



PONY EXPRESS

Sunrise Therapeutic Riding & Learning Centre

"Our Sunrise Star" by Ann Caine

Cora Spencer, who began riding at Sunrise in 2013, was chosen to be featured in an episode of the Discovery Channel series, "Collar of Duty", which will air in 2017. This series explores the role that animals play in the lives of children and adults with special needs. We are delighted that a Sunrise rider will be on national television as an ambassador for Canadian therapeutic riding!

Cora was born in New Brunswick and has multiple diagnoses, including FASD, having a stroke in the womb, and being on the Autism Spectrum. She lived in a loving foster home from birth, and in her young life she was surrounded by chickens, cows, sheep, llamas and HORSES.

At the time when Cora was in foster care, her "forever parents", Andy and Daphne Spencer, were part of a group of parents taking a course in preparation for becoming either foster or adoptive parents. The Spencers already had three boys of their own, one of whom had special needs, so they were well aware of the additional challenges involved in raising an exceptional child. They were hoping to adopt an eight to ten year old child.

During the course different scenarios were discussed regarding specific children's cases and situations, and the challenges that needed to be addressed. They learned of one child for whom there had been two adoption opportunities which did not materialize, due to the nature of the child's multiple needs.

It is usual for parents to finish the course before being put on the waiting list for a child to foster or adopt. However in the case of Andy and Daphne, they were asked to consider adopting a 2 1/2 year old girl before the course had finished. This little girl was Cora, who, although not identified to the group by name, was the child that had experienced two failed adoptions. They were told that she would never be toilet trained, walk or talk, and would have no social skills; a pretty daunting prognosis for any parents. But Andy and Daphne decided to seize this opportunity, having overcome so many obstacles, and proven the world wrong, with their oldest son. This would be a new chapter in their lives that they were prepared to embrace.

The Spencer family moved from New Brunswick to Guelph when Andy took the position of Children and Family Pastor at Calvary Baptist Church. Cora was referred to Sunrise through KidsAbility, in order to help develop her fine and gross motor skills, her core strength and her balance. Cora's passion for horses was re-ignited and she blossomed socially at Sunrise, while also working on all the other goals.

Remember this is a child who was never supposed to walk or talk!

Cora has always had a fear of heights, but at present she is riding the tallest horse in the Sunrise barn, Max, with whom she has formed a very special bond. Cora calls Sunrise her "Happy Place." Andy reflects that Cora is suffering bullying at school just now and Sunrise provides a special anchor in her life. If she has had a challenging day at school, as soon as she arrives at the farm her whole demeanor changes.

Cora is passionate about horses, and through Sunrise's therapeutic riding and summer camp programs she has developed confidence and social skills. Never underestimate the power of animals! Cora truly is a social butterfly at Sunrise, and we cannot wait to see our Sunrise star on the Discovery Channel!



Top: Cora riding Max, with instructors Katlyn (left) and Tiffany (right) on filming day at Sunrise. Right: An excited (and face-painted) Cora shows off her ribbon and certificate on her last day of Riding Camp this summer.



Sunrise Hoofbeat Challenge 2016

On Saturday, September 24, Sunrise hosted its annual Hoofbeat Challenge fundraising event. 69 riders and 30 dog walkers (along with many friends and family) enjoyed beautiful trails and lovely weather, representing a record-breaking number of participants!

Guests enjoyed lunch by The Farmhouse Kitchen and music by Swan Creek, while they perused a great selection of silent auction and door prizes, and delicious goodies at the bake sale tables. The event also included face painting, pet photography by Brian Tilson, massages by Christiana Kingsbury, RMT, and free coffee from Starbucks.

The event raised over \$35,000 towards Sunrise's therapy and recreation programs for adults and children with special needs. Highest individual pledge awards went to Meghan Madott, Emma Rus and Matthew Kingsbury (1st, 2nd and 3rd place Sunrise riders) and Jim Christie, Sue Wilson and Geri Ottewell (1st, 2nd and 3rd place community participants). The **Top Team Award went to the "Git Gallopin" team.** Thank you to all those who supported this event!



Above and below left: Some of the many riders who enjoyed a lovely ride on beautiful trails. Below right: Dog walkers and friends prepare to head out on the trails.



Make a Difference this Christmas!

Our programs would not be possible without the incredible support of our community. Here are a few ways that YOU can get involved!

Volunteer: We are always seeking volunteers to assist in lessons. Enjoy fresh air, great exercise, new friends, while making a difference every week. Please contact Lynne, Volunteer Manager at 519-837-0558 x31 or lynne@sunrise-therapeutic.ca to find out more!

Sponsor a horse or a rider: Gifts of all sizes can directly impact our programs and participants. Please refer to the insert for some ideas regarding how you can make a difference. Thank you if you already have done so this year!

Purchase an Angel: Our locally hand-made, limited edition angels are back this year, with 4 new designs, including "Holly" (top right) and "Sparkle" (bottom right), plus two memorial angels "Amy" and "Sarah". These 4" hanging ornaments make lovely gifts for friends, families and hostesses, and are only \$10 each. Limited numbers of our 2015 7" and 9" tree toppers are also available, priced at \$15 and \$20 respectively.

Angels are available for purchase at the farm, at several Guelph Scotiabank locations (who will match all proceeds), and at other venues in the community. Please email katlyn@sunrise-therapeutic.ca or call 519-837-0558 x23 for more information.



Scotiabank Life Skills Day Program Update

The first full year of the Scotiabank Life Skills Day Program has drawn to a close with all involved being excited about the positive outcomes thus far and the plans for the coming year. Scotiabank recently presented a cheque in the amount of \$20,000 to Sunrise, the second gift of their 3 year commitment. This fall, a second day was added—the program now runs on Tuesdays and Thursdays year-round.

The new raised bed gardens have been a source of great pride to participants as they are able to share their produce with family and friends, which is very empowering when, so often in their lives, they are recipients of care, instead of providers for others. The clients have also been selling excess produce and are proud to have raised over \$320 thus far this season – they have decided to use the funds for a group bowling and pizza outing. An indoor plant growing set-up will enable them to start more plants from seed next year.

Work in the barn with the horses continues whatever the season. This provides a steady, predictable daily routine, so essential to young people with special needs. The feeling of empowerment in caring for and interacting with a large animal is difficult to describe adequately in words, but can be seen daily on the faces of our Scotiabank Life Skills Day Program participants.

In addition to the regular activities, clients have also enjoyed participating in a variety of seasonal and special activities including: special painting projects (sometimes working alongside other volunteer teams), swimming and archery in the summer, team building activities on our low ropes course in the spring and fall, and preparing communal meals to celebrate special holidays.

Together this team, all of whom have cognitive special needs in some form or other, have created a special community – caring for and encouraging each other, and forming lasting friendships. Jane, the mother of a participant, had this to say about the program, “The Scotiabank Life Skills program has been a wonderful experience for my daughter. It is a safe environment that challenges each participant to be their best, experience new things and they have formed wonderful friendships.”

The Scotiabank grant also benefited 42 local high school students, all of whom were participating in alternative education programs. Each class visited the farm 1-3 times and worked directly with the horses, learning to groom and lead them. Several classes also participated in driving, riding or team-building activities using the low ropes course. Many of the students had never been to a farm environment and loved it! Their teachers expressed that the program exceeded their expectations. They marvelled at seeing big, tough teens being so careful and gentle

with the animals and working together to help each other. The teachers were thrilled and excited to plan a return visit for the groups.

We have always known the power of the horse to build confidence, self-esteem and resilience in those who are struggling to find their place in the world. However, it is only with the support of our community partners, like Scotiabank, that we can create and implement innovative new equine-based programs that can have such a profound, positive effect on those we serve.

For more information about the Scotiabank Life Skills Day Program, please contact Lynne O'Brien, Managing Director / Volunteer Manager at 519-837-0558 x31 or Shawna Stemmler, Life Skills Coordinator at x32.



Above: Melanie, Laura (riding instructor) and Abram with baking and artwork created by the Scotiabank Life Skills Day Program participants, which was for sale at Hoofbeat Challenge, along with carrots and herbs from their garden.

SAVE THE DATES for SUNRISE!

Sunrise 35th Anniversary Conference
May 5-7, 2017

Celebrate Sunrise!
Sunday, June 4, 2017 1- 4 PM

Volunteer Training Clinics
Held monthly - call Lynne at x31 for details

Please contact info@sunrise-therapeutic.ca to receive your newsletter by email.

Welcome New BOD Members

Recently, Sunrise has welcomed two new directors to its board, Dr. Chris Stemerding and Matthew Bulmer.

Chris, MD, FCFP, CCFP, is a family physician, the medical director at St. Joseph's Health Centre, a member of the Speed River Family Health Organization and a partner with Family Practice Associates. He has supported Sunrise for several years as a member of Sunrise's Medical Advisory Committee, and also demonstrates his interest in amateur sport through his volunteer work with the Guelph Junior Gryphons Bantam A hockey team. Chris has worked with many children and youth with special needs in his practice -we appreciate the expertise that Chris is able to bring to our programs and board.

Matthew has been a supporter of Sunrise for over 15 years, and has faithfully attended many of Sunrise's events, both personally and as a representative of the Puslinch Optimist Club or the Township of Puslinch, where he is a municipal councillor. Matthew also served as a volunteer on Sunrise's last capital / development campaign committee. As the Founding President and current Executive Director of the Aberfoyle Farmers' Market Association, he has been able to share information about Sunrise with local residents, and facilitated a "Peaches & Ice Cream" fundraiser for Sunrise at the market for the past several summers. Sunrise will gain richly from Matthew's years of volunteer work in our community, and from his previous experience serving on not-for-profit boards and committees, including the Wellington County Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Thank You!

We greatly appreciate the support of our community, including our stall sponsors, all of whom renewed their sponsorship this year: UPI Energy LP, Christie Digital Systems Canada Inc., Guelph Wish Fund for Children and PDI. We also wish to thank our most recent horse sponsor, Strom's Farm & Bakery, who chose Sunrise as their 2016 charity partner, and raised \$8,943 to sponsor two therapy horses, Jackie and Nos. At right is an aerial view of the Sunrise logo in their 6-acre maze! Thank you to all our amazing community partners.



Sunrise was also delighted to receive a community grant from the Guelph Community Foundation (supported by a group of funds within The Foundation) in support of our Students at Sunrise: Equine-based Empowerment project, which will subsidize Guelph-based school groups. The Guelph Community Foundation also produced a short video about Sunrise (and two other charities) which was shown at their celebration event announcing all grant recipients on October 6.

Sunrise Mission

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

Sunrise Programs

Experience the warm family atmosphere

THE THERAPY PROGRAMS

- Therapeutic Riding lessons for children & adults with special needs
- Grooming, Therapeutic Driving lessons for youth / adults
- 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:

- Scotiabank Life Skills Program: Tuesdays, Thursdays year-round

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- Lesson volunteers needed! Co-op students welcome.
- Student Instructors: Residential training opportunities for Canadian and International students (3-12 months)

* These integrated 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 Federation
- Guelph Chamber of Commerce
- Cambridge Chamber of Commerce
- Volunteer Cambridge
- Volunteer Centre of Guelph-Wellington
- SKIC Supporting Kids In Camp