



Spring 2019

PONY EXPRESS

Sunrise Therapeutic Riding & Learning Centre

My Bella, Our Sunrise

"My Bella" is what rider Scarlett always calls the horse she rides at Sunrise. Bella is an 11-year-old 'polka-dot' Pony of the Americas mare, and Scarlett is a six year old girl who loves to ride, and has autism.

Scarlett has been riding at Sunrise for two years, and her family has been "over the moon excited" by the changes and growth they have seen during this time, which they attribute to the therapeutic riding program.

Scarlett used to be very internally-focussed, preferring not to interact with the people and situations around her. She would only repeat greetings when prompted by a parent, and rarely initiate conversation on her own. "Over the past two years, she has really come out of her shell so much, and is now more externally-focussed than internally (unless she is tired)," says her grandmother, Julie. Scarlett knows her volunteers' names, and looks at them and talks to them while waiting for Bella to enter the arena, sometimes even complimenting them on something they are wearing.

Becoming more externally-focussed has helped Scarlett to understand object constancy - that things still exist when out of sight. The first glimmer of her understanding of this concept came when she asked one day (at home), "What do you think my Bella is doing right now?" to her surprised mother, Lindsey.

The special relationship between Scarlett and Bella has also helped Scarlett to understand reciprocity - individuals helping each other. Every week, Scarlett thanks Bella and gives her carrots after their lesson together (see photo at right), in appreciation for what Bella has given her.

Physically, riding has greatly improved Scarlett's coordination and motor skills. When she started riding, Scarlett needed a lot of physical support from



her sidewalkers. She now sits with minimal support, uses a saddle (instead of a surcingle and pad), and can communicate with Bella using her legs and hands as well as her voice. Her mother has noticed a marked improvement in her fine motor skills - she can now use scissors and has the dexterity to play with more age-appropriate toys (which often have many little pieces).

Lindsey thinks the biggest change has been Scarlett's self-confidence. At the end of her first week at Camp Sunrise (in 2018), Scarlett opted to participate in the talent show, singing and dancing to a new song in front of everyone. "Ever since then, she has been wanting to perform at any opportunity, and has no fear of large crowds of people," laughs Lindsey.

"However, I think the rest of our family gets as much benefit out of Sunrise as Scarlett does", says Julie, "as we get HOPE! Two years ago we never thought we would be where we are today. It's just been amazing. Sunrise has provided a renewal of hope for all our family members. For us to see tangible skills progression, to see Scarlett challenged in new ways and succeed in completing things we never thought possible, gives the family new hope for her future which we didn't have before." This has also inspired the family to continue to challenge Scarlett at home as well. "I have gone from saying to Scarlett 'Let me help you with that' to 'You can do it - give it a try!'", says Julie.

It takes four people (3 volunteers and her instructor) to enable Scarlett to ride each week. Her family really appreciates the dedication of everyone involved. "It's truly amazing, and unbelievably humbling, that total strangers would give their time to one individual child - that all these people come together every week to make it happen!"

Laura (at right in photo), one of Scarlett's volunteer sidewalkers this past winter, felt she benefited too. "I looked forward to seeing Scarlett each week. She was always so cheerful and happy to see me." She noted that Scarlett was always ready to see the humour in things - such as whenever Bella snorted! Laura volunteers in several different lessons every week. "I really enjoy getting to know each rider's unique goals and interests."

Lindsey appreciates these relationships. "The Sunrise volunteers and staff are so patient and caring...it's overall just a very happy place to be!" she concludes.



Grooming: More than Brushing a Horse!

In addition to our many weekly riders, Sunrise also has some weekly 'groomers' - adults with disabilities whose lives are enriched through non-riding activities with the horses, under the guidance and supervision of a staff instructor. Matt is a Grooming Program participant, as well as a Sunrise volunteer. His weekly assistance with tack cleaning and other stable chores is much appreciated!



Matt with Sunrise horse Nos

"Sunrise is my second home and a place where I feel like I truly belong. The horses and the staff make it such a welcoming and healing place to be. I can't wait to see the staff [each week]. Being around and interacting with the horses really makes me feel so much better. It doesn't matter who I get to interact with, all the horses each have a unique way to bring to the surface the confident and happier Matt."

"I've found that [when] grooming horses at Sunrise, my anxiety and the stress of the day and week is all gone for at least the time that I'm with the horse. I feel a connection and friendship with the horse, and I feel a sense of accomplishment and purpose."

"The horses don't judge me but they show their love and acceptance of me, and that has meant so much to me personally. It has helped me understand how I should be treated and helped me

to learn to value myself and keep fighting my anxiety no matter how hard it is! "

"Interacting with the horses has given me better self-confidence and self-esteem and it has helped me realize that I matter not only to the horse but to those who care about me. The horses have helped me realize that I should surround myself with those who truly care and like me for who I am."

In addition, Matt reports that, "My coordination is much better [due to grooming and volunteer tasks]...and that has allowed me to be more successful in other tasks [requiring dexterity] that I have to do outside of Sunrise."

Matt's mom, Janet, explains why these experiences are so important. "Matt's combination of autism and right-temporal lobe (visual-spatial) learning disabilities makes life an almost constant challenge for him, and makes the world seem like a dangerous place. The fight-flight-freeze mechanism of anxiety often comes into play...with Matt it's never the "fight" part, but "flight" and "freeze" can be incapacitating."

"What [the staff] and the horses have created at Sunrise is a unique environment of encouragement (literally, putting courage into) and joy and care that is unrivaled in Matt's life apart from his home here with us. Many of Matt's co-workers and extended family have seen the difference that horses have made in Matt's life - the positive effects are not limited to the time he's with the horses! Thank you, thank you, thank you!!!"

Sunrise Cares: School Groups and Scholarships

Sunrise serves a number of local school and agency groups through the year, many of whom are classes of children with special needs. Most of these groups visit Sunrise weekly for up to 4 weeks. These visits are a highlight of the year, and a springboard for learning and discussion in the classroom.

Group visits are subsidized through Sunrise's **Equine Empowerment Fund**. During the 2018-2019 school year, this program was supported through grants from:

Guelph Community Foundation
L.J. Pearson Foundation

At Sunrise, we strive to ensure that finances are never a barrier to participation for those whom our programs would benefit. The **Sunrise Cares Program** (which includes the Equine Empowerment Fund) also provides financial assistance with lesson fees to individuals, through the Amy Turner Memorial Scholarship Fund,

and subsidizes lesson fees universally. We would like to extend a big thank you to our Sunrise Cares partners over the past year:

Bridgeway Foundation • County of Wellington
Harry E. Foster Foundation
Rotary Club of Guelph Trillium
Township of Puslinch



Upcoming Events at Sunrise

Celebrate Sunrise!

Sunday, June 23, 2019 12:30-4:00 PM

Our 6th Annual *Celebrate Sunrise!* event will be held June 23, rain or shine! We look forward to welcoming our friends of Sunrise to an afternoon of inspiration! Come and learn about how Sunrise benefits our community - enjoy musical rides by Sunrise riders, our new Sunrise video and a delicious lunch, prepared by **Chef D** and his team of Puslinch, followed by a live auction, led by **Robert Milburn**, of **Milburn's Auto Sales & Service**. There will also be many lovely items available at our silent auction. **Lisa Richards**, of **Magic 106.1 FM** will be our M.C. for the event. Special thanks to our Harvest Sponsor, **UPI Energy LP**.

Tickets are \$50 each and are available by calling Jennifer at 519-837-0558 x32 or visiting our website: <https://sunrise-therapeutic.ca/>

Hoofbeat Challenge

Saturday, Sept. 28, 2019 9 AM - 1 PM

Mark your calendars now! Join us for our annual pledged ride and walk for Sunrise! Bring your horse, your dog, your family, your friends...or just yourself! Enjoy over 200 acres of beautiful groomed trails (no roadwork). Lunch and bake sale items will be available on site.

Registration will open on or before July 1. Sign up by August 14 and you will be registered for our **Early Bird draw** on August 15! Learn more at <https://sunrise-therapeutic.ca/hoofbeat/> or call 519-837-0558 x32.

Thank you to our event sponsor, **Airlie Foundation** (Coffey Creek Farm) - who also sponsored a horse this year!

Sunrise Therapy Forest: Growing Diversity

Readers that have been out the farm lately will have noticed some activity in the field by the parking lot. The seedlings in Sunrise's new therapy forest have been planted! These native hardwood and softwood species are still quite small, but larger trees will be planted near the forest 'entrance'. The latter area will be the memorial (dedication) forest, and will continue to expand each year, as new "adolescent" trees (4' tall and larger) are added.



In addition to diversifying native species and habitat types on site, the forest will serve as a space for learning and recreation for the hundreds of children and youth that attend inclusive recreation programs at Sunrise each year. It will also be a welcome and unique activity space for future Sunrise programs.

Wet spring weather delayed the official opening of the forest. Initially planned for late May, the event will now be held in September. To learn more about this innovative initiative, which will support Sunrise programs, and how you can get involved, please visit <https://sunrise-therapeutic.ca/forest/>.

Thank you to all our generous forest partners, who have come together to help launch this visionary project:

Capital Paving Inc. • **Cox Construction Limited** • **Williams & Associates Forestry Consulting Ltd**
Roto-Mill Inc. • **Douglas Wood Large Tree Services** • **The Gosling Foundation**

Castle Masonry • **Scutt Signs** • **Sutcliffe Kitchens and Renovations** • **The Green Legacy**

Martin Litchfield, Registered Professional Forester • **Brock Road Nursery Garden Centre & Gift Shoppe**

Plus our two recent supporters: **Woodbine Entertainment Group** and **Grand River Conservation Foundation**



Top: Hundreds of seedlings (bagged) in the barn awaiting planting. Bottom: Although most of the planting was done with specialized machinery, one field was planted by hand.

Thank You to...

In addition to those already mentioned, several more generous foundations and corporations have supported us in a variety of ways over the past 6 months. Special thanks to:

Cambridge Centre Honda, for choosing Sunrise as the recipient of their January 2019 Test Drive for Charity fundraiser. The proceeds helped purchase a new therapy horse, Riley.

Capital Paving Inc. for being our go-to partner for all surfacing projects (and we have a lot of surfacing at the farm!), whether it's driveway repairs, paddock improvements or concrete projects. Their work makes our farm look awesome, and keeps our feet (and our horses' feet) dry!

Christian Labour Association of Canada, for providing partial funding towards a new all-terrain wheelchair, which will be much used during summer camp.

Con Cast Pipe, for sponsoring Jackie the horse for a year, and replacing the damaged drainage culvert under our driveway.

The Georgina Foundation, for enabling us to purchase new inflatable therapy balls, which children and adults use to stretch tight leg muscles before riding.

Guelph Wish Fund for Children, for generously supporting our therapeutic riding program through a stall sponsorship, and the annual Sunrise Christmas part for riders and their families. We appreciate their long-term partnership!

PDI for renewing their partnership as a stall sponsor, thus being a key supporter for our therapeutic riding program.

Ross-Shire Foundation, for their unwavering, ongoing, generous support of Sunrise programs throughout the year!

Rotary Club of Guelph South, for (once again!) donating proceeds from their Taste of Italy Pasta Dinner to Sunrise, which sponsored Rolex the horse and will provide financial assistance for children wanting to attend Camp Sunrise this summer.

Toyota Motor Manufacturing of Canada Inc for co-sponsoring Nos, one of our terrific therapy horses.

UPI Energy LP for donating the entire proceeds of their corporate events to Sunrise, to sponsor therapy horse Toby and *Celebrate Sunrise!*

Vetoquinol for sponsoring Bella the horse, and providing medical products for our horses (the latter for many years!)

The individuals who so generously sponsored Jack, Sundance, Dallas, Luke, Pevensie, Picasso and Seneca!

Please refer to the insert for more Sunrise partners.

Sunrise Mission

"To develop the full potential of children and adults with special needs and lead them closer to independence through therapy, recreation, horse riding, life skills, farm related activities and education programs."

Sunrise Programs

THERAPY PROGRAMS

- **Therapeutic Riding** lessons for children & adults with special needs
- **Grooming** sessions for youth / adults with special needs
- **Equine-Facilitated Wellness** for children & youth facing mental health challenges

RECREATION PROGRAMS

- **Riding Day Camp** for ages 8 to 13+ (summer)*
- **Farm Discovery Day Camp** for ages 5 to 8 (summer)*
- **Leader-In-Training** for ages 13 to 16 (summer)*
- **"Little Breeches" Club**: an introduction to horses for ages 4 to 7 selected Saturdays (mornings or afternoons) Spring & Fall *

LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM:

- **Life Skills Day Program**, for older teens and young adults (weekly)

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- **Lesson volunteers needed!** Must be 15+ years old.
- **Student Instructors:** Residential training opportunities for Canadian and International students (3-12 months)

* These inclusive programs are open to children and youth with or without special needs. **All instructors are Canadian certified.**

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Sunrise is a Member of:



Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association



Ontario Camps Association

- Ontario Equestrian
- Guelph Chamber of Commerce
- Cambridge Chamber of Commerce
- Volunteer Action Centre
- PIN (The People and Information Network)
- SKIC (Supporting Kids In Camp)