



NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

AUGUST 2011

A Publication from RDA Australia Ltd

We have another big issue this month with stories from all over Australia about celebrations that took place for RDA Awareness Week!

For news, updates and chat to other RDA folk, check out RDAA on Facebook!

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Riding-for-the-Disabled-Association-of-Australia-RDAA/135449168732>

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The mention of change to entrenched culture, particularly for the older generation, will often cause a backlash against the proponents, but progress in our society is about change, and it happens regardless. The younger generation will embrace the evolution with ease.

RDA Australia needs to look at a different membership structure, one that invites people to be a part of this great Organisation on a broader scale. Recently we have had interest from international bodies to combine with Australia in a way that benefits all. Consider the advantages of using the best practices from different parts of the world to raise the standard of equestrian programmes to people with disabilities. As well as getting input from outside we can promote and offer our ideas to less developed countries where educational material in coaching and management are not available. These ideas will be discussed during the coming months and at the December Strategic planning meeting.

At the beginning of August (the official birthday for most horses in Australia), RDA Members were in the middle of Awareness Week, promoting their activities with displays and demonstrations. I attended the RDA WA Open Day at Brigadoon Equestrian Centre and watched a polished performance of Vaulting, enthusiastic volunteers doing sausage sizzles and the like, and pony and carriage rides being offered to the public. Later in the day, RDAA held a concert at the Kalamunda Performing Arts Centre. These functions, along with others being held across the country, are a wonderful way of showcasing our Organisation to the public, and the feedback is always encouraging.

I would like to invite more members of the public to be a part of RDA, offer expertise and experience,

whatever that may be, because I know you have many abilities. For those who are willing to offer financial support, note that you will be doing something that a lot cannot do, and finance is essential to develop and continue to run the programmes which benefit people with disabilities. Contact your local, State, or the National body, and your interest will be very welcome.

Ross Goulden - Chairman

EXECUTIVE OFFICER REPORT

The RDA Office is preparing this month for the annual audit in preparation for the AGM on 4 December 2011. In the next 6 months, our major national events will be happening and we hope that all States and Centres will get on board with the National Volunteer Awards and National Video Dressage Competition. There are some great prizes and awards this year, thanks to Wintec.

In this issue of Spotlight, we have introduced the RDA Office staff so that you can put faces to the voices over the phone. There is at least one staff member in the office 5 days a week now and we are pleased to report that our dependence on the answering machine has reduced. Our staff have been working hard to put the office in order ready for lots of visitors next month, which include Vice President, Judith Van Unen, Australian Sports Commission consultant, Amanda Beehag, and Peter Nicholson from Jurox Pharmaceuticals (who is talking to RDA about future sponsorship).

It is also great to see a lovely story from Jane Danzi in this month's Spotlight. Hearing about the difficulties and successes from RDA riders always helps us to remember what RDA is all about. Thank you, Jane, for sharing your story with us.

Karen Aspery - National Executive Officer

COACHING REPORT

My name is Sharon Nichols and since 20 June this year I have had the honor of being the National Coaching Coordinator. Just to give you some background history, I have been a Level 1 Coach in SA for nearly 8 years and am currently doing my Level 2 qualification.

I would like everyone to feel free to contact me with whatever query they have that their State Office cannot provide. My aim is to provide a service to every coach and whip in conjunction with their State body to help make their time with RDA a pleasant and fulfilling experience.

New Coach Training Syllabus

We are pleased to announce that in July we received official notification from the Australian Sports Commission that the OTC and Level 1 Coaching syllabus for Riding, Carriage Driving and Vaulting has been accepted. Colourful new covers have been designed for the workbooks and the process to obtain quotes for printing will start soon.

Vaulting Workshop

Karen Aspery and I will be launching the new Level 1 Vaulting syllabus at the **Vaulting Workshop (1-2 October)** at Newington House and Bellarine Horse Riding and Equine Training Centre on Bellarine Peninsula, Victoria. Please contact admin@rdav.asn.au for more information or coaching@rda.org.au for a copy of the new syllabus to become familiar with its content prior to the clinic.

Special Olympics

Following the success of RDA as an exhibition sport in the Special Olympics National Games held in SA last year, WA has invited SA to participate in an Invitational Games. The competition will be held over the weekend of **15-16 October 2011** at the WA Equestrian Centre. The program will include English Equitation, Prix Caprilli, Western Trails and Texas Barrel Race.

National Dressage Championships

The National Dressage Video Championships are on again this year with just over a month before entries close. We hope to get lots of entries, as there are great prizes generously donated by Wintec. Be in it to win it! RDAA is hoping that next year we will run a live National Dressage Competition and possibly include other RDA disciplines, which will be exciting!

Sharon Nichols - National Coaching Coordinator

Sharon has also shared a story from the Horse's Birthday Celebrations at RDA Victor Harbor, SA.

When it was the horse's birthday, I came up with the brilliant idea to have a game for my riders centred around that theme. It was a horse's birthday cake relay race for two teams. They ride to the first drum and pick up a birthday candle, then go to the second drum and place it on a "birthday cake", then come back and tag the next rider. The winning team was the one with the most candles on their cake after the allotted time. I decided to make the cake from ingredients that the horses could eat afterwards as a birthday treat (apples, carrots, rolled oats, etc) and they looked great. However, the best laid plans go awry! I didn't consider the seagull factor.

After setting up the course and placing the cakes on the drums then walking away to do other things, every seagull for miles around came to eat the cakes! We eventually covered them up, but they managed to do a fair amount of damage to my lovely horsey cakes. They hung around for ages and my game (which worked so well in my head) turned into putting candles into a plateful of crumbs! Then to top it all off, the horses kept trying to eat the cake when their rider was trying to put their candle into it, so volunteers had to be on seagull watch *and* try and keep the plates away from the horse's hungry mouths. Then they didn't want to leave the drum to go back to the start. I can laugh about it now.

When the game was finished, we gave some cake to the horses and they didn't even like it after all that, turning up their top lips in disgust! Next year I'm making them out of Styrofoam!

PARA-EQUESTRIAN NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Please see below the results of The 2011 National Champions for each grade – great to see some RDA riders featuring among the winners! Congratulations to all!

- IA Morgan Webb Liddle (Kyneton, Vic)
Abbeyville 1 Molly
- IB Joann Formosa (Broadford, Vic)
Riverview Solitique
- II Grace Bowman (Moonta, SA)
Kirby Park Joy
- III Elizabeth Sobbecki (Adelaide, SA)
Ponderosa Stud Lucarno
- IV Hannah Dodd (Arcadia, NSW)
Lucifer's Dream

2011 NATIONAL VOLUNTEER AWARDS

RDA Australia is pleased to announce that the Panel for 2011 National Volunteer Awards has been appointed. Evelyn O'Loughlin (CEO of Volunteering SA & NT) is taking part as our independent member. Norma Pearce joins us this year as a representative from the RDAA Board and Maguerite Francis will be participating as a Life Member.

Nominations are due to National Office from States at the end of August and will be passed onto the panel shortly after.

Please note the change of date for the Awards Dinner. It will now be held on **Saturday 3 December**.

ASC FUNDING OPPORTUNITY



There is a new opportunity for funding for young people through the Australian Sports Commission, aimed at assisting with the costs of participation in sports.

“Young people find it difficult to meet the ongoing and significant costs associated with participation at sporting competitions, particularly those from regional areas.

The [Local Sporting Champions](#) program is an Australian Government initiative designed to provide financial assistance for young people aged 12-18 towards the cost of travel, accommodation, uniforms or equipment when competing, coaching or officiating at an official national sporting organisation (NSO) endorsed state or national sporting championships or a School Sport Australia national championships”

Please find a link to this funding offered by the ASC here: [Local Sporting Champions](#). There is also a link to the above website on the [Office for Recreation and Sport website](#)

2011 NATIONAL DRESSAGE VIDEO CHAMPIONSHIPS



Entries can still be submitted for the 2011 National Dressage Video Championships via DVD or Youtube link up until **Friday 23 September**. There are a range of tests available with riders able to enter up to 2 tests each which will cost \$30 for first test and \$15 for the second test, if chosen. Results will be announced on Friday 7 October on the RDAA website.

***Please note –Forms can be acquired from State Offices or RDA National Office.**

FREE AUTISM TRAINING

In 2009, the Australian Government introduced the *Positive Partnerships* program to support school aged children with autism, their parents and carers. *Positive Partnerships* is funded by the Government through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and specifically provides training for teachers, parents and carers.

The *Positive Partnerships* website includes a free Online Learning Portal, online videos and workshops for parents and carers. An excellent resource for RDA coaches, this website is in its final year of funding and is well worth a visit. www.autismtraining.com.au

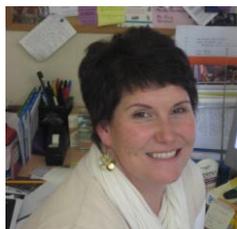
Diary Dates

Aug 31	Nominations for RDAA National Volunteer Awards close to National Office
Sep 2	TAS School Term 2 finishes
Sep 16	QLD School Term 3 finishes
Sep 19	TAS School Term 3 begins
Sep 23	Submissions for National Dressage Video Championships close to National Office
Sep 23	VIC School Term 3 finishes
Sep 30	ACT, NT, SA, WA School Term 3 finishes
Sep 30-Oct 2	RDA Q Carriage Driving Workshop – contact admin@rdag.org.au
Oct 1-2	RDAV State Vaulting Workshop – contact admin@rdav.asn.au
Oct 3	QLD School Term 4 begins
Oct 7	National Volunteer Awards Winners and National Dressage Video Championships Results published on website
Oct 10	NT, VIC School Term 4 begins
Oct 17	ACT, SA, WA School Term 4 begins
Nov 26-27	National Disciplines Meetings (Melbourne)
Dec 3	RDAA National Volunteer Awards Dinner (Toowoomba, QLD)
Dec 3	RDAA National Delegates Meeting (Toowoomba, QLD)
Dec 3-7	5 day TTEAM workshop at Rokeby, Victoria – contact sue@mckibbin.net
Dec 4	RDAA AGM (Toowoomba, QLD)
Dec 9	QLD School Term 4 finishes
Dec 10	RDA Pegasus Christmas Party
Dec 15	WA School Term 4 finishes
Dec 16	NT, SA School Term 4 finishes
Dec 20	VIC School Term 4 finishes
Dec 21	ACT, TAS School Term 4 finishes
Dec 22	RDA National Office closes for Christmas Break (reopens 9 Jan)

MEET THE RDA AUSTRALIA STAFF!

We would like to introduce the National Office staff!
Please also note some new email addresses.

Karen Aspery



Karen has been the State Coaching Coordinator for RDA SA for 6 years and continues in this position 2 days per week when she is not working for RDA Australia. Karen filled in as the National Coaching Coordinator in

2010 to deliver the National Coaching Workshop and moved into the Executive Officer position (part time) in April 2011.

Karen is a Level 2 RDA Coach and National Assessor and is heavily involved with the introduction of equestrian as a sport for Special Olympics.

Karen holds an Advanced Diploma in Management, Cert IV in Management (Contracts) and Cert IV in Workplace Training and Assessment.

Karen lives near the coast, south of Adelaide where she enjoys beach rides, Riding Club and riding around the local McLaren Vale vineyards.

Karen can be contacted Mondays and Wednesdays on eo@rda.org.au

Sharon Nichols



Sharon is the most recent staff addition to RDA Australia, joining in June 2011 as National Coaching Coordinator. Sharon comes to us from RDA Victor Harbor centre in South Australia where she volunteers as a coach and treasurer and is

currently coaching 1 rider for Special Olympics and 5 riders for the SA State Dressage Championships.

Sharon is qualified in RDA as a Level 1 coach and is now training for Level 1 Vaulting and Level 2 Coaching.

When not at RDA, Sharon works 3 days a week for TAFE SA Regional and holds the following qualifications: Cert IV in Business Administration, Cert III Financial Services Accounts Clerical, Cert IV Training & Assessment, Cert IV Language, Literacy & Numeracy and Diploma Remedial Massage Therapist.

Sharon can be contacted on Mondays and Fridays on coaching@rda.org.au

Theresa Moore



Theresa has been working as the Administration Assistant for RDA SA since October 2006 and joined the RDA Australia team in June 2010 when the National Office relocated to Adelaide. Theresa now holds the position

of Office Manager, effective from July 2011 and is currently organising, with assistance from RDA Q, the National Volunteers Awards and National Delegates Meetings in Toowoomba, amongst other bits and pieces – of which there are always plenty!

Theresa completed a Cert IV Sports Admin, Specialising in Events Management through SportSA in 2010. She is married and lives in Reynella, approx 40 minutes south of Adelaide.

Theresa can be contacted on Tuesdays and Thursdays on admin@rda.org.au.

Stacey Seal



Stacey first joined RDA Australia in June 2010 where she assisted with sorting out paperwork when the National Office initially relocated to Adelaide. After a break, Stacey rejoined the team in May 2011 as Administration Assistant and is currently compiling statistics from ASC surveys and the Annual Report, as well as the ongoing task of sorting and archiving RDAA files electronically and physically. Stacey will soon begin compiling the RDAA National Directory.

Stacey has recently completed an Arts degree Major English Literature which she began at the University of Adelaide and completed at Tabor Adelaide. Stacey will be getting married in January 2012.

When not at RDA, Stacey works at the Two Wells Medical Clinic doing archiving and reception work.

Stacey can be contacted on Mondays and Thursdays on fundraising@rda.org.au

Deb Clover



Deb works as an Account Manager for Better Business Basics, a business that supplies book keepers to organisations, and has been working on site for RDA Australia since July 2010. Deb looks after the accounts and has recently been working in conjunction with the RDAA Board and auditors Moore Stephens on our audit preparation for the 2010/2011 year.

Deb has a Diploma in Accounting *needed??* and has been working as a bookkeeper for over 10 years. She lives in the north eastern suburbs and has had an involvement with horses for over 35 years.

Deb can be contacted on Tuesdays on accounts@rda.org.au



THE BEST FUN YOU CAN HAVE ON FOUR LEGS

Story from parent Jane Danzi

Every Saturday morning Cameron gets dressed just a little bit quicker because he knows he is going to one of his favourite activities for the week - Riding for the Disabled.

Cameron has been horse riding with RDA since he was two and a half years old and thirteen years later he still loves it with a passion. He doesn't need to tell us, we can see the smile a mile away.

When Cameron started with RDA he could not walk. I carried him, or pushed him in his pram. He had a K-Walker which is a walking frame on wheels which goes behind the body with bars on the side to balance.



Cameron was very slow with his K-Walker and he could not change direction. If he walked into a solid object he stood there waiting for you to turn him around or he'd drop to the ground and crawl away. He had taken the occasional independent step, in therapy and at home, lurching from one adult to another but he was definitely not walking.

We discovered RDA from an unobtrusive A4 flyer on the wall at the hydrotherapy pool. I'd tried a mainstream playgroup and that had been a disaster so I had Wednesday mornings free. I thought, why not; let's see what this is about. That single thought changed our lives.

Six months after Cameron starting horse riding he walked independently. It was incredible and he has improved ever since. Just this week, I noticed that he is running better and isn't leaning forward as if he is about to a nose dive into the dirt.



When you ride a horse the movement of the horse causes your body to use the same muscles it would if it was walking and consequently those muscles strengthen. When Cameron started RDA he had no real tone in his stomach muscles. He had been receiving physiotherapy at least twice a week since he had woken up in the Infants Ward and he had been swimming twice a week as well. His muscles had improved but they clearly needed something more and RDA was it.

Horse riding with RDA is miraculous for so many reasons. Obviously there are the physical benefits of strengthening muscles but there are so many other benefits. For a person in a wheelchair they are suddenly up high looking down upon their world and experiencing a form of walking. For a lot of people

with intellectual disabilities, like Cameron, they cannot play team sports but they can ride a horse. Someone is there to watch over them and guide them all the time; they don't have to remember rules or game plans. There are also the emotional benefits they experience along with confidence building and self esteem. Everyone can ride, no matter what the condition, disability or problem there is always a solution.

Research has shown that horse riding can improve fine motor skills. A study showed that an intensive session on a horse can improve a child's hand writing immediately. It's seems implausible but we've seen it.

Over the years I have seen Autistic children calm down, overcome their sensory issues and fall in love with their horse. I've seen children with Cerebral Palsy improve beyond their parents wildest dreams. I've seen a hit and run victim who was in a wheelchair and needed total assistance walk unaided to his horse for the first time. I've watched children form deep bonds with their horses, coaches and volunteers and I've seen riders make lifelong friendships with other riders. As a by product, parents also become friends and find powerful support from other parents.

There are social benefits too. Cameron gets to socialise with lots of different people in an environment which is supportive and makes allowances for him. This doesn't mean he can misbehave but people understand his disability and allow him to be him. He is with other people with special needs, their families and all the volunteers. Everybody knows everybody and there is a sense of fun, acceptance and excitement. It is a supportive community with a common purpose.

For us we have watched as Cameron's body has strengthened and taken control of itself. Cameron has learnt to say a few volunteers' names from time to time and he learnt to sign horse riding at one point. Unfortunately his seizures robbed him of these achievements but he did them. He has learnt to mount a horse - a very difficult task when every week, for years, your brain tells you to use the wrong leg.



Cameron moves through life quite slowly but every Saturday Cameron jumps out of the car and walks quickly into the centre. He walks up the steps and up a graduated ramp which is high off the ground, two more skills which used to be incredibly challenging for him. He mounts his horse and rides off smiling, incredibly relaxed and happy because - he loves RDA.

Horse riding for the disabled truly is the best fun you can on four legs and our family are deeply grateful for this incredible organization.

AWARENESS WEEK STORIES!

RDA SA:

RDA Port Pirie volunteers ran an Awareness Day on Sunday 31 July – no-one minded it being a day earlier than the “official” birthday.

Volunteer and reporter Skippy Flink said:

“The weather was very kind, bright sunny skies and lots and lots of people. We had music by one of our volunteers, Barry Flink, who kept the crowd entertained with his singing, easy listening, some country and all most enjoyable.

“Our volunteers were kept busy giving pony rides, making tea and coffee, and handing out birthday cake, whilst our president Bill Rogers was chained to the barbecue cooking up a magnificent sausage sizzle. After lunch, all our ponies and Wilbur, our horse, lined up and everyone sang Happy Birthday to our four-legged friends.

“They were then handed out a slice of special ‘birthday cake’ of their own, especially made with carrots, apples, a little honey and lots of love. It was wonderful to see so many of the general public come out to help us celebrate, and also meet all the committee and volunteers at our centre.

“It was a great fund-raiser, and we intend to have more such days in the future.”

Back in Adelaide, the annual RDA Badge Day and Awareness Week was celebrated in Rundle Mall on 29 July. Promotional items such as Smiley badges, stickers, newsletters and other information were handed out.

RDA Jennibrook Farm turned up trumps by bringing in their delightful “Pixie”, attracting masses of attention from people walking past. Clearly they were not used to seeing a pony in the middle of Rundle Mall. Pixie was not fazed by the hundreds of pats she received. Many of the children had never before seen a “real” horse, their faces filled with joy and awe as they ventured closer to pat the pony.

Thanks to the many people who contributed to the day’s success, particularly Jennibrook Farm volunteers Lorna, June and Arrand for bringing Pixie and the Jennibrook float to the Mall, and taxi-truck driver Robin, whose talents extended to helping load Pixie onto the float at the end of the day.

RDA TAS:

Report from Lindy Newman, RDA North West Centre

Our open day was held on Monday 8 August after having to be postponed because of many invited guests being unable to attend the previous week. Although the weather was quite overcast, we were very pleased with the number of interested and invited guests who attended.

The Mayor of Wynyard, Mr Robbie Walsh and the Mayor of Burnie, Mr Alwyn Boyd, both showed great interest and encouraged us to seek further support through local grants programmes from their respective councils.

Representatives from several local service groups also came along and were impressed with our facility and delighted in watching the children from the School of Special Education as we conducted their morning riding session. They all indicated that they would be recommending to their groups to assist us financially. We also had offers of assistance with maintenance and repairs to our barn and fences.

We also had three people who expressed interest in becoming volunteers, which is fantastic.

We all felt our open day was a great success, so much so that we are planning to hold another open day when the weather warms up.

MORE STATE NEWS

RDA ACT:

As many of you know, Pegasus had to retire a large portion of our trusty herd in mid last year, which left us very short of horses and required us to make a major reduction of our programs. We have searched for potential new members for the herd and, while we are not yet up to our optimum herd size, we are currently progressing well. A couple of “newbies” have been put into programs this term increasing the number of places we can offer and keeping us heading in the right direction towards running full programs once again. We have three more potential horses coming in for trial in the next week or two. They all sound really promising, so fingers crossed, they’ll all end up joining the training program and eventually take their place in our programs for riders in the future.

On the fundraising side of things, Pegasus is very fortunate to have been chosen by the **Canberra City Rotary Club** as the recipient of proceeds from the annual **ACT Springtime Antique and Collectibles Fair** for 2011, 2012 and 2013. The fairs have been running in Canberra for about 25 years and each year the proceeds go to a charity. The 2011 Fair has just been successfully run with the assistance of Rotary and Pegasus volunteers over the weekend of 12-14 August. Over 2,200 people attended the fair. We are as yet unsure of the amount that will be donated but very much appreciate the support of Canberra City Rotary and the wonderful antique dealers who make the fair such a success each year. What a great job these people do and we are looking forward to continuing our partnership next year and again in 2013 (the year of Canberra’s centenary!).

TTEAM Adventure

Bitterroot Ranch, Wyoming USA

Report from Sue McKibbin

In 2009 I met Robyn Hood and Mandy Pretty. Robyn and Mandy were very accessible trainers and the work they taught was kind and gentle, but clear to the horse. They have a passion for listening to what the horse is trying to express. Last year Mandy encouraged me to attend the “Young Horse Starting Clinic” which is an annual event held at the Bitterroot Dude Ranch in Wyoming, USA. She said it was a lot of fun and as I have two youngsters I thought it would be a great place to start their training. I’m so glad I went!!

It was incredible to see how quickly these barely handled 3 and 4 year olds learned to lead, pick up their feet, be relaxed with people touching them all over their bodies, and negotiating “The Playground for Higher Learning”. It was fascinating to watch the horses build their confidence and rapidly expand their abilities to incorporate what they had learned into new and gradually more challenging situations and most of the time I think we were all enjoying the process enormously.

We also had a 5 year old horse from the previous year’s clinic to help him review his learning from last year and progress in his training to potentially be one of the horses used by the ranch.

The overall respect given to the horses and people as we negotiated our learning paths was wonderful to experience. At no time was anyone made to feel foolish or dumb, for not getting it yet. “Chunk it down” became a favourite expression when anyone was stuck. I kept visualising how I would be able to use this work at home with all my own horses, and how beneficial it would be to incorporate in basic training for the RDA horses and volunteers that I work with.

The highlights of my trip were the incredible beauty of the snow capped mountain ranges looming all around the ranch, trail riding through scenery that looked like a set from a Hollywood move but was actually the Indian Reservation and Public Land adjoining to the ranch (I had been fizzing for weeks like a shaken Coke bottle that I was going for a ride in “cowboy country”) and the incredible people that I met. It was wonderful to be in such a place surrounded by people on such similar paths or wavelengths. It’s been a bit difficult fitting back into who I was before I went, I’ve had to stretch the boundaries of that “hole” a bit :-)

Robyn and Mandy will be holding a 5 day TTEAM workshop at Rokeby, Victoria, Dec 3rd-7th. Contact sue@mckibbin.net for more info.

Pat Fisken; face of RDA Awareness Week 2011



Please email admin@rda.org.au if you no longer wish to receive RDAA's bimonthly newsletter, **Spotlight**.

Next issue: 20 October 2011

Mission Statement

RDA enables people with disabilities & volunteers throughout Australia to experience enjoyment, challenge and a sense of achievement through participation in equestrian activities, resulting in the development of life skills, improved quality of life and attainment of personal goals

We are dedicated to providing these services through an organisation which is relevant, innovative, effective and rewarding.

RDA SPONSORS & SUPPORTERS



Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission



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