



Changing Lives Stride by Stride

Mission: We provide opportunities for people with special needs to move towards greater independence and freedom through their connection with horses.

Winter 2019

Meet the 2019 SARI Ambassador

“Gage was born with Down syndrome. Children with Down syndrome can have a variety of health concerns and developmental delays. Approximately 50% of children with Down syndrome have some type of heart defect, many requiring heart surgery. At 13 months Gage had open heart surgery which put his physical development further behind while he recovered. Physical movements that are easy for most of us require a lot of energy and strength for children with Down syndrome; they often have low tone and muscle weakness requiring physiotherapy.

“We were advised by parents of an older child with Down syndrome that SARI was the place to be! Gage has benefitted greatly by attending SARI and has gained a great deal of core strength while learning to ride Toby. Gage has also suffered from frequent ear infections and vertigo and we believe that learning to balance himself atop a moving animal has taught him to compensate for the times that he is feeling off kilter.

“Riding is Gage’s “thing”; he looks forward to lessons each week as well as Little Britches monthly. He loves everything about SARI - the staff, the volunteers and of course (ponies) Toby and Ben. Gage would not be the boy he is today if we had not become involved with SARI.”

- Shana Mechefske, Gage’s Mom



AMBASSADOR—Rider Gage, shown here riding “Toby”, has been chosen as the 2019 SARI Ambassador.

Volunteer Spotlight: Wendy Absolom



VOLUNTEER—Volunteer Wendy with her favourite horse “Willow”. Asked why she loves Willow, Wendy says “she is big, kind and easy to work with!”.

As retirement approached, Wendy Absolom felt it was time to explore volunteer opportunities where she could provide a helping hand while also satisfying her passion for horses.

In August 2017 she attended the SARI orientation and committed to volunteering on two teams each week immediately after her work day was done. Wendy retired the following summer and began to dedicate much of her time to SARI, including leading and sidewalking in riding lessons at Summer Camp and is now a regular on Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons.

While working with the riders and horses was her motivation for getting involved, Wendy has discovered the added benefit of some great exercise (although the hot sauna workouts of the summer months were more than she was really looking for!). After a 45 year hiatus from riding, her involvement with SARI has also motivated Wendy to start taking riding lessons again!

With a work history that included 21 years at A&P and then 26 years as a union rep for United Food and Commercial Workers Local 175, we at SARI are looking forward to having Wendy around for MANY years to come!

Interested in becoming a volunteer like Wendy? Contact our Volunteer Coordinator at volunteer@sari.ca or 519-666-1123 to find out how!

The Alva Foundation Instills Philanthropic Values Across Generations

In 1965 Philip and Margaret Fisher established the Alva Foundation, to instill in their family the notion of giving back with the hope that it would carry forward into future generations. Now in 2019, the foundation is handing the reins over to the next generation. Alison Vilaca of Ilderton is the Great Granddaughter of the founders and now serves as a Board Member along with some of her cousins; they are very excited to take over the foundation management.

Alison grew up on a horse farm and was involved in pony club at a young age. She also had an aunt with a disability who was engaged in many specialized programs that provided opportunities for personal development and belonging. This combination made SARI a perfect fit when she was seeking an opportunity to get involved with a community organization, eventually leading Alison to serve on SARI's Golf and Program Committees.

With first-hand knowledge of the Alva Foundation and an awareness of SARI's need for community support, Alison was awarded the "Youth Challenge Grant" - a grant only accessible to family members to foster the importance of giving back. This grant was used to purchase a horse for SARI in 2008.

Now Alison's children are getting involved. Graydon and Kallen have attended SARI's integrated summer camp for the past two years. They loved their experience so much that it was an easy decision for the boys to suggest SARI as a recipient of a grant from the family foundation. The idea of adopting a pony was very appealing—the boys even drew pictures of themselves and their camp ponies as part of the application process! The application was approved with enough funding granted to adopt Toy, Tinker and Belle, providing the financial resources for their total care for one year.

Four generations later, the legacy of Philip and Margaret Fisher is thriving through the Alva Foundation, growing a sense of social responsibility in their Great-Great-Grandsons that will be sure to continue in generations to come.



FOUNDATION—Kallen (left) and Graydon (right) were inspired by their family's Alva Foundation to select SARI as a beneficiary. Here they are presenting a cheque to SARI Executive Director, Diane Blackall, to adopt Tinker and Belle (shown) and Toy—their summer camp favourites!

Celebrating 2018—Program Highlights

2018 was a big year for SARI as we celebrated our 40 years of history and began planning our future with a property expansion. We continued running our core programs for over 130 participants, we hosted seven corporate volunteer events and fourteen large tour groups for an up close equine experience. Enjoy a few of our favourite memories — we can't wait to see what 2019 brings!



⇒ Riders Trinity, Ainsley, Nicholas and Ariana enjoyed competing with the Hoofbeats Dressage Club (HDC) at various shows through the summer! "Team SARI" is pictured with Doug Warnock, HDC Vice President (left).



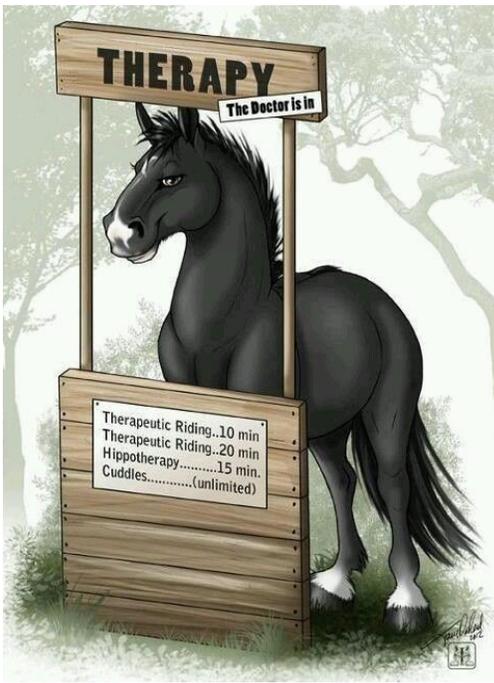
⇒ Volunteer Instructor Karen Pratt earned her CanTRA Intermediate Instructor certification in her 10th year of service to SARI!

Our incredible volunteers logged 13,618 hours! This number does NOT include special event volunteers, Board or committee meetings OR instructors!



⇒ Volunteer Instructor Gerry and Driver Kerry Bridge celebrated Kerry's division championship at the Tri-County Carriage Association banquet.

SARI Horses Need Sponsors—Adopt-a-Pony 2019



Did you know...

- Every day it costs over \$70 to feed our herd
- In 2018 SARI spent over \$10,000 on hoof care alone
- The average age of a SARI horse is 17, with many in their senior years who require additional care!

The SARI horses are the backbone of our program. They are carefully selected and trained to ensure they take careful steps under precious cargo. In addition to their routine feeding and care, the herd requires monthly and annual care including hoof trimming and/or shoeing, vaccinations and teeth floating (filing!). Sometimes, additional care is required to recover from injury or illness. On average, the expense of a single SARI horse is \$3,000 per year!

The SARI Adopt-a-Pony program gives corporations, groups and individuals the opportunity to cover the care of a horse with a \$3,000 donation. This “adoption” fee can be made in a lump sum or through monthly contributions; tax receipts are available. Donors are recognized for their generosity with a sign on their sponsored horse’s stall, a framed photo of the horse to display, recognition on the SARI donor list, and a meet and greet opportunity with the horse (be sure to bring carrots!).

Ready to consider helping a horse who is “Changing Lives, Stride by Stride”? Meet the available equines below, then contact SARI for more information.



BEN
SERVING SINCE 2010



ANEA
SERVING SINCE 2014



DICKENS
SERVING SINCE 2013



WILLOW
SERVING SINCE 2017



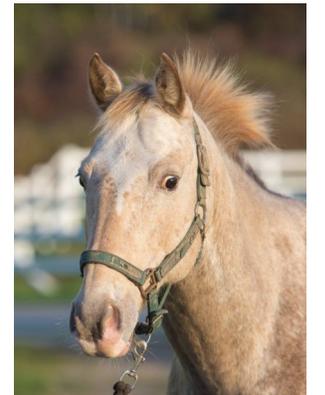
LUNA
SERVING SINCE 2015



LEWIS
SERVING SINCE 2014



TOPAZ
SERVING SINCE 2017



CAMANCHE
SERVING SINCE 2016

The Footprint of a Board Member: Sarah Kirshin-Neilans

Not every Board Member who serves SARI Therapeutic Riding is in it for the long haul. A term is two years and yet every so often, there comes along a special person who has the passion and commitment to dedicate a significant amount of time and talent to making SARI a better place. Sarah Kirshin-Neilans is one such person.

Asked what brought her to her role at SARI, Sarah stated “When I started my career as a personal injury and insurance lawyer in London, I wanted to find an opportunity to give back to the community by joining a board of directors for an organization that makes a real difference to people with disabilities.” First introduced to SARI as a high-school co-op student about 15 years prior, Sarah knew that SARI would be a good fit. “I have been privileged enough to have ridden horses most of my life, so I know what a benefit it can be both physically and mentally, not to mention the amazing bond that develops between horse and rider. It really is a team sport.”

Throughout her tenure with SARI, her positions have included: Board Member (2012-2019), Secretary (2015-2016), President (2016-2018), Past President (2018-2019). Additionally, Sarah has sat on numerous committees, attended countless events inviting friends and family, and personally pledged to support SARI endeavors including the purchase of additional acreage.

As Sarah rolls off the Board in March this year, she has many hopes for the future of SARI. She dreams that SARI can continue to offer top quality equine programming to clients in the London area while keeping program fees reasonable for families. Sarah expects that SARI will continue to be highly regarded in the therapeutic riding community, offering training and certification for therapeutic riding instructors. She hopes the physical expansion of the property will allow SARI to serve more clients, shorten the wait list and that the generous community support will continue in the years to come.

SARI wishes to thank Sarah for her years of service and aspires to fulfill the above listed goals in the coming years.



FOOTPRINT—Long-time Board Member Sarah Kirshin-Neilans has dedicated herself to the service of SARI since 2012.

The Price of SARI's Benefits—A Mother's Note



“Steve had a severe traumatic brain injury 33 years ago, and has been left with devastating physical, visual and cognitive deficits. So, after so many years one could ask - what further benefits could a therapy program possibly provide to improve the life of someone so severely damaged?”



“It is said in the medical community that whatever accomplishments are not achieved in six months after an accident, they will never be achieved. Well... so much for that theory! Steve was still in non-responsive coma at the six month stage, and now he is not only riding horses, but improving his physical abilities and his brain capacity as well!”

“Thanks to the caring attitude and wonderful staff, patient instructor (thanks Sue!) and generous volunteers at SARI, Steve has learned over the past four years to relax in the saddle, deal with his spastic paralysis, and to look forward to his ‘therapy sessions’ which are no longer mundane but exhilarating fun! He is learning to direct his horse through using the reins, which is not only strengthening his arms and cognitive ability but giving him the ‘power’ to direct the beautiful beast underneath him!”

What a wonderful gift... PRICELESS!”

- Carol Reicheld, Steve's Mom

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www.sari.ca



SARI Therapeutic Riding



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