

RIDING FOR THE DISABLED (JERSEY GROUP) December 2013 Newsletter

Riding for the Disabled, Jersey Group has continued to enjoy holding our rides at Le Claire Stables in St John during 2013 for both adult and children with learning difficulties and physical disabilities. As well as our usual rides held every weekday afternoon during term time we have introduced a new ride on a Wednesday for young riders from Rouge Bouillon School; this is held after the usual Mont a l'Abbe ride. Kelly Symonds, the Wednesday instructor, kindly agreed to take a double ride in the afternoon and the volunteers all agreed to stay on and help for the extra hour, as well as the parents of the children coming to help. Everyone is enjoying the experience and the children are coming on extremely well after a few weeks.

The new waiting room refurbished by the team by RBSI last year has been a godsend keeping our waiting riders and their carers warm and dry during the early part of the year when the weather was challenging. During the year this has been developed further using the remaining funds raised by RBSI to have special hat 'pigeon hole' shelving which keep the hats in size order and assists volunteers greatly when getting the hats ready for the riders. There are also storage boxes and a white board for instructors to use for planning their rides. We have been very well supported from RBSI again this year when a team assisted in replacing and staining a large number of kicking boards in the sand school which ensures that the stringent Health and Safety requirements for RDA are met.

A new large mounting block was purchased using a £500 donation from one of the JCG volunteers, Zoe Hubbard, given to her as Lions Ambassador for Jersey and this has made mounting riders who need more than one helper very much easier and safer for all concerned. RDA Jersey were very grateful to Profreight who transported this large item over to Jersey free of charge.

Lady McColl made a second visit to the group to watch the Friday ride at the end of the Summer Term and was able to meet both the riders, their support staff from Bel Royal School and parents. She and her husband, the Lt Governor of Jersey watched the riders take Grade 2 riding and stable management proficiency tests, passing with flying colours, and their certificates were presented by Lady McColl. During the year we have had many riders attaining their Grade 1 and Grade 2 riding and stable management and it is noticeable how the proficiency in all the rides has improved. It is just a delight to watch riders improving, whether achieving a rising trot for the first time or managing to ride without being on the leading rein; the smiles on the faces say it all.

Becky Monk, our RDA County Instructor, visited in March to meet Lizzie Bois, a horsewoman with a wealth of experience and expertise, who had offered to train as an RDA instructor to replace Judy Howard (Monday Instructor) who had retired and returned to the UK. Lizzie has been helping Lucy with the adult ride on a Monday and following Becky's final visit in June, Lizzie has taken over the Monday session. All the instructors continue to be assessed on a regular basis by RDA National instructors and a number of volunteers have also completed First Aid courses run by St. John's Ambulance.

We have been very fortunate this year to be invited to be the main charity to fund raise at one of the race meetings at Les Landes during the summer and thanks to the Jersey Rugby Club who also allowed a collected during their pre season match against Leicester. Support and help come from all areas of Jersey we must thank the Catholic Women's League for holding a very successful Bingo Evening, the Lady Captain of La Moye Golf Club, Ladies Section, for nominating RDA Jersey as her charity of the year and the Lions Club of Jersey for choosing RDA Jersey as one of the beneficiaries of the 2013 Swimathon. Thank to all our supporters - whether you have dressed down for RDA, allowed people to visit your garden, baked cakes - we are very grateful indeed.

Of course all this work cannot be done without our volunteers - all unpaid - and we have had a number of new and valued helpers join us this year. They cheerfully turn up week on week helping in all ways but the more volunteers, we have the more rides we can provide, so please mention our work to any potential helpers.

Wishing all our supporters a wonderful Christmas - and if you visit the St Peter's Christmas Tree Festival please look out for the RDA tree adorned with the happy faces of our riders.