

TAILS FROM THE BARN

*The latest news and updates from Tara's Chance
"A place where therapy feels like play"*



Edited By

Miriam Everette

IN THIS ISSUE

NEW HORSE

**RIDER SPOTLIGHT-
RICARDO**

PROGRAM UPDATE

RIDING WITH THE STARS

**PHILANTHROPY -
US BANK**

BOARD UPDATE

TSC AWARENESS

STAFF HIGHLIGHT



Welcome Blackjack

by Matt Howells, Executive Director

We are thrilled to introduce the newest member of our herd, Black Jack! Hailing from Northern California, this 11-year-old Welsh mix pony is a delightful addition to our family. Standing at a compact 13.1 hands tall, Black Jack may be short in stature, but he is overflowing with charm and character.



One of Black Jack's most impressive traits is his remarkable calmness, even in the face of things that might spook an average horse. During his trial period, we put him through desensitizing training, and he proved to be a star performer, handling everything with grace and composure. His gentle demeanor and affable nature make him a favorite among all who visit the ranch. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Ebell Club of Fullerton, Carol Geisbauer, and Kyle Kehner for making Black Jack a part of our family. We are also deeply grateful to the Dhont Family Foundation for their sponsorship, which covers the costs of Black Jack's annual care, ensuring he receives the best attention and support. As Black Jack settles into his new home at Tara's Chance, we are excited to see the positive impact he will undoubtedly have on our riders and the joy he will bring to all who interact with him.

Rider Spotlight- Ricardo

by Martha Vargas, Ricardo's Mom

Ricardo is our miracle. Ricardo was born at 37 weeks, and we did not know if he would make it past the first couple of days of his life. Ricardo was diagnosed with cerebral palsy 3 weeks after his birth. From that day, the life of our family changed. As a result of Ricardo's diagnosis, he has 7 specialists, PT, OT and speech. Ricardo requires help to do everything and anything. Ricardo is non-verbal, and his physical disability is very severe.

Ricardo is a very social boy, he likes to go out to new places, and his favorite place to go is Angel Stadium. I started looking for new activities for Ricardo, but I always asked myself, where are they going to work with him if he doesn't sit, he doesn't walk, he doesn't talk? One day, I began to see that there are many children like him in different activities. One day, a mother I know posted a comment on social media about Tara's Chance. I investigated the program, and it seemed like a good place, but I didn't know if they were going to accept our son or not. I applied, we waited, and in April 2023 Ricardo was riding a horse for the first time.

Just 3 months later, we already see a huge difference. When he started riding, his head was down, he wouldn't raise it, and now Ricardo raises his head and for several minutes. Tara's Chance has created miracles for families like us and we are so grateful. Another super important thing is that the Program Director, Cindy Howells, understands our son. Ricardo communicates with his body, and to be able to see that he can communicate with her just fills our hearts with joy. We love to see Ricardo ride his horse and most importantly, see the beautiful community that Tara's Chance has created for families like us.

My family and I feel very fortunate to be a part of Tara's Chance.



Program Director Update

by Cindy Howells, Program Director

Tara's Chance established a valuable partnership with Discovery Mood & Anxiety in January 2023. For over 25 years, the Discovery Mood & Anxiety Program has been instrumental in helping thousands of teens and adults whose lives and families have been affected by anxiety, depression, and other mood disorders.

As a program activity within the Discovery Mood & Anxiety programs, Tara's Chance provides essential services to individuals undergoing treatment. Each week, we serve fourteen participants from two different treatment centers, engaging with them between 1 to 6 times while they receive treatment, with over 200 individuals benefiting annually.



One of the remarkable aspects of Tara's Chance is the unique connection formed between the participants and our magnificent animals. For many, their first encounter with a horse happens at our center, as they may have never seen one up close before. However, within just an hour, they are able to build a profound bond with the horse, describing their first rides as empowering and liberating. The sheer joy and positive feedback visible on their faces serve as a testament to the difference Tara's Chance is making in their lives.

The growth and progress witnessed in the participants are truly awe-inspiring. It's incredible to observe how much knowledge they retain and witness their curiosity to learn and explore further. A heartwarming example is one of our participants who initially had a fear of animals. Through a slow and gentle introduction to our mini horses, he gradually formed a deep bond with them. By his third visit, he had the confidence to ride, thoroughly enjoying the experience. The transformation was evident as he expressed interest in continuing to work with Tara's Chance, even after completing his treatment with Discovery Mood & Anxiety. Now, he comes once a week to ride Taffy and spend time with the mini horse Patrick, demonstrating how horses can be catalysts for overcoming fears and embracing new challenges.

Witnessing the profound impact our horses have on building confidence, fostering connections, and forming lasting bonds with the participants is an absolute privilege. The magic of these interactions extends beyond the stables, profoundly changing lives and leaving a lasting positive impact on all involved.

Executive Director Update

by Matt Howells, Executive Director

Get ready for an unforgettable event – the 11th annual Riding with the Stars presented by US Bank is just two months away! Join us as we cheer on this year's stars, Olivia, Addy, Jean-Luc, Jude, Ricardo, and Mia, while supporting our mission at Tara's Chance. You won't want to miss their incredible performances at this year's event. This special occasion promises an array of attractions, including an amazing



collection of live and silent auction items, hosted by our favorite auctioneer, Vinny the Voice. It's an opportunity to experience the magic of Tara's Chance firsthand. Riding with the Stars plays a pivotal role in our organization's success, raising 38% of Tara's Chance's annual operating budget. The funds generated enable us to continue offering impactful equine therapy programs, ensure the well-being of our beloved horses, support our dedicated staff and volunteers, and expand our reach to serve the 90 children currently on our waitlist. Last year's event was a monumental success, raising over \$150,000, allowing us to increase our weekly riders from 65 to 90. With our community growing stronger, we aim to surpass that milestone this year, and we need your help to make it happen. You can actively participate in the event by purchasing tickets and attending, becoming an event sponsor, selling tickets to your family and friends, donating exciting live or silent auction items, purchasing a winner's choice raffle ticket, or volunteering your time. Every contribution, big or small, plays a crucial role in making Riding with the Stars a resounding success. As a united Tara's Chance community, we can create an even greater impact this year, transforming lives through the power of equine therapy. Join us in this extraordinary journey and be part of the magic at Riding with the Stars. Together, we can make a profound difference in the lives of those we serve.



Philanthropy - U.S Bank

by Francine Flores, US Bank District Manager

In 2007 Francine Flores took her young daughter to a horseback riding lesson, and what transpired from there no one would have ever anticipated. Upon meeting Cindy Howells, who Francine says is really an “angel of healing,” it became clear that this was not just an average riding stable - but rather a place of marvels.

Francine’s daughter benefitted from her newfound hobby, finding an enjoyable method for overcoming the stressors and anxieties of daily life. In 2012, when Francine learned that Cindy was starting a program to serve children with special needs through equestrian therapy, she knew she could help. Francine was instrumental in forming Tara’s Chance as a 501(c)(3) organization and served as the Board President. Working as a District Manager for US Bank, Francine advocated for U.S. Bank to be the presenting sponsor of the first Riding with the Stars in 2013. US Bank’s commitment has continued and grown with Tara’s Chance for ten consecutive years.

Thanks to the impact of Francine and US Bank nonverbal children have spoken for the first time, young people who couldn’t sit up on their own are now able to do so while on horseback, where medical science may have given up, mother nature was just getting started.

“My children and I love to volunteer with Tara’s Chance, and every year my U.S. Bank team has an uplifting and inspiring time at Riding with the Stars,” said Francine. “I am so proud of Cindy, Tim, and Matt for the amazing work they do. I feel like we’ve witnessed the most beautiful transformations take place right in front of our eyes, thanks to the magical combination of caring people and gentle horses. I can’t wait to continue to see the expansion of the organization’s services, and the types of people we are able to help.”

Francine’s story is a perfect example of being able to use your professional skill and corporate resources to make a meaningful community service impact. Everyone at Tara’s Chance appreciates Francine’s dedication to our organization. She is an amazing leader, community member, mother, and friend. She is more than just our banker, she is our “angel of finance.”

If you’d like to help support Tara’s Chance through corporate philanthropic support or volunteerism please contact (714) 230-6247.



Francine's daughter Faith riding Tara

Board Update

by Susan Smith, Board President



At each meeting of the Tara's Chance Board of Directors, we spend some time digging deeper into why this organization is so vital to those we serve. In a recent Board meeting, we learned about a young girl named Remi who is a new rider to the program. Thus far, she has ridden twice. This young girl has developmental delays and is unable to lift her head. Like many of the youth we serve, she is nonverbal and communicates only with a, "thumbs up." While riding, this student did not seem to be at all happy about the session, but when asked if she wanted to continue, she gave a, "thumbs up." This was heartwarming and rewarding for her

parents, volunteers, and the instructors working with her. It provided a sense of achievement that through equine therapy, she could improve her physical, mental, and emotional status leading ultimately toward a higher quality of life. This story repeats daily with each of the clients we serve at Tara's Chance. Thanks to the generous support of our community of donors, we know that the services provided are having a positive impact on those we serve.

The vision of Tara's Chance is to be able to help all who are in need of this kind of therapeutic services. As we look to the future, we know that we must commit ourselves to finding ways to meet the needs of students like this. As we work toward plans for our future, this is at the forefront of our minds.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Tara's Chance, we want to thank you for working with and investing in us to create a place where those with disabilities can grow and improve to live a fuller and more complete life.

Tara's Chance Advocates for TSC



Tuberous sclerosis complex (TSC) is a genetic disorder that causes tumors to form in many different organs, primarily in the brain, eyes, heart, kidney, skin and lungs. At least two children born each day will have tuberous sclerosis complex. In March, Tara's Chance Executive Director Matt Howells and Program Director Cindy Howells went to Washington D.C. with our rider Bao Heffron to advocate for TSC research funding from Congress. Bao inspired us all as he shared how this disease has impacted his life and how the cutting edge medical treatments and therapies are vital to those living with TSC.

Learn more at www.tscalliance.org.

Staff Member Highlight

by Melissa Farmer, Horse Coordinator

I have been a “horse girl” since I was very young. I grew up in New Jersey and as a teenager, my home away from home was an English show barn, where I worked in exchange for lessons and riding privileges. I also worked at several trail riding barns. As much as I would have loved having a “career” centered on horses, that just wasn’t feasible and life took me in other directions. I spent 30+ years working at a family-owned software company as a Systems Analyst. I rode horses any opportunity I had, including some amazing rides in Arizona, Florida, Lake Tahoe and even Switzerland!



The year 2021 brought lots of changes for me including a separation (and subsequent divorce), a move from San Diego to Orange County to be closer to my adult children (Cal and Karly), and the announcement that the software company I worked for was most likely ceasing operation within the year. I wanted to get back into riding regularly, so I started looking for a place locally to ride. I happened upon the Coyote Hills Ranch website and a link to Tara’s Chance Therapeutic Riding. After watching some of the videos and reading about the program, I just knew I had to get involved. I immediately submitted my volunteer application and started volunteering in January 2022. I forgot all about riding for myself and fully revealed in experiencing the joy of all the riders in the program.

When the position of Horse Coordinator opened up in July, 2022, I jumped at the opportunity and somehow made two jobs work for the rest of the year. In 2023, I transitioned to nearly full-time at Tara’s Chance while still doing some software consulting work on the side. Although I’m considered “Horse

Coordinator,” I do just about anything that needs to be done to keep the program running smoothly. Whether I’m caring for the horses (including cleaning stalls and other hard work around the ranch), gearing them up for each session, side-walking on lessons, and even stepping in as instructor when needed, I’m never one to say ‘no’ when a job needs to be done.

I am so happy to have found Tara’s Chance! It’s a great feeling to be part of the lives of the children and their families and to see the amazing benefits riding has had for them.

Staff Updates



On May 2nd we welcomed the newest Tara's Chance family member, Nathaniel Tomas Perez. Katherine, Tara's Chance Office Manager, is currently on maternity leave taking care of baby Nathaniel. Thank you to everyone who supported Nathaniel with your beautiful baby gifts, he loves them all!



Veronica Wilson has stepped into Katherine's role as a volunteer coordinator while she has been on maternity leave. Veronica has been doing a wonderful job and if you are interested in volunteering at Tara's Chance please contact her at veronica@taraaschance.org.

Tara's Chance was thrilled to have Abby return to work for Tara's Chance this summer during her summer break while attending Northern Arizona University. She has returned to school for the fall and we wish her success!



After losing Abby to college, Tara's Chance hired Alex Pivin to the Horse Trainer position. Alex has over 10 years of equestrian experience and will be responsible for exercising and training the Tara's Chance herd.



Manuela Bedoya recently joined Tara's Chance as an Office Assistant to facilitate between Tara's Chance and our riders. If you are a parent interested in learning more about our programs for your son or daughter please contact Manuela at manuela@taraschance.org.



Riding with the Stars

Annual Dinner & Rider Showcase

Presented By



10/7/23



Click here to
purchase tickets



Tickets and sponsorships available at
TARASCHANCE.GIVESMART.COM

Thank You

Wilson W. Phelps Foundation

KNOC OC Chapter Charities

Amigos de los Niños

Fullerton South Rotary

US Bank

Woman's Club of Fullerton

John and Jeanette Svet

The Lara Team

Frank Nigro Columbian Fd.

Laura and Kurt Alvarado

YMI Jeans

Inspirations Gift & Home

Credit Union of SoCal

Affiliates in Motion

Gable Tax Group

Yorba Linda Woman's Club

ALPHA

Judy's Joy

Orange County Community Foundation

Yorba Linda Woman's Club

Kimberly Ann Williams

Ebell Club of Fullerton

Martin's Family

Susan & Gary Smith

Guez Family

OC Elder Law

Butler Pediatric Dentistry

Azria Family

Carmody Construction

Simsolo Family

Kyle Kehner

Carol Geisbauer

Hyundai Motors

Red Door Realty

Yorba Linda Sunrise Rotary

Watts Family

NextMove Real Estate

A3 Properties

Century 21 Discovery

Fullerton Rotary Club

Chad Holland

Chris Koorstad

John Wedge

Hutchison Family

Bob & Elizabeth Jahncke

Paul Kott Realtors

Theo Posch

Photo-Sonics, Inc

KF Professional Group

Tricia Eagan Ojala

Quayle Family

Barbara Eller

Ellen Skaggs

Dave Paynter