*Cecilia Llambias, a graduate student from the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine at the University of Alberta, carried out a study that investigated the benefits of hippotherapy (therapy with horses) for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).*

The use of animals to promote health began long ago, but in the last decades there has been an increased interest in therapies assisted by animals. It seems that incorporating animals into therapy sessions is a powerful tool, especially for children. Children have an innate attraction to animals. Curiosity, surprise and joy are common emotions seen in the children participating in therapies with animals, but other benefits have also been noticed in psychological, sensory, motor, communication and social functioning. However, very little research has been done to systematically investigate these benefits.



Animal-assisted therapy, including therapies with horses, belongs to the realm of Complementary or Alternative Medicine. The more well-known therapies with horses are *therapeutic riding* and *hippotherapy*. Therapeutic riding is a group approach to riding lessons for people with disabilities. Hippotherapy is a little different. According to the American Hippotherapy Association, hippotherapy is a physical, occupational and speech therapy treatment strategy that utilizes the horse and its environment to improve the person's skills. It is delivered one-on-one, and is a part of an integrated treatment program. Research about hippotherapy for children with ASD is just emerging, and thanks to the support of ASEA (*Autism Society of Edmonton Area*), I conducted a new study that will contribute to what we know about the benefits of hippotherapy for children with ASD.



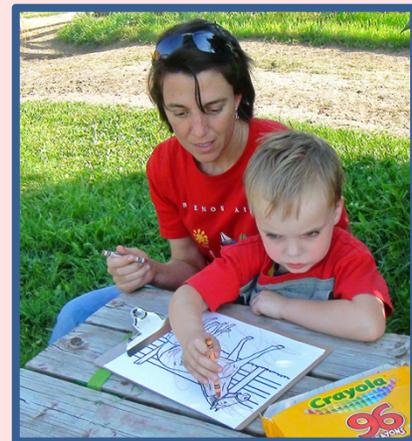
Hippotherapy may help children with ASD in at least four ways. First, children with ASD often focus on apparently non-purposeful (non-meaningful) activities such as repetitive and stereotyped behaviours. These behaviours very often interfere with their engagement and motivation for purposeful activities, which interrupts participation in activities that are essential to development. Therefore, one goal of therapy is to help the children to change the focus from their repetitive behaviours to activities that are more meaningful. By providing activities that are powerfully attractive, therapists facilitate this children's change of focus. Moreover, if the activities are so attractive that they capture the children's attention for long periods of times, it allows learning of new skills. Children's attraction to animals is of great help in this regard. Second, children with ASD often have very limited and restrictive interests. In therapies with animals, the variety and novelty of stimuli and activities in which they can be involved (such as saddling, grooming or riding) attract the children and increase their motivation to participate in purposeful activities. Motivation consists of the things that one personally likes to do because they are interesting and satisfying in and of themselves. Third, some studies also suggest that activities that involve physical demands in natural environments (similar to the outdoor fields or riding stables where hippotherapy is conducted) help to increase motivation by having a vitalizing effect. In addition, while the children are engaged in these attractive activities, they also practice a wide range of fine and gross motor, sensory, social and communication skills. Finally, children with ASD also have difficulties in social interaction and communication, both of which are also improved by these therapies. Animals can elicit communication from children, and this is especially important for

children with ASD. In fact, some authors indicate that many children get along better with animals than with people. Temple Grandin suggests that, for people with ASD, the animals' simple nonverbal communication system makes it easier to understand than more complex human communication.

But what is so special about horses? Horses can provide many benefits for children with ASD. In the first place, the size of horses makes it possible for children to ride them, and riding horses increases muscle strength and balance. However, there are also benefits in other areas, such as attention and emotion. The continuous and repetitive sensory and motor stimuli that the children receive while riding help them to organize their responses to a particular activity, resulting in an increase of focus. For example, children's attention and engagement in steering the horse has been known to rapidly improve after a few minutes of riding. This is believed to be due to the vestibular (movements of the head in different directions) and proprioceptive (the sensory-muscle information that results from activities such as posting trot) stimulation that the rider receives while riding. These benefits are not seen in other types of therapies with animals such as dogs, although therapies with other animals might offer other benefits. Another important aspect of riding a big animal is the psychological benefit. It is speculated that a new perspective of life and new emotions emerge when children can see the world from the back of a horse. Furthermore, when they are obeyed by the horse with just a little movement of a rein, the children feel powerful. These feelings of self-confidence and enhanced self-esteem may produce psychological benefits.

The present research project was carried out with the support of Little Bits Therapeutic Riding Association and Whitemud Equine Learning Center Association (WELCA). The research was conducted in the facilities of the Association, located in Edmonton river valley. Eight children with ASD, averaging five years of age, participated in the study. The study began in July 2012 at the University of Alberta, where the children had some free play sessions so we could get to know them. Next, children started hippotherapy, one hour per week for ten weeks. The children learned riding skills and horse care such as grooming and saddling. All the sessions were videotaped and coded by raters who were trained to notice behaviours such as intentional communications and

expressions of motivation. Parents' commitment to the study was remarkable, with no absences. Also invaluable was the help and support of Little Bits and their many wonderful volunteers. In addition, parents and teachers completed questionnaires, and parents also kept a journal to track changes in the selected child's outcomes after the sessions. Significant changes in motivation levels were observed over the period of the study, with an increased interest in participation and initiating activities. Parents and teachers noticed effects at home and school. We did not find results in intentional communication during the therapy itself, but changes were seen after the therapy at home and school. In fact, 5 of the 8 mothers reported an increase in the number of words, length of sentences and initiation of communication immediately after the therapy and the following day. Teachers at school also reported similar changes. These results indicate that the children's motivation may be positively influenced by hippotherapy. Furthermore, communication effects may be delayed and only evident after the hippotherapy intervention, rather than during intervention. However, this requires further exploration.



In conclusion, there are many options for parents who are looking for interventions for children with ASD. Hippotherapy may help children to improve in several important developmental areas, while at the same time allowing them to enjoy the experience of being outdoors and on a horse. This study addressed the effects of this alternative intervention on areas that are important in the life of the children, allowing us to further understand the underlying theoretical concepts. It is important that the benefits and effects of this intervention are clearly understood so families can make informed decisions when choosing from the options available.



# Daisy Day at the Canadian Derby



Saturday, August 17, 2013

9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Northlands Spectrum

**Come and sell daisies to the public!**

30 workers needed (earn PSF service hours)

9:00 am to 1:00 pm

10:00 am to 2:00 pm

11:00 am to 3:00 pm

(Shifts will be assigned)

*This position involves enthusiastic selling, handling money and making change.*

*Workers must be willing and able to perform these tasks in order to receive credit for hours.*

*Please dress for the weather as you may be outdoors for much of the time.*



*No jeans or t-shirts; please wear office attire.*



Wheelchair accessible; parking and refreshments available.

## 2013 Little Bits Sponsors and Donors

Alberta Mounted Shooters Association

Alberta Provincial Gymkhana Association

Alberta Trail Riders Association

ATCO EPIC Campaign

ATCO I Tek

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Steve and Peggy Remus and Melanie Moore in memory of Doreen Kirk

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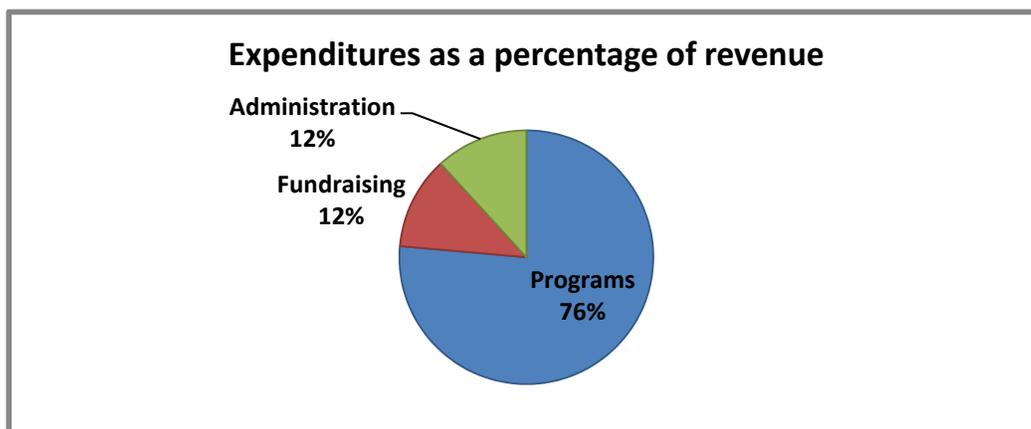
Nancy Sanbourn Royal Lepage Noralta

Pemberton Family

Team Telus Dollars for Doers

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# Donation Form



Please fill in the following form and enclose it with your donation to:

**Little Bits Therapeutic Riding Association**  
**Box 29016 Lendrum P.O.**  
**Edmonton, AB T6H 5Z6**

**Phone: 780-476-1233 Fax: 780-476-7252 E-mail: info@littlebits.ca**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

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Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please visit [www.littlebits.ca](http://www.littlebits.ca) to make a donation online through [CanadaHelps.org](http://CanadaHelps.org)

YES! I would like to help make a wish come true!  
I would like to donate: \$\_\_\_\_\_

I would prefer my contribution to be used:

- I want to sponsor a rider
- Where it is needed most
- Cheque enclosed       Cash enclosed
- I would like a tax receipt
- I do not want a tax receipt

*Please make cheques payable to:  
Little Bits Therapeutic Riding Association*

Charitable Registration #11902-1277 RR0001  
Tax receipts available for donations over \$20