



MISSION STATEMENT

To provide a therapeutic horseback riding program for children and adults with disabilities that promotes and enriches their physical, psychological and social well-being.

The Victoria Therapeutic Riding Association (VTRA) is a registered charity and non-profit organization that uses horseback riding as a recognized therapeutic aid for people with disabilities; some of which include: cerebral palsy, Downs's syndrome, autism, intellectual challenges, and hearing or vision impairment.

10 – 12 Therapy Horses are specifically trained to support the efforts of rehabilitation to more than 150 participants from the Greater Victoria area.

Our Instructors are certified by Equine Canada and the Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association; our facility is a Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association (CanTRA) member centre which meets their risk management standards; our Association is a member of BCTRA (British Columbia Therapeutic Riding Association), CanTRA (Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association) and Horse Council BC. We are affiliated with Volunteer Victoria and the Association for Fundraising Professionals.

Our rider's wear safety equipment including a riding helmet, boots with a heel and special transfer belts to be used in emergencies. Each rider is supplied with equipment that is designed to assist with their particular needs and may include: special reins for those with only partial use of hands and arms, special saddles for those with little or no balance or who are unable to sit in a conventional saddle, and adaptive equipment to give extra body support. We use mounting blocks and wheelchair accessible ramps where necessary to help with getting riders onto the horse's back. Special teaching techniques allow for the rider's needs, which may range from a straight therapeutic value to pure recreation.

Through participation in this program, individuals learn to believe in themselves, have positive identity, sense of purpose, optimism and psychological well-being. Programs such as ours are essential to ensuring a healthy community in the Greater Victoria area.

The benefits of Therapeutic Riding include improved:

Posture, core strength, speech, coordination, fine and gross motor skills, social skills, riding skills, self-esteem, and simple academic skills ie. counting, number recognition, letters, sequencing.

Flora's Mum writes, "Through her three years of riding with top-level, caring and sensitive instructors and volunteers at the VTRA my daughter has been offered this perfect form of engaging play. She has gained communicative skills, physical and intellectual strength, and self-confidence that school or traditional therapies could not do in the same amount of time. At the commencement of this program she wouldn't even want to sit on the horse. It is why my beautiful, lively, engaged and engaging special needs daughter has been able to say "walk on" and "whoa" and signal stop along with using the reins to direct her horse. It is why she is able to sit straight up and high in the saddle as she not only walks but also trots in unison with her horse and how she has learned to change in sequence from reins to handle to reins over the course of this exercise. Again simple tasks for many adults; for many small children and special needs persons more difficult still; to those who are both young and have special needs - nothing short of monumental accomplishments."

In the past 10 years, VTRA has provided this specialized service to more than participants with disabilities (75% of whom are children). Our program has grown from 1 day/week to 4 ½ days per week and from a strictly volunteer run organization to a part time staff of four, and more than 100 volunteers who are essential in the delivery our classes.